

e Conscience

are being decimated by overfishing and whose capture drowns birds and destroys the sea bed and sea life. We can choose the fish that we know will always be available because the catch is more sustainable and the habitat is more secure. And we can influence other consumers, the vast and varied crowd of housewives, superannuants, city workers, students and children whose shopping is the life blood of the fishing industry.

Consumer power has worked before. Remember Genetically Engineered food? Such was the power of customer resistance that GE food stuffs couldn't get a toehold in the New Zealand supermarket. After a campaign against GE-fed chicken, McDonald's have announced that they will no longer use them. Their chickenburgers will not be tainted with even a suspicion of GE.

The GE victory was easy because it depended entirely on the consumer's self-interest. People think GE products might be bad for them, so rejecting them was easy. The health campaigns about the risks of excess salt and sugar in our diets weren't so easy because the health messages conflicted with our love of sweet and salty food, but still the buyers' response led to a range of salt and sugar-reduced products being marketed.

Let's not insult ourselves — for we are the consumers — by suggesting that we only think about our stomachs. We can act selflessly for a cause we think is right.

Twenty years ago, the campaign to stop drift-net fishing showed just that. While governments tried to enact laws to stop the indiscriminate massacre by the enormous drift nets, we consumers demanded that our tuna wasn't caught over the corpses of the dolphins entangled and drowned in the giant nets. In no time, 'dolphin-friendly tuna, not caught in drift nets', swept the shelves and tuna tins proclaim it even today, when drift netting is hopefully only a memory.

We cared about dolphins and we care that the albatrosses should fly above the southern oceans and not be dragged to a dreadful death on the hooks of long-line fishers. We want the undersea gardens of coral and seaweed to flourish, and not to be smashed beneath the rollers of the trawl nets. We don't want sea creatures like crabs, sea urchins, the bizarre sea lilies and the sea pens to die, trashed as 'by-catch' from the nets dragged for scampi. We want sustainable fishing practices that work. We want to eat fish, and we want to eat it with an easy conscience.

Why not tell family and friends overseas

to avoid eating hoki and orange roughy? Take your 'Good Fish Guide' with you when you go shopping. Tell the people around you about your choice of fish. Tell the person behind the counter too, and your friends and neighbours and family.

We can make a difference.

— ANN GRAEME co-ordinates the Kiwi Conservation Club for Forest and Bird branches.

Find new fish recipes to use with more acceptable fish species at www.forestandbird.nz

