Case Study

followfood

Staying ahead of the market through healthy fish stocks

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What began as a sustainability requirement turned into a strategic advantage: by consistently tracking fish stocks as part of its sustainability management, followfood switched early on from overfished Atlantic cod to Pacific cod, enabling it to continue supplying fish and maintaining price stability whilst its competitors were left high and dry.

Overfishing of Atlantic Cod

Overfishing of the oceans is not only a sustainability risk but also an economic one. This is because when fish stocks dwindle, prices skyrocket. This was also the case with Atlantic cod, which, according to analyses by the IntraFish portal, was at times 80 per cent more expensive in 2025 than in the previous year. As part of its sustainability guidelines, the fish and organic food company followfood carries out annual assessments of the fish stocks in its portfolio. Its criteria go beyond standard certification schemes (such as the MSC). In the case of Atlantic cod, it was foreseeable that stocks would fall below the threshold. This enabled followfood to seek alternatives at an early stage and replace Atlantic cod with the healthy Pacific stock – even before the market reacted and sent prices for both Atlantic and Pacific cod soaring.

Profile followfood

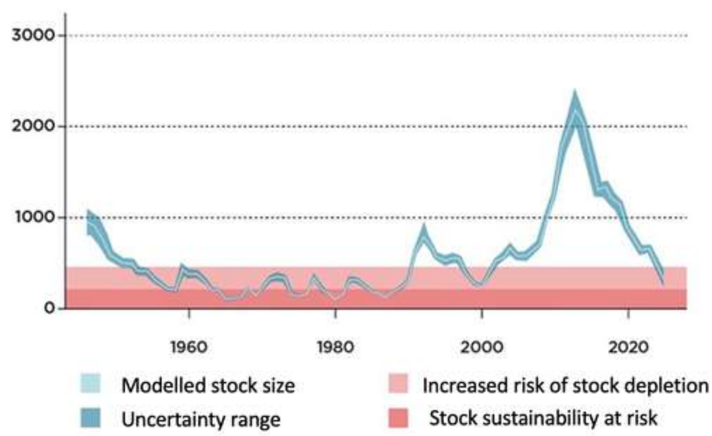
Headquarters: Friedrichshafen, Germany
Employees: approx. 70
Turnover 2024: approx. €70 million
Founded: 2007
Sales: Germany
Core offering: Originally known as “followfish” for sustainable fishing; now produces over 150 (organic) products under environmentally friendly conditions

> “Thanks to our own fisheries guidelines, we are able to plan with greater foresight. This also has economic benefits, as we are able to anticipate changes in fish stocks and consequently price trends at an earlier stage.”
>
> *Gyde Wollesen, Head of Impact*

From goal to implementation

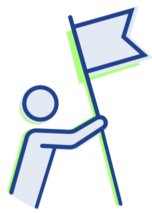
- 100% of all fisheries in the followfood portfolio comply with the company’s own fisheries guidelines
- 100% of raw materials come from healthy stocks
- Precautionary approach: followfood withdraws from sourcing at an earlier stage if a stock is in poor condition
- Contractual safeguards: Every supplier must disclose the fisheries from which they source directly or indirectly and have them approved by followfood
- followfood employs a fisheries biologist to work with the procurement team to select suitable fisheries
- Annual audit by a seafood consultancy
- Origin is transparently traceable via a tracking code on every package

Population development of Atlantic Cod (in thousand tonnes)



Detailed timeline of the measures

2021	Development of the Fisheries Directives	
2024	In-house assessment of fish stocks	
2024 - 2025	Reallocation process by the Procurement and Impact Team	
	Juni 2024	The management was informed of the poor forecast
	Q4/Q1	The procurement department obtains quotes for alternatives to cod
	Q2 2025	Decision to switch to Pacific cod
Juli 2025	Publication of official stock assessment – confirms previous assessment	
Juli 2025	Contract signed for Pacific cod ahead of price surge	
2025	Product launch	
Nov 2025	Retailers are asking for additional stock	



Challenges & investments

Due to the early outsourcing, it was impossible to predict how the market would react. Whilst followfood was able to regard the price advantage as a relatively certain opportunity, one risk was acceptance by retailers and consumers:

- Atlantic cod is more common than Pacific cod and differs slightly in taste and texture.
- Despite the threat to the stock, Atlantic cod is permitted to retain its MSC certification, which means that the overfishing of the stock may not be given sufficient consideration in the retail sector.
- There is little awareness of the issue within the retail sector and society at large, as the German media have not covered the overfishing of the stock, even though cod is a very popular food fish.

Why did it pay off?

- 2 new products were launched
- Reliable supply capacity, whilst competitors were unable to source goods competitively and had no stock
- Price stability vis-à-vis the retail sector
- Best practice in engaging with financial stakeholders to explain how environmental and economic strategies are interlinked and why investing in sustainability also makes economic sense.

Conclusion & outlook

Doble materiality is not a bureaucratic requirement, but a competitive factor – regardless of whether companies fall under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Any company that integrates planetary boundaries, such as the regenerative capacity of fish stocks, into its business strategy is practising active risk management. The precautionary principle not only safeguards ecosystems, but also stabilises catch volumes, prices and supply chains. Had the political catch quotas in 2024 been in line with scientific recommendations, the economic risk would also have been reduced. Policymakers should not view investment in sustainability as a burden, but as a risk management tool that ensures security of supply.