

Case Study

# followfood

Ahead of the Market  
thanks to Healthy Fish  
Stocks



# followfood GmbH

## Ahead of the Market thanks to Healthy Fish Stocks

What began as a sustainability requirement became a strategic advantage: By consistently tracking fish stocks as part of its sustainability management, followfood was able to pivot early from overfished Atlantic cod to Pacific cod, maintaining supply continuity and price stability while competitors faced severe disruptions.

### Overfishing: An Economic Risk

Overfishing of the oceans is not only a sustainability risk but also an economic one because when fish stocks shrink, prices skyrocket. Atlantic cod serves as a prime example, with prices increasing by up to 80% during 2025 compared to the prior year, according to analyses by the IntraFish portal. As part of its sustainability guidelines, the fish and organic food company followfood conducts annual assessments of all fish stocks in its portfolio. Its internal standards go beyond common benchmarks like the MSC guidelines, enabling the company to move away from vulnerable stocks at the first sign of concern. In the case of Atlantic cod, it was foreseeable that the stock would fall below the threshold. This allowed followfood to transition to healthy Pacific cod stocks before the market reacted and drove prices for both stocks sky high.

### 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 earlier if a stock is in poor condition
- Contractual safeguards: All direct and indirect sources must be disclosed to and approved by followfood prior to use by a supplier
- followfood employs a fisheries biologist to work with the purchasing department to select suitable fisheries
- Annual audit by a seafood consultancy
- Origin is transparently traceable via a tracking code on every package

### Profile followfood

**Headquarters:** Friedrichshafen & Hamburg

**Employees:** approx. 70

**Turnover 2024:** approx. €70 million

**Founded:** 2007

**Sales:** Germany

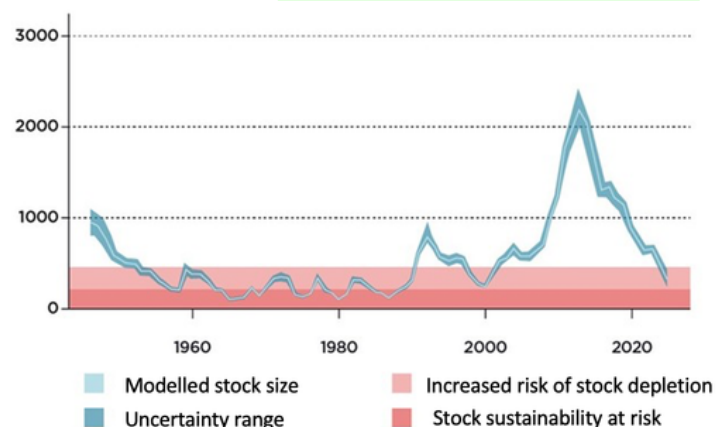
**Core offering:** Originally known as "followfish", the company is known for sustainable fishing; now producing over 150 (organic) products under environmentally friendly conditions



"Thanks to our own fishing guidelines, we plan with greater foresight. This also has economic benefits, as we can anticipate stock trends - and thus price trends - earlier."

*Gyde Wollesen, Head of Impact*

### Population Development of Atlantic Cod (in thousand tonnes)



## Detailed Timeline of Measures



|                    |                                                               |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2021</b>        | Development of the fishing guidelines                         |
| <b>2024</b>        | In-house assessment of fish stocks                            |
| <b>2024 - 2025</b> | Outsourcing process by the Procurement and Impact Team        |
| <i>Juni 2024</i>   | Management was informed of the poor forecast                  |
| <i>Q4/Q1</i>       | Purchasing solicits quotes and prices for cod alternatives    |
| <i>Q2 2025</i>     | Decision to switch to Pacific cod                             |
| <b>Juli 2025</b>   | Publication of official stock assessment; confirms assessment |
| <b>Juli 2025</b>   | Contract concluded for Pacific cod before price surge         |
| <b>2025</b>        | Product launch                                                |
| <b>Nov 2025</b>    | Retailers request additional inventory                        |



## Challenges & investments

Due to the early outsourcing, it was impossible to predict how the market would react. While followfood considered the price advantage to be a relatively certain opportunity, acceptance by retailers and consumers remained a risk:

- Atlantic cod is more common than Pacific cod and differs slightly in taste and texture.
- Despite the threat to the stock, Atlantic cod is allowed to retain its MSC certification, which means that overfishing of the stock may not be considered a significant issue in the retail sector.
- Low awareness among retailers and the public, as the German media has not covered the overfishing of the stock, even though cod is a very popular food fish.



## Why did it pay off?

- Two new products were launched on the market, ensuring reliable supply while competitors were unable to source goods competitively and had no inventory
- Price stability vis-à-vis retailers
- Best practice for financial stakeholders to demonstrate how environmental and economic strategies are interconnected and why investments in sustainability also make economic sense



## Conclusion & outlook

Double materiality is not a bureaucratic requirement but a competitive factor, regardless of whether companies fall under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Those who integrate planetary boundaries, such as the regenerative capacity of fish stocks, into their business strategy are practicing active risk management. This precautionary principle not only safeguards ecosystems but also stabilises catch volumes, prices, and supply chains. For example, if political catch quotas in 2024 had aligned with scientific recommendations, the economic risk would also have decreased. Policymakers should not view investments in sustainability as a burden, but rather as a risk management tool that ensures supply security.