

FFT Ep 6_Client Review 2_10

_V1_v2

[00:00:00] **Redi Tlhabi:** As someone who enjoys eating seafood, I completely understand the joys of the amazing flavours and possibilities that the produce of our oceans offer. From a seafood curry to sushi, from pickled fish to a bowl of garlicky mussels, or even a good old snoek paté or hake and chips, the options are endless. Not to mention the amazing health benefits of fish, which we all know can be such a great source of omega 3. I'm also aware that seafood is the world's most widely traded animal protein with millions of people worldwide relying on fishing, not only as a vital food source, but also for their livelihood. In 2020, an estimated 58.5 million people were employed in the primary fisheries and aquaculture

[00:01:00] sector globally, according to the Food and Agriculture organisation of the United Nations. But I definitely have a lot of questions when it comes to consuming anything caught in the ocean. Perhaps you were one of the millions worldwide who watched My Octopus Teacher back in 2020, choked up with tears, wracked with guilt about all the years of merciless seafood eating in your past. The South African documentary film was a runaway success internationally, winning armfuls of awards including an Oscar and a BAFTA, and not only because it highlighted the incredible intelligence and relational nature of an octopus, but also the beauty of the underwater world. And then there was Seaspiracy, another Netflix documentary that questioned the sustainability of seafood while promoting plant-based diets. Although critics have questioned the accuracy of the documentary, it nonetheless played an important role in bringing awareness to the

[00:02:00] pressing need to further improve seafood sustainability, if we are to reverse the growing trend of overfishing that our seas currently face. At the other end of the spectrum, a recent article in the scientific journal Nature states that because seafood is nutritionally diverse and avoids or lessens many of the environmental burdens of terrestrial food production, it is uniquely positioned to contribute to both food provision and future global food nutrition, security. But the question that plagues me when it comes to this subject is how to make it all sustainable and whether sustainable seafood practices exist at all. It is a particularly important question when considering that the world population is expected to reach 9.7 billion people by 2050.

[00:03:00] I'm Redi Tlhabi and this is Food for Thought, the podcast designed to demystify the food landscape brought to you by Woolworths. Just a quick note that the content shared on this podcast is for discussion and information purposes only and should not be taken as advice. The views and opinions discussed here are those of the podcast hosts and guests, and do not represent those of Woolworths. So let's get going. It goes without saying that the health of our oceans is directly linked to the world's collective food futures. Global consumption of seafood has increased at an average annual rate of 3% since 1961, with rising incomes and changes in dietary trends projected to drive a further 15% increase in consumption by 2030. According to the World Economic Forum, the global average consumption of fish and other seafood per person reached a record high of 20.5 kilograms in 2019. And in South Africa, fish consumption is estimated to be around six to eight kilograms

[00:04:00] per person per year, which equates to less than one portion of 200 grams per week. But our marine ecologies are under threat, predominantly due to illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing and emerging threats such as climate change, ocean acidification, and plastic litter. In this episode, we take a look at sustainable seafood and what we need to do to expand the production of food from the sea in an equitable and sustainable manner. The seafood we consume includes fish and other aquatic organisms that come from capture fisheries and aquaculture in marine and freshwater environments. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, global fisheries and aquaculture production is at a record high and the sector will play an increasingly important role in providing food and nutrition in the future.

[00:05:00] Total fisheries and aquaculture production reached a record 214 million tons in 2020. The amount destined for human consumption was 20.2 kilograms per capita. That's more than double the average of 9.9 kilograms per capita in the 1960s. As I unpack this important subject with the experts, I'll be sharing with you the conversations I had that really helped me to better understand the global seafood industry, not only from a consumer point of view, but also for the fisher communities employed in this industry locally. And you'll discover various NGOs in South Africa and elsewhere in the world working to bring about change in the industry and the lives of fisher communities. I'll even be talking to the creators of a fascinating installation at the Museum Rijswijk's 2021 Textile Biennial in the Netherlands. The art installation hung from above and offered an

[00:06:00] interactive, ever-changing reflection on the sustainability of South African seafood and our fisher communities. And of course, I'll be asking the question, did a dolphin die for the sake of my tuna salad? When I imagine

where my fish comes from, I usually picture large fishing vessels at sea trawling nets through the water that capture anything in their path. But many trawl fisheries have been certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council, and today 50% of wild-caught fish are landed by small-scale fishers. Plus 56% of seafood for human consumption is actually farmed through aquaculture. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, there are currently about 4.1 million legal fishing vessels in the world today, and approximately 20.6 million fish farmers. Together, capture fisheries and aquaculture

[00:07:00] account for the millions of tons of seafood consumed worldwide each year. I wanted to understand more about capture fisheries and the various fishing methods used as well as the fascinating world of aquaculture. So I got hold of Gert le Roux, an Aquaculture and Fishery Specialist from Woolworths, to tell me more. Welcome. It's lovely to chat to you. Uh, let me put you on the spot immediately. Is there such a thing as sustainable seafood?

[00:07:31] **Gert le Roux:** The, the answer to your question is definitely is I think Woolworths' vision is to be one of the world's most responsible retailers, and we firmly believe that the responsible production and consumption of seafood is a key part of a sustainable food future. I think if you look at it over the past 15 years, we, we've seen a significant improvement in seafood sustainability. And I think it's now mostly accepted that certainly within the aquaculture sector, uh, that sector has generally embraced a business and societal expectation of

[00:08:00] environmentally and, and socially sound practices. I mean, right now, if, if you look at it within a global food system context, seafood is most certainly one of the most sustainable and nutrient-rich food sources. Uh, but, but to answer your your question fully, I think it's important to, to define sustainable. So sustainability can never be fully defined as an end destination. Uh, I, I think we need to look at it as, as a journey, as, as implied by Woolworths Good Business Journey. And, and that journey allows us to keep up with progress, improvements, and innovation so that we can viably meet growing demand while minimising our impact on the environment. All of global seafood comes from either capture fisheries, so these are wild-caught fisheries. It is the last protein sector where we rely on hunting. So fishing boat goes, it goes out into the ocean and, and, and the hunting for fish. So that's capture fisheries. So it's wild-caught fisheries.

[00:09:00] Aquaculture is also a form of fisheries, but it's culture fisheries. There we control the production cycle, we determine where we form these

species, and, and, and we, we feed them and, and we protect them from predators, for example and aqua agriculture also involves corporate ownership of the stock. The, the, the development of aquaculture globally has been tremendously important. Uh, it has been referred to as the Blue Revolution since I think somewhere around 2004. It has for many years now, been the fastest-growing global food production system. And aqua agriculture now supplies around 56% of total world seafood for, for human consumption. Uh, in that regard, it, it, it bridges the gap between sustainable captures, fisheries and global seafood demand, and quite, quite simply food. If you look at the ocean, the ocean is really vast and, and fish grow really well there. We have the technology to farm the fish there. And at a farm level, uh, I think aquaculture

[00:10:00] has fantastic sustainability attributes. The, the modern fish form is an intensive knowledge-based enterprise, and it operates within strict standards and best management practice frameworks.

[00:10:15] **Redi Tlhabi:** Where I previously had not had enough knowledge to make informed choices, I was starting to realise that not all fish is fished equally, and that it was possible to enjoy seafood from fisheries that operate in a sustainable way that preserves both fish stocks and the oceans for future generations. To understand more about the social and political processes of fisheries reform in South Africa, I spoke to Professor Moenieba Isaacs. Moenieba is a University of Western Cape research coordinator, and her research focuses on fisheries reform in South Africa, mainly through the lens of policy, processes and implementation at small-scale fisheries. She also co-authored the book *Beyond the Blue*, which is based

[00:11:00] on research into entrepreneurship, the lives of fisher women, and making a living from the sea. Thank you so much for joining us, uh, Moenieba. I'm so delighted to have you on our podcast, and I'm also fascinated about your research on the policy processes and implementation in small-scale fisheries in South Africa. What did you find, what are those basic findings of your research?

[00:11:23] **Moenieba Isaacs:** I've been doing research in small-scale fisheries for over 25 years, and one of the key findings of my research from the beginning was that the Marine Living Resources Act of 98 did not recognise small fisheries in South Africa and define them under either a, subsistence, a commercial or recreational. And, and this in essence, was the problem. So through a formal litigation process, uh, brought, uh, about by NGOs and small scale

[00:12:00] fisheries, they challenge these definitions of small-scale fisheries in the policy. So they, uh, challenge the individual, uh, transferable quota system, which is a rights-based approach that basically see a big fishery company in the same light that they see a small fisher. And it failed to incorporate them over 22 years and this is now 2020 and it has resulted in many elite capturing of rights at local level and, and mainly at the expense of, um, small-scale fishers.

[00:12:42] **Redi Thlabi:** Let the public then understand in what way these rights are denied. And perhaps the best way to do that is to just find out what it is they are fighting for. What is, what is it that would put them on equal footing with, uh, the bigger commercial, uh, fisheries.

[00:13:00] **Moenieba Isaacs:** Number one, it is a right to practise their livelihood by saying, I want to go out with my fishing boat and I want to collect as much fish that is possible with my human body. Not with a machine, but with my, uh, hand and line. And then I want to bring that fish back and I want to sell the fish so that I can provide for my family, but I also want to have that fish to eat. And, and that is one of the, the most important for a livelihood and for food security and for them to make decisions about their livelihoods and also a way to send their children to school, what food is in the family to, uh, put food, um, on the table, and also in terms of if they need medical care that they can provide that. So it's the basic necessities that they are

[00:14:00] wanting to have. In terms of an equal footing in the fisheries rights allocation system.

[00:14:07] **Redi Thlabi:** I mean, basic rights that every human being is entitled to, especially under our Constitution and our Bill of Rights. But just getting back to, we use the term overfishing and the vulnerability that, uh, sea life as it were, is facing because of human activity, like, uh, littering, overfishing and, and, and so on. Can you then share with us how small-scale fisheries or fishers seem to contribute the least to this global crisis, and yet they are adversely affected by the practices, perhaps of, of bigger players. Is is that, uh, the, the case?

[00:14:47] **Moenieba Isaacs:** That is definitely the case. If you, if you look at, um, a small-scale fisher and a fishing family and a community for them, sustainability of

[00:15:00] resource is at the core of the practice. They know that we need to protect the resource so that we can have, um, a livelihood not only for this year, but also for the next 20 years or for a lifetime, and that it can also be

intergenerational that I would be able to have this right also given to my family and my children can continue that right. So I think when we talking about sustainability, it's about looking at the practices of small-scale fisheries and what footprint they really, really, make in terms of what they actually can extract from, from the ocean is very little compared to a big trawler vessel that can scoop a whole school of fish at one time. And also incredibly destructive in terms of the marine ecosystem, seabed, corals that they destroy while scooping, uh, that fish up.

[00:16:06] **Redi Tlhabi:** Given the vital need for reform, I was impressed to learn that Woolworths has been taking action towards sustainable seafood practices for the last 23 years - since the year 2000. To hear more about the work being done, I spoke to Rahim Hoosen, Woolworths Trading Head, and the Chair of the International Pole and Line Foundation, an organisation with which Woolworths works closely in their sustainable seafood initiatives. Rahim, what are some of the milestones in the Woolworth sustainable seafood journey thus far?

[00:16:38] **Rahim Hoosen:** You know, when we talk about milestones and our journey, you know, we extensively partner with like-minded organisations. You know, WWF uh, in 2012, we became the first retailer to sell MSC certified seafood in our counters. Um, you know, we went on to disrupt the market as the first retailer on the African continent to convert

[00:17:00] all our caught tuna to pole and line caught tuna, you know, the most sustainable seafood message. And then we followed that on with, uh, becoming the first retailer to sell. You know, Aquaculture Stewardship Council certified, uh, you know, farm seafood that we touched on earlier, and then last year, again, joining forces with industry experts in Global Tuna Alliance, uh, the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative. And we see this as an integral part of partnering with industry to create greater impact and change. So, you know, maybe one of the most memorable, um, uh, milestones that we can look back to is when we, when we started out the Fishing for the Future programme and became the first retailer to start putting on, uh, you know, the labels on our products. You know, the, this, uh, tell customers, you know, the green, the orange and red system that was, in a highly complex industry, simplifying the message to that end consumer that

[00:18:00] says, this is good for you, or it's a sustainably caught and sourced versus, you know, in an absolute red, um, icon that it is a no-go, do not buy, do not support these impactful sources of, of, uh, seafood. The International Border Line Foundation was founded in 2012 in the UK. It's an NGO, uh, globally

based and is aimed at sustainable one by one fisheries that use, uh, sustainable catch methods. When we talk one by one, it's not, you know, it's not just enough to be sustainable, but to understand how we create a, you know, more regenerative practices that, you know, that repair what we are doing as, as humans on, on global impact. So, pole and line, very simply, uh, explained is one by one fishing. It is highly selective. It's a traditional way. Um, it's a hook size that is used that prevents by-catch, and that's a really important part to understand. By-catch in other harmful methods of, of fishing,

[00:19:00] you know, destroy the ecosystems in the ocean. They catch sharks and dolphins. And we've all seen the videos of turtles being caught in nets and, and the impacts of that. So the, the pole and line or trawl line or handline is the least impactful phishing method to the industry.

[00:19:18] **Redi Tlhabi:** Through these conversations with Gert, Moenieba and Rahim, I was pleased to discover that when I pick up a can of Woolworths tuna and see that it says pole and line caught, I can be reassured that dolphins or turtles were not harmed in the process. And any time I order mussels or buy a huge batch to cook, I now know that this is one of the most sustainable seafood options. The inspiring work of the International Pole and Line Foundation with Rahim as chair also includes upliftment programs and support for fisher communities with a focus on empowering women in these communities.

[00:20:00] As the foundation's website puts it, women play an important role in family nutrition and food security in coastal communities. Increased sustained employment for them will contribute to the food security of their families, improve financial security through employment, increases their purchasing power, and allows them to improve the nutrition of their diet. These conversations around sustainable fishing and policy processes helped me realise the importance of policy and legislative changes. As consumers, we can certainly do more to make responsible choices when eating seafood, especially by choosing more sustainable options such as oysters and mussels. At a global level, the greatest impact would be for us all to push for legislative changes and improved enforcement of existing laws in the fishing industry. Small-scale fishers play a big role in the sustainability of wild-caught seafood

[00:21:00] and I was glad to hear that around 42% of the wild-caught seafood sold at Woolworths is caught by small-scale fishers. Abalobi, a South African based global social enterprise working in partnership with Woolworths, brings sustainably sourced fresh fish to the consumer's table while supporting the small-scale fishers who catch them. Abalobi's work with Woolworths was ramped up in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A tiered pricing

structure for cape bream, carpenter and yellowtail fish was agreed upon by Abalobi fishers to ensure the viability of making Abalobi-tracked fish with a story available in all 31 Woolworth stores with a fresh fish counter. These stores are spread across the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces. A vacuum packed catch of the season product line was developed in conjunction with Woolworths

[00:22:00] that would also enable forward traceability of Abalobi-tracked fish with a story so that Woolworths customers could access the Abalobi QR code. I was really encouraged to hear the stories of these collaborations. What's more, the importance of supporting our fisher and coastal communities cannot be over-emphasised, especially since artisanal and small-scale fisheries create jobs that provide 90% of employment globally in the fishery sector, according to a 2021 Fish and Fisheries Journal article by Robert I, Arthur. One of the most original and inspiring awareness initiatives that I came across was a project by fisher community activist Hilda Adams and Studio H director Hannerie Visser, who teamed up for an exhibition at the Museum Rijswijk's 2021 Textile Biennial in the Netherlands. Using fabrics, fibres

[00:23:00] and found materials, Hilda and Hannerie created an ever-changing hanging reflection that spoke to the sustainability of both South African seafood and our fisher communities. I spoke to the two of them, and Hilda shared some fascinating insights with me about her work as a fisher community activist. Hilda, just share with us how you came to be involved as an activist and what work you do.

[00:23:24] **Hilda Adams:** Good afternoon everyone. My name is Hilda Adams. I am a small-scale fisher woman from Mamre, a small town in the Western Cape. I am a fisher woman and I'm also a, a activist for fisher folk in South Africa. How I became involved as an activist, I think with the whole, um, beginning of the Apartheid regime. I was about 12 years old when, uh, my grandmother was evicted from Green Point

[00:24:00] to Manenberg, and that was a big shock to the whole family. And to me it was complete injustice, you know, to be moved from your home in a beautiful area to a flat, in a very sandy area. At the same time, we were also, I'm born into a family in Mamre, and at the same time, uh, we were denied access to our customary and historical fishing grounds, which brought about, uh, more injustice and more expenses for our fisher folk.

[00:24:46] **Redi Thlabi:** So, uh, Hilda, that history is so important, but just talk to us a little bit more about the story of the fisher women in South Africa, and why are they an important part of the fisher community?

[00:24:58] **Hilda Adams:** Many, uh, women works in, uh, canning factories and many women also, uh, work in, uh, the net, um, repairing, uh, area where they repair the nets of the bigger boats. It's still happening and it's a special skill that they have. Why we are an important part of the fisher community? We are very passionate about what we do. And we ourselves, are, should have better, uh, rights in terms of the, the fishing rights for different species, we can provide a lot of jobs.

[00:25:45] **Redi Thlabi:** So to find out more about the pair's creative art installation at the Biennial in the Netherlands, I chatted to Hannerie. Hannerie, welcome to the podcast. So lovely to speak to you. Just talk to us a little bit more then about the concept of the Textile Biennial installation. Uh, how, how did it work and just coming up with the idea itself.

[00:26:06] **Hannerie Visser:** So the installation that we collaborated on told the story of the women behind South Africa small-scale fisher communities. And it also highlighted all the issues that they face on a daily basis, like the increasing food insecurity they're facing, and also all the complications around restricted fishing rights. So how the installation worked, um, we took the woman from Steenberg's Cove, um, that Hilda worked with, collected broken fishing nets for us, which they then mended into large panels. So we then attached heritage recipes from my own family, from Hilda's family and their own recipes. Um, and then the recipes included dishes like viskop sop, braaied snoek, fish fingers. And the idea was that the observer of the, the work which removed the recipes and as they took the cards

[00:27:00] it revealed embroidered letters that spelled the name of the recipes behind it. You know, so, so as people interacted with the nets, the nets moved and you can, you could still smell the ocean. So it was really just a reminder of these fragile communities that we face in South Africa and all the challenges that they face. I just really wanted to create a space where people could talk again about the wonderful work that Hilda does, the continuous struggle that our fisher communities in South Africa face. Also, the story of the women behind these communities and the, the invisible work that they do.

[00:27:41] **Redi Thlabi:** I couldn't help smiling when I heard that the theme of this textile Biennial in Rijswijk had been Food for Thought, the same title as we chose for this podcast series. Putting more thought into the food I eat and what it took to get that food to my plate has become a rewarding habit for me, as I've

[00:28:00] challenged myself to know more. It felt so good to discover that transparent, fair and ethical seafood supply chains do exist. And that if I'm

buying smartly, it's possible to trace back my fish to the very person who caught it. The social and ethical impact of sustainable fishing practices is far reaching, and it encouraged me to know that there are suppliers and meaningful collaborations out there making it possible to support responsible sustainable seafood choices. After all is said and done, I have a newfound appreciation for our fragile marine ecologies. And a determination to make better choices that benefit both people and the planet for the future. I'm Redi Tlhabi, journalist, producer and author, host of Food for Thought, a podcast designed to demystify the food landscape, brought to you by Woolworths. You'll find all podcast

[00:29:00] episodes at www.woolworths.co.za/podcast or wherever you listen to your podcasts. Thank you so much for joining us. We look forward to having you along for the next episode of Food for Thought. If you enjoyed this episode, you can dig deeper at www.woolworths.co.za and if you're enjoying this podcast, please give this channel a follow. You can also rate and review it wherever you listen to your podcast.

*