Krill fishing companies back call to protect Antarctic Ocean

by Greenpeace International  9 July 2018

Cambridge, UK – A Greenpeace campaign to protect the Antarctic Ocean, backed by 1.7 million people globally, has received the unprecedented support of the vast majority of krill fishing companies operating in Antarctic waters. The move was announced at Greenpeace’s Antarctic 360° event in Cambridge, UK, attended by scientists and Oscar-winning actor Javier Bardem, who joined Greenpeace’s expedition to the Antarctic in January 2018.

This major announcement from a group of the largest krill fishing companies will see nearly all krill companies operating in the Antarctic voluntarily stop fishing in huge areas around the Antarctic Peninsula, including ‘buffer zones’ around breeding colonies of penguins, to protect Antarctic wildlife. Krill is a small crustacean which is a keystone species in the Antarctic food web, eaten by penguins, seals, whales and other marine life.

The companies have also pledged to support the scientific and political process for the creation of a network of large-scale marine protected areas in the Antarctic, including areas in which they currently operate. The companies are all members of the Association of Responsible Krill harvesting companies (ARK), and represent 85% of the krill fishing industry in the Antarctic.

“The momentum for protection of the Antarctic’s waters and wildlife is snowballing. A huge movement of people globally has been joined by scientists, governments, celebrities and now even the companies fishing in the Antarctic. This is a bold and progressive move from these krill fishing companies, and we hope to see the remainder of the krill industry follow suit,” said Frida Bengtsson, Greenpeace Nordic Protect the Antarctic campaign.

Kristine Hartmann, EVP at Aker BioMarine, the largest krill fishing company in the world, said: “Safeguarding the Antarctic ecosystem in which we operate is part of who we are. Our ongoing dialogue with ARK members, scientists and the community of environmental NGOs, including Greenpeace, is what makes additional efforts like this possible. We are positive that ARK’S commitment will help ensure krill as a sustainable and stable source of healthy omega-3s for the future.

“Through our commitment we are showing that it is possible for no-fish zones and sustainable fisheries to co-exist. Our intention with this commitment is to support CCAMLR’s work on establishing a network of large-scale science-based marine protected areas in the Antarctic,” Hartmann added.
In dialogue with Greenpeace, the world’s leading krill companies have committed to stop fishing in some of the identified ecologically sensitive areas recommended for protection. From 2020, these krill companies will observe a permanent closure of these areas, whilst continuing to support the process to create a vast protected area in the region.

**Chris Johnson, WWF Antarctica programme lead, said:**

“WWF welcomes the initiative by Aker BioMarine and other ARK members to voluntarily commit to protecting Antarctica and its extraordinary wildlife. A comprehensive and effective network of marine protected areas surrounding the continent – which must include no-take marine sanctuaries – is essential for safeguarding biodiversity and improving sustainable fisheries. The accelerating impact of humanity on fragile ocean ecosystems, including from climate change, makes this commitment to Antarctic protection all the more timely.”

**Andrea Kavanagh, Director of Antarctic and Southern Ocean conservation, Pew Charitable Trusts, said:**

“The Association of Responsible Krill harvesting companies’ support for the creation of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs), including large no-fishing zones, is a truly visionary step that more commercial fishing interests in Antarctica and around the world should follow. Cooperation among scientists, governments, industry, and conservation groups is the surest bet to protecting the 30 percent of the ocean that scientists tell us is needed to maintain global ocean health. We expect to see the Weddell Sea and waters off East Antarctica declared marine parks in October. Governments should follow industry’s lead and support MPAs.”

**Dr Phil Trathan OBE, Head of Conservation Biology at the British Antarctic Survey and Lead Ecological Adviser for the UK Delegation to CCAMLR, said:**

“Many animals, including penguins, seals and whales, depend upon krill in the Antarctic. For over 20 years the Conservation Biology group at BAS, has worked alongside the international community, tracking key species to identify favoured feeding areas at different times of year. This work underpinned the UK call, from 2016, for the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources to prohibit krill fishing in coastal zones adjacent to the Antarctic Peninsula, especially during the summer breeding season. CCAMLR has yet to take such a step, so it is to be welcomed that the majority of krill companies have decided to take these voluntary steps. Ongoing work is still required to assess the risks associated with krill fishing practices, so I hope that these companies will be equally responsive as the science continues to develop.”

“This October, when the proposal is on the table to create a huge Antarctic Ocean Sanctuary in the Weddell Sea, politicians must know that the eyes of the world and the weight of history are upon them,” added Bengtsson.

Oscar-winning actor Javier Bardem was speaking at a Greenpeace UK event in Cambridge, alongside a meeting of Antarctic scientists who are drawing up the technical plans for marine protected areas in the Antarctic Ocean, one of which is expected to cover around 1.8 million square kilometres in the Weddell Sea. The final decision will be taken by the Commission for
the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in October 2018, when it convenes in Hobart, Tasmania.

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Notes

The companies making the commitment represent 85% of the krill fishing industry in the Antarctic and are all members of the Association of Responsible Krill harvesting companies (ARK). They are: Aker BioMarine, CNFC, Insung, Pescachile, Rimfrost.

“ARK’s mission is to facilitate an industry contribution to an ecologically sustainable krill harvest. Our members agree that the industry must develop sustainably to ensure long-term viability of the krill stocks and the predators that depend on it. Today, we are moving forward with a pioneer initiative, implementing voluntary restricted zones for the krill fishery in the Antarctic Peninsula. We hope to help the scientists collect information which allows us to better understand the krill’s behaviour and the interactions of the fishery with other predators in the Antarctica,” stated the Association of Responsible Krill harvesting companies in a common statement.

Kristine Hartmann heads Aker BioMarine’s Transformation department and holds overall responsibility for sustainability.

The Association of Responsible Krill harvesting companies (ARK) was established in 2012 to facilitate an industry contribution to ecologically sustainable krill harvesting. Its current members are from Chile, China, Korea and Norway. The Association coordinates and cooperates with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) on the provision of research and information on krill, and the krill fishery and its impact on the ecosystem, with the aim of contributing to CCAMLR’s work on managing the krill fishery sustainably.

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