



ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD

"The voice of the ornamental fish industry"

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Dear Catherine

You may recall we have met at meetings in Brussels on several occasions. I watched with interest the press conference on YouTube about the launch of the MEP for wildlife initiative - a very important initiative which we look forward to engaging with fully. Honest traders are victims of criminal wildlife trafficking activity because they are undercut in the market and their reputation is besmirched by unfortunate and incorrectly held association. We stand against the trafficker and always will and resent any phrase or set of words that insinuates our legal activities are in any way comparable to the criminal activity of wildlife trafficking. OATA does not and will not support illegal (criminal) activity.

However I was extremely concerned that you singled the ornamental fish industry out with your comments about wild caught fish. It's simply not true to say there is a 'huge' industry in wild caught ornamental fish and that 'very many are endangered and protected species' and 'so there is criminal activity there' I would be very interested to see your evidence for making these statements. Unless you are able to do so I do hope you will take the time to correct these misleading statements in as public a platform as this press conference.

There are 79.7 **MILLION** tonnes of wild fish caught globally every year of which 6.38 **MILLION** tonnes are thrown back as discards. Just **150** tonnes of ornamental fish are caught a year - to be kept alive for the home aquarium industry. That's not a huge industry.

We realise the issue of wild caught animals is an important one but to say many ornamental fish imported by our industry are 'endangered and protected' is again just wrong - and in fact accuses us of criminality. Our industry is covered by CITES, shipments come into this country through UK airports where border inspection posts check paperwork. To smear honest importers like this is very concerning. Perhaps you would like to visit either a very well-respected retailer in your constituency or importer which is situated just down the A40 from your constituency to see the real picture of what's involved. We would be very happy to arrange this.

What is often forgotten about when talking about the honest trade in wild caught fish are the people who catch those fish. Catching live fish for home tanks - rather than dead fish for the plate - earns them substantially more, which means they have to catch less. And if that source of income is taken away - what are the alternative industries for feeding their family? We are currently doing some research into this very issue which we will happily share when it's ready but in the meantime attached is a leaflet we've produced. Did you know many of these fish are caught using hand held nets? That's a lot less destructive than the shrimp trawlers in Indonesia for example which throw away nearly **82%** of their catch to provide us with prawns for our sandwiches etc. We are all for a legal, sustainable and well-managed industry in wild caught fish that can benefit communities both economically and environmentally - that's why we've been asked to sit on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s new Home Aquarium Fish Sub-group.

Perhaps you'd like to check out Project Piaba in Brazil <http://projectpiaba.org/> and LINI in Indonesia <http://www.lini.or.id/> for some examples of how wild caught fish can benefit the communities that catch them. There are people behind this honest trade and they need our help as much as the wildlife.

I look forward to hearing your evidence for the statements you made. And please don't hesitate to come back to me if you would like to visit a UK trader. We also look forward to being part of your research for this initiative.

Regards
Keith