

Dear Mr. Wegman,

I am writing regarding the sale of frog legs at Wegman's supermarkets. I am a long-time customer of Wegman's and am the Founder & Executive Director of SAVE THE FROGS, America's first and only public charity dedicated to protecting amphibians. Nearly 2,000 amphibian species are on the verge of extinction, and 200 species have completely disappeared in recent decades. This constitutes the largest mass extinction event in 65 million years. The continued disappearance of frog species will result in irreversible consequences to the planet's ecosystems and to humans.

The worldwide trade in frog legs is massive, and is undoubtedly a significant contributor to the decline and extinction of amphibian populations worldwide. The frog legs trade is responsible for the spread of harmful infectious diseases and invasive species, and the depletion of wild frog populations. The attached sheet briefly outlines some of the problems associated with the trade in frog legs – both wild-caught and farm-raised. You can find more information, as well as relevant scientific publications, at:

www.savethefrogs.com/froglegs

I am writing to ask you to aid worldwide amphibian conservation efforts by discontinuing the sale of frog legs at Wegman's. San Francisco's Restaurant Gary Danko has stopped serving frog legs, and we are currently contacting restaurants and supermarkets around the country to ask them to do likewise. By becoming the first supermarket on the planet to remove frog legs from its stores for environmental reasons, Wegman's would undoubtedly receive a significant amount of positive publicity, and this would be to Wegman's long-term economic advantage. SAVE THE FROGS! can assist in this regard by (1) issuing a press release to culinary and environmental journalists worldwide; and (2) announcing Wegman's decision to our supporters, via our 14,000 person mailing list and a dedicated page on our website. Our frog legs campaign has been featured in the Chicago Tribune and France's Le Monde, on ABC News and on John Tesh's website. By removing frog legs from your company's supermarkets, Wegman's will certainly receive free publicity in future articles on the subject, of which there will be many.

As Americans, we are fortunate to have many choices of food, and thus there is no reason to contribute unduly to the extinction of one of the Earth's most threatened, ancient, important, and well-loved groups of animals. I would appreciate it if you could inform me of your decision by September 4th. Thanks for your consideration, and feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

3-August-2010



Dr. Kerry Kriger
Executive Director

savethefrogs.com

The Overharvesting of Wild Frogs for Food

Over 100 million frogs are taken out of the wild each year for use as food (Gratwicke et al. 2009). This can clearly cripple frog populations, and the harvesting of amphibians for the food trade is unregulated in many countries. India actually banned the export of frog legs in the 1980's because mosquito populations were increasing as the frog populations declined. **The French ate so many of their native frogs that the government had to ban the eating of native frogs, and now France relies on imports from Indonesia and other distant countries.** While many frog species are not currently listed as threatened, their continued harvest will undoubtedly drive them towards endangerment, as has been the case with numerous other amphibian species that were once abundant. This is simply not acceptable given the current status of amphibians worldwide.

The Spread of Infectious Diseases

The international market in farm-raised frogs is a major contributor to the spread of the lethal fungal pathogen *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Mazzoni et al. 2003). This fungus is the causal agent of the disease chytridiomycosis, which has driven approximately 100 amphibian species to complete extinction in recent decades, and is thus the single greatest cause of ongoing amphibian declines and extinctions. It is of vast importance to prevent the further spread of this disease. Frog farms are hotbeds of this disease, as frogs are reared in very close quarters, enabling the spread of the disease in the region surrounding the frog farm, as well as potentially the final destination of the farm-raised frogs. Several million farm-raised American Bullfrogs are imported into Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco each year, and a recent study showed that 62% of these frogs are infected with the deadly chytrid fungus (Schloegel et al. 2009). More info on chytridiomycosis: www.savethefrogs.com/chytrid

The Spread of Invasive Species

The vast majority of farm-raised frogs are American Bullfrogs, which are native to the eastern USA and Canada, but farmed worldwide. These frogs regularly escape their rearing facility, and establish populations outside their native range: being farmed around the world has allowed these frogs to invade 15 countries, where they eat native wildlife, including frogs, birds, bats and snakes, thus irreparably damaging ecosystems.

REFERENCES

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- Schloegel, L. M., A. M. Picco, A. M. Kilpatrick, A. J. Davies, A. D. Hyatt, and P. Daszak. 2009. Magnitude of the US trade in amphibians and presence of *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* and ranavirus infection in imported North American bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*). *Biological Conservation* 142:1420-1426.