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Farmed sturgeon gains Friend of the Sea certification

16 June, 2008 - FRIEND of the Sea has announced the certification of Calvisius Caviar of Agroittica Lombarda and its farmed white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) production. Following independent audit run by an international certification body, the caviar production has proved to be sustainable.



Since 1998, the sturgeon has been included in the Washington Convention's list of endangered species. The sturgeon risks extinction due to excessive poaching and pollution and their survival is endangered in countries such as Russia, Iran and China. Agroittica's innovative aquaculture technique, which makes it possible for sturgeon to be born in captivity, contributes to the protection of sturgeon by taking pressure off endangered populations.

Furthermore, Agroittica itself is a symbol of ecological production. In the 70s, the partners of a steelworks in Viadana di Calvisano, a small town near Milan in Italy, realised that they could use the waters cooling the steel in an ecological way. Using a simple heat exchanger, the surplus heat of the steel process was transferred to the cool resurgent waters, thus obtaining the perfect habitat for some species of valuable fish among which were the White Sturgeon of the Pacific, and at the same time saving energy. This innovative application was to lead to the creation, in the following decades, of an exemplary system of modern aquaculture covering 600.000 square metres, a model of avant-garde ecology, which achieved worldwide recognition.

Agroittica in collaboration with Davis University in California, began importing White Sturgeon larvae from the USA focussing on the breeding of this species. In 1996, after having reached a high level of specialisation in the reproduction of the species, it stopped sturgeon larvae importation from the USA. Since then, the company has annually reproduced a great number of fries according to its development programmes. Agroittica is currently producing dozens of tons of top quality caviar yearly. This is how Italy became the third largest producer of caviar in the world, after Russia and Iran and the leading producer in Europe.

"Much of the merit for the quality of our caviar is due to the unique characteristics of the pure waters of Calvisano and to our model of sustainable aquaculture," comments Mr Sandro Cancellieri, managing director of Agroittica. "We are proud to be certified Friend of the Sea. This recognition will provide us with added value for our most environmentally aware customers."

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