



# Care for the Wild International

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Sir Terrence Leahy  
Chief Executive  
Tesco  
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Dear Sir

Freshwater turtles are facing an acute extinction crisis. Due to unfettered demand for the animals' meat, particularly in China, this crisis is particularly severe across Asia, causing significant and continuing decline in many species. By insisting on selling freshwater turtles for food in its Chinese outlets, supermarket chain Tesco acts as an accessory to the escalating conservation demise of these species. Furthermore, Tesco knowingly employs and admits to employ slaughter methods on frogs and turtles that are considered inhumane under UK law and would be subject to prosecution.

## **Farming**

There are currently over 1,000 large, commercial turtle farming operations in China alone. Tesco argues that turtles sold in its stores are farmed and therefore do not affect wild populations. However, this is not the case. Successive generations of farm-raised turtles show a marked decrease in reproductive capability. Farms therefore rely on supplementing existing stocks with wild-caught specimens. Moreover, because consumers believe that wild-caught individuals possess more potent tonic qualities, wild turtles continue to be exploited in an unsustainable manner to satisfy this two-tier market. Turtle farming therefore does not eliminate hunting pressures on wild populations. Turtles on farms are over-crowded, species are hybridised and escape into the wild; and high levels of parasites and water-born pollutants are discharged into the environment. Turtle farms therefore also endanger the health and viability of local wildlife. In fact, recently published research has shown that turtle farming represents a major threat to the survival of wild turtle populations.

## **Slaughter**

Tesco currently mainly relies on decapitating turtles as a slaughter method. However, veterinary and scientific guidelines explicitly state that decapitation is inhumane and is not recommended. Because of their slow metabolism, which uses up oxygen very slowly, turtles and other reptiles can remain conscious for more than 15 minutes following decapitation and will experience extreme pain during this period. Killing commercial quantities of turtles humanely in a supermarket environment is not a viable option.


We would also like to point out that Tesco has no control over the behaviour of customers who wish to buy live turtles for home slaughter. Common methods include dismembering, eviscerating or boiling the animals alive. Again, these methods are considered extremely inhumane.

Frogs sold at Tesco's Chinese stores are skinned alive prior to consumption. There is no question that this is an utterly unacceptable slaughter method, which can not be considered humane under any circumstances.

Tesco's Corporate Responsibility Policy states that the company is "committed to conducting business in an ethical and socially responsible manner", and that Tesco uses "up-to-date knowledge of research, ethics, scientific facts and legislation to ensure this happens".

**As representatives of the veterinary, scientific and chelonian community the undersigned strongly appeal to Tesco to cease trading in live turtles and frogs for food.**

Yours faithfully,



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CEO, Care for the Wild International

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