



Sustainable Pearls .org

Leading Pearl Producers and Conservation Practitioners Join Forces at First Sustainable Pearls Forum Talks in Hong Kong

September 12, 2014: The Sustainable Pearls Forum took place June 20th in Hong Kong, bringing pearl industry leaders around a table to discuss the importance of sustainability to cultured pearls. This event included companies such as Paspaley, Robert Wan, Jewelmer, Tiffany & Co. and Mikimoto. The Forum highlighted the potential of pearls as pioneers of sustainability in the jewellery industry and demonstrated that there is a clear business case for sustainable cultured pearls. All the videos and presentations of this event are now available [online](#).

Dr. Gaetano Cavalieri (president of CIBJO) gave an opening talk introduced why sustainability is important in the jewellery industry, and why cultured pearls are in a unique position to be sustainability pioneers. The Forum was made up of [three thematic sessions](#): Protection of the Biosphere, Management Commitment to Sustainability, and Promoting Sustainability throughout the Supply Chain.

[James Paspaley](#) showcased how the Paspaley pearling company operates with little impact in remote marine areas by having only sea-based operations in Australia. Mr. Paspaley argued that "from my perspective the simplest and first step in sustainability is the preservation of the wild stock and the environment itself" and that "the overall conclusion is that the pearling industry is environmentally benign. In fact, it could be argued that the industry has an environmentally beneficial effect as, if not for the existence of the pearling industry, there would be fewer influential advocates for environmental preservation of this remote region."

[Jacques-Christophe Branellec](#) (Jewelmer, Philippines) emphasized the need to engage with surrounding communities in order to conserve the pristine marine waters in which the company's golden pearls are produced. Mr. Branellec highlighted that "by protecting the natural habitat of oysters, pearl farms also become the breeding grounds of a diverse group of marine life."

[Robert Wan](#) from French Polynesia, a Tahitian pearl industry legend, looked back on 40 years of producing cultured pearls in remote Pacific coral atolls and the need to protect these. [Douglas McLaurin](#) and [Josh Humbert](#), both smaller producers, have been pioneers of sustainable pearl farming since their beginnings by focusing on restoration of native oyster reefs and developing ecological oyster cleaning techniques.

Responsible pearl farming is unique because it is about not just preserving vital ecosystems, but also producing high-quality pearls. This economic and environmental synergy enables producers to market their pearls in unique and valuable ways.

Results of a US jewellery [consumer market survey](#) carried out by Sustainable Pearls and MVI Research were [presented](#) by Julie Nash and clearly showed that there was a business case for sustainable pearls. The Forum also included a side event in which pearl producers discussed [Sustainability Principles](#) for pearls, and these will be launched soon. The Hong Kong Sustainable Pearls Forum was unique in bringing together so many industry leaders to discuss sustainability.

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For more information, see our website: <http://www.sustainablepearls.org>

About Sustainable Pearls

The Sustainable Pearls project was founded in 2011 and received initial 3 year funding from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, through a grant to the University of Vermont. The aim of the project is to assess the synergy between pearl farming and coral health, as well as find ways for the marine cultured pearl supply chain and consumers to further support these positive environmental and socio-economic benefits and promote responsible pearl farming.