

A Common Vision for Environmentally Sustainable Seafood

Ratified by: Blue Ocean Institute, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre, Environmental Defense Fund, FishChoice, FishWise, Living Oceans Society, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Natural Resources Defense Council, New England Aquarium, Ocean Conservancy, Sierra Club British Columbia, World Wildlife Fund – US

We envision a future where environmentally sustainable fisheries and aquaculture (or fish farming) thrive along with the communities that depend on them. We envision diverse and productive fisheries and aquaculture systems that deliver seafood on a continuing basis as well as vital environmental benefits necessary for the well-being of all the world's inhabitants.

The seafood industry can be a powerful force for improving the environmental sustainability of seafood and ocean ecosystems. We envision a future in which businesses that buy and sell seafood and conservation organizations are active partners helping to achieve sustainable fisheries management and aquaculture production. We believe that this partnership is one of the critical elements to achieving the long-term viability of the seafood supply that is essential for business and that we all depend on as a global community.

We invite businesses to join us in realizing this vision.

The Need for Sustainability Improvements

With growing seafood demand, improving the sustainability of wild-caught and farmed seafood is necessary to protect our oceans and seafood supplies into the future.

As population increases, global demand for seafood rises. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, by 2030 there will be a need for an additional 40 million tons of seafood. Currently, wild-caught fish make up 57 percent of the seafood consumed, but the amount of wild fish caught is unlikely to increase since most fisheries are fished at or beyond capacity. Current fishing practices can also harm ocean ecosystems by destroying seafloor habitats and killing seabirds, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

To meet the demand for seafood, aquaculture has expanded greatly, increasing 86 percent in the last decade. While some forms of aquaculture hold promise as sustainable options to meet seafood demand, the practices used to farm many species can result in the loss of natural habitat, release of waste, spread of disease, and the introduction of foreign species that harm native fish. Also troubling is the dependence on wild-caught fish to feed many farmed species, a practice that puts added strain on the world's oceans.

Call for Action

We invite businesses that buy and sell seafood to work with the conservation community to build a sustainable future for seafood. We urge such businesses to advance the sustainability of fishing and aquaculture by choosing to buy environmentally responsible products and through direct support for policies and practices that protect the oceans and the long-term viability of our seafood supply.

We recognize that fulfilling the vision for environmental sustainability is a journey involving many steps. We seek to combine industry's business knowledge and ability to innovate with our conservation expertise. We call upon seafood businesses to move forward with us on the path toward sustainability through the following actions:

Make a Commitment

Commit to developing and implementing a comprehensive, corporate policy on sustainable seafood.

Collect Data

Assess and monitor the environmental sustainability of your seafood products.

Buy Environmentally Responsible Seafood

Support environmentally responsible seafood choices through purchasing decisions.

Be Transparent

Make information regarding your seafood products publicly available.

Educate

Educate your customers, suppliers, employees and other key stakeholders about environmentally responsible seafood.

Support Reform

Engage in and support policy and management reform that leads to positive environmental outcomes in fisheries and aquaculture management.

Steps to Achieve a Common Vision for Environmentally Sustainable Seafood

The Common Vision for Environmentally Sustainable Seafood identifies six critical areas where seafood companies can demonstrate environmental leadership and take action to ensure a sustainable seafood supply. Specific actions to meet and address these areas are outlined below.

Commitment

Creating a public corporate policy on sustainable seafood shows an important commitment to action and provides essential guidance for company practices. A comprehensive sustainable seafood policy would:

- Establish a corporate philosophy and approach to achieving the Common Vision for Sustainable Seafood.
- Outline specific activities to address the critical areas of data collection, transparency, procurement, education and reform.
- Identify specific goals and targets to be achieved over set timelines in each area.

Data Collection

Detailed data collection on seafood products is critical to protecting the long-term supply of seafood. A greater understanding of products and where they come from enables environmentally responsible companies to measure changes in the seafood supply, identify problems, and take action to improve supply over time.

Specific information that is essential to collect and monitor over time includes:

- Common and scientific names.
- Country of origin.
- The stock from which the seafood was caught or the farm from which it was cultivated.
- Fishing gears or aquaculture production methods used.
- Producers and/or processors.
- Volume of product purchased.
- Environmental responsibility ranking (i.e., how each product is ranked by leading conservation NGOs on environmental performance.)

Procurement

Seafood companies can make a significant difference and demonstrate environmental leadership by making changes in their buying practices. Environmentally responsible companies:

- Preferentially sell environmentally responsible seafood which address local, regional, and global concerns regarding environmental performance.
- Stop selling seafood products with serious ongoing environmental impacts.
- If purchasing less sustainable seafood, source from operators that are willing to work proactively to improve the environmental performance of fisheries or farms and can demonstrate significant progress in fixing problems by meeting clear milestones and deadlines for improvement.
- Phase out fisheries, producers, and suppliers that refuse to improve their environmental performance.

Transparency

Being transparent about actions taken to achieve the Common Vision for Sustainable Seafood is essential for ensuring industry-wide improvements over time. A transparent, environmentally responsible seafood company would:

- Make their sustainable seafood policy publicly available.
- Release an annual status report that summarizes goals achieved and identifies planned actions.
- Make sustainability information (i.e., common and scientific name,¹ catch area or farm, country of origin, catch gear or farm technique used, environmental responsibility ranking) regarding their seafood products easily accessible to customers and other interested parties. This includes:
 - In-store labels on their products.²
 - Information shared via their Web site.
 - In-store signage or collateral materials.
 - Other marketing or outreach materials.

Education

Educating customers and key stakeholders along the seafood supply chain will increase understanding of sustainability. Environmentally responsible seafood companies:

- Train management and employees about issues of environmentally responsible seafood.
- Prepare sales staff to help customers choose environmentally responsible seafood selections.
- Share educational materials (e.g., signs, brochures, Web content) with customers about the status of the world's ocean life and key environmental criteria.
- Ensure suppliers are aware of environmental issues with seafood and equipped to address key concerns.

Reform

To achieve the Common Vision for Sustainable Seafood significant improvements in environmental performance of fisheries and farming operations are required. There are multiple ongoing activities to encourage these changes as well as the need to identify and address many other potential improvements.

Active engagement in policy and management reform includes, but is not limited to:

- Advocating for national and international fisheries and aquaculture policies and management to be more environmentally responsible.
- Supporting efforts to collaborate across industry and conservation organizations to develop strong performance based metrics and high standards to tackle existing issues in wild and farmed seafood. A promising multi-stakeholder, transparent process underway for the development of aquaculture standards is the Aquaculture Dialogues.
- Working with suppliers or producers to improve and document environmental performance.
 - For wild-caught seafood, work with suppliers and producers to move producer practices to meet environmentally responsible standards or credible certification.³ Set benchmarks to verify improvement.
 - For farmed seafood that is not certified under a credible eco-label, require that suppliers provide annual, third-party verified data which clarifies their farm's performance in addressing the key impacts of the species they are farming (see attached [Key Impacts of Commonly Farmed Fish](#)), and make nonproprietary data publicly available.

¹ Approved names are available from the US Federal Drug Administration and the Canadian Federal Inspection Agency.

² Seafood should only be labeled organic if it meets the USDA organic standard in the US, or the Canadian federal standard in Canada.

³ If committed to an eco-label for certified seafood, environmentally responsible companies ensure that the eco-label conforms to international standards for third party certification (e.g. ISEAL and FAO guidelines on governance and standard setting) and upholds strong environmental standards.