

MSC REPORT 2026: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT WILD SALMON?

DENMARK – KEY INFORMATION

WHY SALMON IS SO IMPORTANT?

Salmon is one of the key species in the shopping basket in our part of Europe, valued for its taste, its “healthy” image, and its wide availability in many formats (fresh, smoked, frozen, marinated). At the same time, it is a category where consumers are often unsure whether they are buying wild or farmed salmon – and the differences in origin and production methods can be significant.

SPECIES DIVERSITY

Wild salmon occur in the waters of the North Pacific and the North Atlantic, including the Baltic Sea.

The North Atlantic is inhabited by the species *Salmo salar*. Unfortunately, due to dams and other river barriers, the degradation of natural habitats, and pollution, the spawning migrations of Atlantic salmon have been severely restricted. As a result, wild Atlantic salmon populations have drastically declined. Atlantic salmon available in stores is mainly farmed, originating primarily from aquacultures in Chile, Norway, Canada, and Scotland.

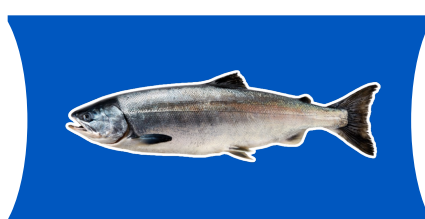
In contrast, Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus spp.*) includes a dozen or so species from the *Oncorhynchus* family. These fish live along the northern coasts of North America, around Alaska (often referred to as Alaskan salmon), and in the northwestern Pacific.

THE MOST COMMON SALMON SPECIES



PUKKELLAKS

Oncorhynchus gorbuscha



KETALAKS

Oncorhynchus keta



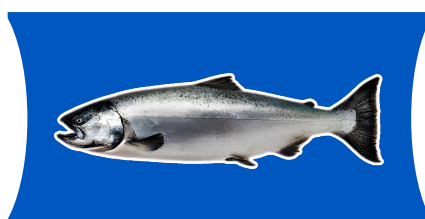
SØLVLAKS

Oncorhynchus kisutch



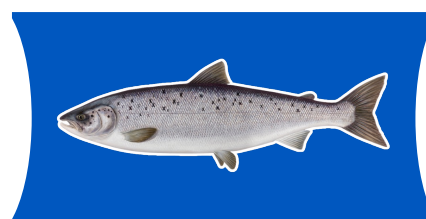
RØDLAKS

Oncorhynchus nerka



KONGELAKS

Oncorhynchus tshawytscha



ATLANTISK LAKS

Salmo salar

SALMON CONSUMPTION IN DENMARK

Salmon consumption in Denmark was 6.26 kg per person in 2024, compared with an estimated total seafood consumption of 20-25 kg per person. Salmon accounts for a third of fresh fish consumption in Denmark. In 2024, Denmark recorded the highest per-person salmon consumption across the entire EU.

WHAT DO DANISH CONSUMERS EXPECT?

According to a survey commissioned by MSC and conducted by the research agency SW Research in December 2025 (CAWI method, Danish sample N=610), 92.5% of Danes declare that they eat salmon. Almost two thirds eat it at least monthly: 13.1% do so regularly (at least once a week) and 49.3% often (1–3 times a month).

The most popular forms of store-bought salmon in Denmark are smoked/cured (56.9%) and fresh (46.1%), sushi (29.7%), frozen fillet (22.0%), and frozen dishes with salmon (16.4%).

When buying salmon, 13.0% consumers always check whether the product carries certifications from independent organisations indicating sustainable fishing (e.g., MSC) or responsible farming (e.g., ASC), and another 47.5% do so often or sometimes.

Asked what type of salmon they eat most often, Danes indicate farmed (16.8%) and wild (15.8%) at very similar levels. A further 30.0% say they eat both equally often, while 37.4% don't know what type they usually consume.

Actual behaviour does not fully match stated preferences. When respondents who buy salmon were asked what they would choose if price and availability did not matter, they would more often prefer wild salmon (59.6%) than farmed salmon (11.9%); and 28.5% have no preference.

Wild salmon is preferred mainly because it is perceived to taste better (38.2%) and to live in more natural conditions (34.0%). Other frequently cited reasons include environmental/ecological reasons (9.0%) and being perceived as healthier (8.4%).

HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WILD AND FARMED SALMON?

CHECK THE NAME ON THE LABEL

- The label may state “farmed” or “wild”.
- Terms such as “Pacific” or “Alaskan” usually indicate wild-caught salmon, although some of these species are also farmed.
- Terms such as “Atlantic”, “Norwegian”, “Scottish”, “Islandic” usually refer to farmed salmon.
- The Latin name listed on the packaging reveals exactly which species of salmon was used (see species overview above). However, remember that even some Pacific salmon species are now farmed.

LOOK FOR ECOLABELS

Credible ecolabels help consumers distinguish between wild-caught and farmed fish and also provide assurance of responsible sourcing.



The MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) ecolabel always indicates wild salmon caught from sustainable fisheries.



The ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council) ecolabel always indicates farmed salmon raised in responsible, environmentally certified aquaculture.

MSC SALMON PRODUCTS

In Denmark, only 10 salmon products carrying the MSC certification are currently available. The label guarantees that the fish come from sustainable fisheries operated in line with the most rigorous environmental requirements set out in the global MSC Fisheries Standard.

Over the past five years, the sales volume of MSC-certified wild salmon on the Danish market has halved.

Danish processors play an important role in supplying MSC-certified wild salmon products to European markets. The leading processors of MSC-certified wild salmon in Denmark are: Polar Salmon Hjerting Laks (smoked), Espersen Frozen (ready meals), C&D Foods (pet food).



SALMON FISHERIES

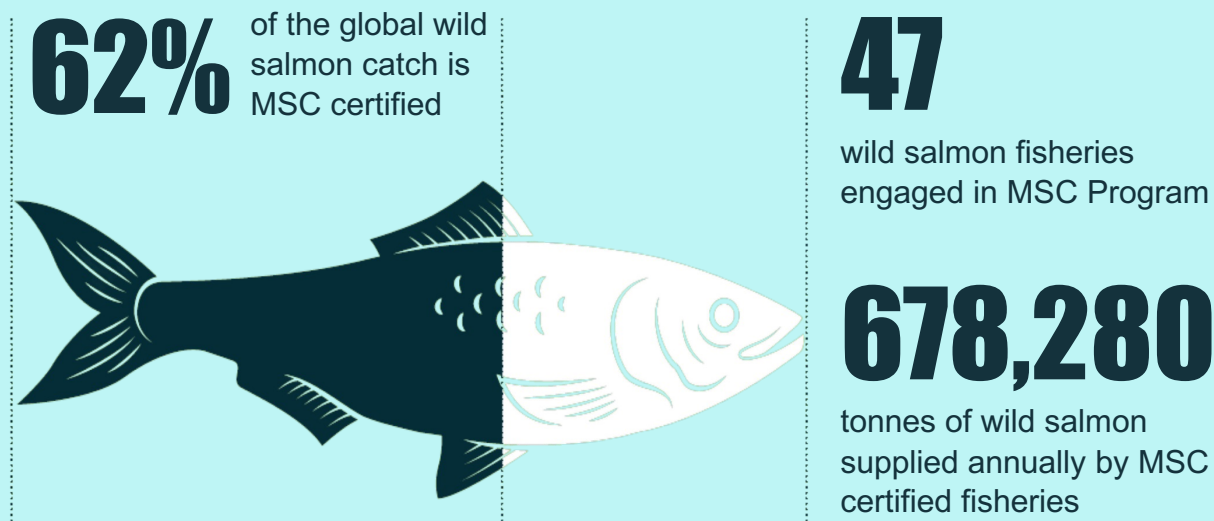
Over the past 45 years, global wild salmon catches have increased significantly. Average annual catches in the 21st century have been almost 20% higher than those recorded between 1980 and 1999. In 2023, the global wild salmon catch reached almost 1.1 million tonnes.

Commercial wild salmon fisheries include both Pacific species (FAO areas 61 and 67) and Atlantic salmon (FAO 27). Pacific salmon account for almost all wild-caught salmon globally (over 99%) with pink salmon comprising the largest portion of landings, followed by chum and sockeye salmon.

As global demand for salmon continues to rise, ensuring that salmon fisheries operate sustainably has become increasingly important. In the regions where Pacific salmon fisheries are active, fishing has supported local economies and communities for centuries. This long-standing relationship with the ocean has fostered a strong understanding among fishers of the need for responsible, science-based management that maintains healthy salmon stocks and ensures their availability for future generations.

Pacific salmon fisheries have been part of the MSC programme for over 25 years, supplying certified sustainable salmon to markets worldwide. Over this time, the annual volume of wild salmon from MSC-certified fisheries increased by approximately 85%, from 367,417 tonnes in 2020 to 678,280 tonnes today.

Currently, 47 salmon fisheries are engaged in the MSC programme, including 45 certified fisheries and 2 in assessment. Together, these fisheries account for 62% of the global wild salmon catch. Pink salmon represents the largest share of MSC-certified and MSC-engaged catches (59%), followed by sockeye salmon (29%) and chum salmon (11%).



LEARN MORE ABOUT WILD SALMON

On our website, you can find the full report “What do we know about wild salmon? 2026” as well as many additional materials about wild salmon.

www.msc.org/dk/laks