

The MSC Blue Label: Making Claims with Confidence

Guidance for brand and retail partners on communicating credibly about MSC certified sustainable seafood, including recent developments in green claims legislation.

Introduction

The MSC blue label is one of the most trusted sustainability certifications in the world. When your product carries it, you have a powerful, credible story to tell — and this guide is here to help you tell it with confidence.

Across the globe, rules about how companies communicate on sustainability are evolving rapidly. New legislation in the EU, Australia, Canada, and elsewhere is designed to crack down on greenwashing and give consumers the reliable information they deserve. This may sound daunting, but the good news is straightforward: if your seafood product carries the MSC blue label, the hard work of substantiation has already been done.

MSC certification is grounded in science, independently audited, and publicly transparent. It was built precisely to withstand the scrutiny that new regulations demand. Communicating around it - on pack, off pack, in-store, and online - is something your brand and category teams can approach with clarity and confidence.

How to use this guide

Designed for brand managers, product category managers, and marketing teams at retailers and seafood brands, this guide covers:

1. Developments in green claims legislation
2. How MSC Certification addresses legislation
3. How to draft good claims
4. Guidance for using the MSC Label and Claims
5. Example messaging
6. Do's and don'ts at a glance
7. A word on speaking up
8. Further references and contacts

⚠ Legal Responsibility

While MSC provides this guidance to support you, the legal responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and compliance of all claims rests with your organisation. This guide does not constitute legal advice. MSC strongly recommends seeking independent legal or regulatory advice where you are uncertain about specific claims or markets.

1. Developments in Green Claims Legislation

A wave of new legislation is reshaping how brands communicate about sustainability. Understanding what is changing — and why — helps your team make confident decisions about messaging.

The EU Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (EmpCo)

EmpCo amends existing EU laws — including the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive — to ensure that environmental claims are fair, clear, and reliable for consumers. It was created in 2024 and applies in member states from September 2026.

Some of the main areas that EmpCo targets are:

- Vague or generic environmental language such as "eco-friendly" or "sustainable" used without substantiation
- Sustainability labels not backed by independent, third-party certification schemes

From September 2026, companies in breach could face fines, dependent on how the legislation has been adopted into national law.

A Global Trend

Similar requirements are taking shape worldwide, for example:

Region / Market	Development
Australia	Consumer Commission Guidance on environmental claims under Australian Consumer Law (July 23)
Canada	Bill C-59 development in anti-greenwashing regulation (June 2025)
United States	FTC Green Guides under revision; growing litigation risk for unsubstantiated claims
United Kingdom	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Green Claims Code, with active enforcement activity

The global direction is clear: environmental claims must be specific, substantiated, and verifiable. For brands with credible certification behind their products, this is an opportunity — not a burden.

2. How MSC Certification Addresses Legislation

The MSC certification system was designed with credibility at its core — and that means it is already well aligned with the requirements of new green claims legislation.

Why MSC certification provides a strong foundation for claims:

1. Science-based assessments drawing on peer-reviewed data, with publicly available assessment reports.
2. Independent third-party auditing: all fishery assessments and annual audits are carried out by accredited, independent certification bodies — not by MSC itself.
3. Publicly available standards: the MSC Fisheries Standard and Chain of Custody Standard are freely accessible online.
4. Compliant with ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for sustainability standards: MSC is the only ISEAL compliant wild capture seafood certification, which means we have been independently evaluated against their globally-recognised benchmark for effective, credible sustainability systems.
5. Supply chain assurance: MSC Chain of Custody certification ensures that certified seafood can be traced back to a certified source.
6. Consumer trust: globally, 80% of consumers who recognise the MSC label say they trust its claims. (Source: GlobeScan Seafood Consumer Survey 2026)

The MSC on-pack claim and ecolabel

The MSC blue label and associated on-pack text claims have been reviewed and updated specifically to align with EU EmpCo guidance:

- The words "Certified Sustainable Seafood" within the MSC ecolabel are permitted under EmpCo, as terms such as "sustainable" can be used within ecolabels that are based on a robust certification scheme.
- MSC has updated its [-on pack text claim options](#) in multiple languages to avoid uses of the term "sustainable" outside of the ecolabel.
- Updated MSC claim text provides consumers with a link to further information at [msc.org](https://www.msc.org), ensuring easy access to an explanation of what the label covers.

⚠ Legal Responsibility

MSC licensees are responsible for updating the claims text on their packaging to use the latest approved MSC claim versions. Please ensure you are using the current approved text for your market. Contact your local MSC licensing contact or ecolabel@msc.org to confirm you have the latest approved claim text and translations. The legal responsibility for accuracy and compliance rests with your organisation.

3. How to draft good claims

MSC provides standard text for the back of pack claims on MSC certified products, but where our partners may want to use their own copy in other media, we've provided some general guidance for good drafting of claims (that we find useful) here. Use the five principles below as your checklist whenever you write sustainability copy — whether for packaging, a website, an in-store display, or social media.

Principle	What it means in practice
1. Specific & Clear	Avoid using terms like "sustainable" in a generic way. Under the new guidance its use must be specific and clear as to which dimensions of sustainability are covered. In the context of MSC, the environmental aspects of fishing practices are covered by the certification scheme. Only use these kinds of terms with the highest level of qualification and substantiation, and subject to your own legal checks. Use language that consumers can immediately understand.
2. Accurate & substantiated	Claims must be truthful and backed by credible, verifiable evidence. Independent third-party certification — such as the MSC standard — is a good route to substantiation. For example, claims about MSC products should accurately reflect the scope of MSC certification: the MSC certification covers environmentally sustainable wild capture fishing practices.
3. Accessible & transparent	Consumers should be able to easily verify claims. Always reference msc.org (which has clear information about the MSC label) so consumers can learn more about the MSC's criteria and assessment.
4. Proportionate & honest about scope	Do not imply a level of sustainability that goes beyond what is certified or imply that MSC certification leads to effects on e.g. the broader environment or climate (overclaim). For example, if only part of your range is MSC certified, messaging should reflect that. MSC certification addresses the environmental sustainability of wild capture fishing, it does not cover all aspects of a product's sustainability profile e.g. plastic packaging.
5. Robust	Only make claims on products and in contexts where MSC certification applies. Do not imply certification extends to products, supply chains, or aspects of your business not covered by your MSC label license.

A note on 'sustainable' vs 'certified'

The terms are not interchangeable. 'Certified' is the more precise and defensible term: it refers to a specific, verifiable achievement. 'Sustainable' is broader and more open to challenge if used without qualification. When you can, lead with 'certified'.

For example: *"Sourcing certified seafood is a key part of our approach to sustainability."* is clearer and more defensible than: *"We only sell sustainable seafood."*

4. Guidance for Using the MSC Label and Claims

The following guidance covers both on-pack and off-pack usage. "Off pack" includes websites, in-store signage, point-of-sale materials, menus, corporate reports, social media and advertising.

On-pack usage

- Use the current MSC-approved ecolabel. The label, including the words "Certified Sustainable Seafood", is in line with EU laws. The ecolabel options in different languages as well as an international version are available on the [MSC label guidelines](#) page.
- Use the latest version of the [MSC back-of-pack text claim](#) for your market. Do not use older versions that may use the term "sustainable" generically.
- Include a reference to [msc.org](https://www.msc.org) so consumers can verify the claim.
- Where only some products in a range are MSC certified, the label and claims must appear only on those certified products.
- We advise partners not to use additional wording about MSC certification on product packaging (beyond the ecolabel and back of pack claims described in our Ecolabel User Guide)

Off-pack and marketing usage

1. You may use the MSC ecolabel in marketing materials, advertising, and digital content to promote your MSC labelled products, subject to MSC ecolabel user guidelines.
2. When promoting your MSC labelled products in off-pack communications, make it clear that this relates to environmentally sustainable fishing practices and do not make claims beyond this scope.
3. Do not make claims that imply or describe that your brand or entire range is MSC certified unless all relevant products are certified.
4. It is appropriate — and in the spirit of the legislation — to describe MSC certification as an important part of your approach to sustainability, rather than a claim to have 'solved' sustainability entirely.
5. Avoid using the word "guarantee". No certification system can guarantee outcomes across every element of a supply chain. Please note: Within the EU, EmpCo sets specific requirements for future-oriented language. We recommend avoiding such language for any communication within the EU.
6. Be transparent about the boundaries of what MSC certification covers: environmental sustainability of wild capture fishing practices — not any aspects of a product's social or economic sustainability profile.
7. If you wish to communicate about additional sustainability commitments, these should be clearly separated from the MSC claim to avoid any suggestion that they are substantiated by MSC certification.

Legal Responsibility

The legal responsibility for ensuring that off-pack and marketing claims are accurate, compliant, and substantiated rests with your organisation. This applies to digital content, social media, in-store materials, and advertising as much as to printed packaging. If in doubt, talk to your local MSC contact for initial advice, but always seek your own legal advice before publishing.

5. Example Messaging

The following examples may be used as-is or adapted to suit your brand voice. All are consistent with best practice for sustainability claims.

Short copy (for labels, shelf-edge, or social)

Our seafood products that carry the MSC blue label come from well-managed fishing practices that minimise impact on the ocean and help protect fish stocks - they have been certified to the MSC's standard for environmentally sustainable fishing practices.

Medium copy (for websites, in-store, or marketing materials)

We've partnered with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) to offer seafood that's certified to their strict standard for environmentally sustainable fishing practices. The MSC standard means that fisheries have been independently assessed against science-based criteria for fish stock health, the impact of fishing on the marine ecosystem, and which are managed well. Look for the MSC blue label on our seafood to shop with confidence. Learn more at [msc.org](https://www.msc.org).

Long copy (for corporate reports or sustainability pages)

We've partnered with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), a global non-profit organisation working to end overfishing, to offer seafood that is certified to their rigorous standard for environmentally sustainable fishing practices. The MSC has spent nearly 30 years working with scientists, fishers, and seafood companies to develop standards that protect ocean ecosystems and fish stocks. Fishing operations that have achieved MSC-certification have been independently assessed and are regularly audited by third-party certification bodies. When you see the MSC blue label on our seafood, you can be confident it comes from a well-managed fishery working to reduce impact on the ocean. MSC certified seafood is an important part of our commitment to more responsible sourcing. Learn more at [msc.org](https://www.msc.org).

Suggested phrases for social media, advertising, and in-store

1. Look for the blue label — seafood that's certified to the MSC standard for wild-caught fishing.
2. Look for the blue label — fishing practices independently checked that help protect fish stocks.
3. Wild-caught, independently certified fishing practices.
4. Independently certified — this seafood comes from fishing that helps keep stocks healthy.
5. Choose the blue label: fishing certified to help protect stocks and marine habitats.
6. The blue MSC label means your seafood comes from fishing that has met the MSC environmental criteria for well managed fishing practices. The MSC Blue label is one of the leading independent certifications for wild-caught fishing.

7. Certified wild-caught seafood — assessed independently against the MSC standards for fishing practices.
8. MSC certified seafood is an important part of our approach to sourcing [if partner has a documented policy].
9. Choosing MSC labelled seafood supports fishing practices that help reduce overfishing and help protect the ocean.
10. Find out more about MSC certified seafood and helping our ocean at www.msc.org
11. When you choose the MSC blue label, you're supporting better fishing practices that help protect the ocean
12. Certified to meet the Marine Stewardship Council standard — one of the world's most trusted seafood sustainability labels

6. Do's and don'ts at a glance

✓ Do	✗ Don't
Use the current MSC-approved ecolabel on certified products	Use outdated versions of the MSC label or claims text
Use the latest MSC back-of-pack claim text for your market	Use the term 'sustainable' outside of the ecolabel without the highest level of qualification
Describe MSC certification as part of your sustainability program	Imply that MSC certification covers all aspects of a product's sustainability
Be specific: "environmentally certified fishing practices"	Use the word 'guarantee' in relation to certification
Reference msc.org so consumers can verify the claim	Apply the MSC label or claims to products not covered by your licence
Use the ecolabel for products that are certified	Imply your whole range is certified if only some products are

7. A word on speaking up

In a complex legislative environment, it can be tempting to say less rather than more. But silence carries its own risks. Consumers who see no sustainability messaging are more likely to assume a brand is doing nothing — or hiding something. Research by Edelman shows that 53% of consumers draw this conclusion when a brand stays silent about its environmental practices.

New legislation is designed to stop misleading claims — not honest ones. Brands that have partnered with the MSC, source from certified fisheries, and carry the MSC blue label have a genuine, substantiated story to tell. The legislation is on your side.

The choice is between communicating credibly, or leaving the story untold.

Communicating accurately and confidently about MSC certification is not just good practice — it is an act of transparency that consumers, regulators, and the ocean all

benefit from. Use the MSC label with pride, communicate with clarity, and let msc.org do the work of substantiation.

8. Contacts and Further Support

The MSC team is here to help you communicate confidently about your certified products.

For licensing and claims questions

Contact your local MSC licensing team, or email: ecolabel@msc.org

For marketing and communications support

Your local MSC team can provide market-specific guidance on claims, review draft copy, and help you develop on-brand messaging for your products.

Useful resources

1. MSC website and consumer-facing claim substantiation: [msc.org](https://www.msc.org)
2. MSC fisheries database (check any certified fishery or product): fisheries.msc.org
3. MSC Trademark Use Guidelines: available from your local MSC licensing contact
4. ISEAL Alliance (global standard for credible sustainability schemes): isealalliance.org
5. EU Empowering Consumers Directive guidance: available at your national consumer authority

Legal Responsibility

This guide provides general guidance based on MSC's understanding of current legislation and best practice. It is not legal advice. The legal responsibility for ensuring all claims you make are accurate, compliant, and substantiated rests entirely with your organisation. MSC strongly recommends that you seek independent legal or regulatory advice where you are uncertain about specific claims or markets.