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MSC Canada Tuna Report: The transformative power of canned tuna

February 2025

Sustainable tuna: A global movement

Tuna stands as one of the most important marine species for ecological, socioeconomic and food security reasons. It represents nearly 30% of the global seafood trade, by weight is one of the top consumed species in numerous countries, and it supports millions of jobs linked to both small-scale and industrial fisheries.

It is thus no surprise that in the quest to transform fisheries and the seafood market to a sustainable basis, tuna is the Big Fish.

Global conservation efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of tuna species are crucially important not only for environmental, but also human wellbeing.

In Canada, the market for MSC certified sustainable tuna has grown exponentially in the two years ending in 2024, with the volume of MSC labeled tuna sales up a staggering 582 per cent.



Just over 99 per cent of MSC labeled tuna is sold in cans, meaning that in 2023-2024, Canadian seafood companies sold over 93.5 million cans of MSC certified and labeled tuna, or enough to cover an area roughly the size of two city blocks.

This astronomical growth can be attributed to two brands: Ocean's, who now have 26 MSC labeled canned tuna products on offer, and Clover Leaf, who in 2024 reached 31 MSC labeled canned tuna products.

+582%

volume of MSC labeled tuna sold in Canada from 2021/22 to 2023/24

93.5 m

cans of MSC labeled tuna sold in Canada in 2023/24

50%

of Canadian seafood consumers report purchasing canned seafood "often" in 2024

Sustainable management hurdles

Tuna are highly migratory top predators that help prevent the overpopulation of smaller prey species and transport essential nutrients across vast oceanic distances, both of which help maintain balance and biodiversity in marine ecosystems.

Due to their migratory nature, international cooperation is essential to effective tuna management and can require agreement across up to 50 nations and jurisdictions, involving different sovereign states with varying levels of power and competing national interests [1].



Case Study: A Landmark In World-Leading Tuna Harvest Strategies

In 2023, two landmark achievements in international fisheries cooperation were reached: the implementation of harvest strategies for Western Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) skipjack and North Pacific albacore tuna.

This transformative moment for North Pacific albacore is the first time a tuna stock has achieved a stock-wide management plan across multiple Regional Fishery Management Organizations that encompass several nations and dozens of unique fisheries.

Skipjack tuna is the most abundant tuna species in the world with a majority coming from the Western Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). Skipjack fished from this area has an annual catch averaging approximately 1.7 million metric tons [2] which represents a substantial portion of the global tuna supply.

In a bid to maintain their MSC certification, managers of the skipjack and albacore stocks

achieved breakthrough, multi-jurisdictional management agreements that ensure the long-term sustainability of these vital tuna stocks. They also set new benchmarks for global fisheries management, establishing a model for other fisheries to follow.

The harvest strategies provide critical management tools such as:

- Pre-determined 'safety nets' that trigger specific actions if stocks decline
- Science-based frameworks for making fisheries management decisions
- Cross-jurisdictional cooperation between multiple nations and organizations

These case studies demonstrate how pre-agreed harvest strategies can transform industry practices while protecting crucial marine resources for future generations, and how MSC certification can act as a catalyst for positive change.



The rise of MSC certified tuna

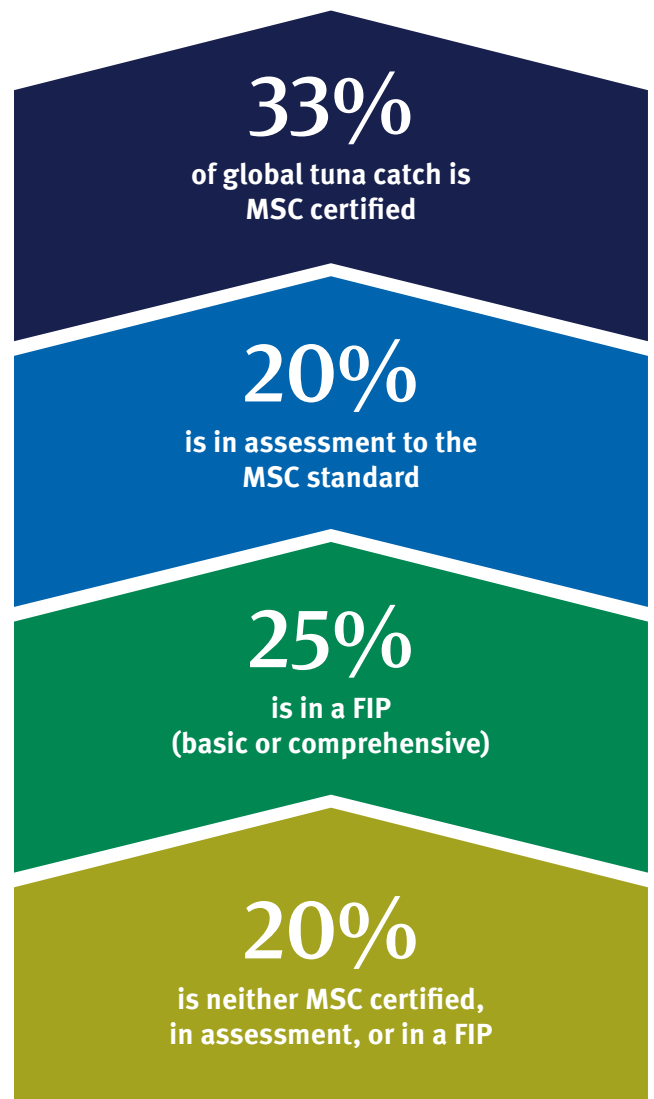
The global tuna market is worth approximately USD \$42 billion and projected to grow to USD \$54 billion by 2032 [3].

In just over 10 years, market pressures from MSC partners and consumers around the world have helped the MSC grow the percentage of tuna that meets the organization's standard for sustainable fishing from 100,000 metric tons in 2012 to 1.6 million metric tons in 2023. That's a 1,600 per cent increase in available supply. Globally, 182 tuna fisheries are engaged in the MSC program, representing 53 per cent of global tuna catch.

For consumers, this translates to a rapid increase in sustainable tuna options at retail. The latest figures reflect this impressive growth in MSC labeled tuna:

- More than 200,000 metric tons of MSC labeled canned tuna is sold worldwide,
- 50 per cent growth in the volume of MSC labeled frozen tuna, globally.

Harnessing demand from industry and consumers is integral to transforming seafood supply chains. Shifting retailer and consumer preference toward sustainable sourcing and verifiable sustainability claims has immense power to catalyze change on the water.



Certified tuna volumes by year, metric tonnes

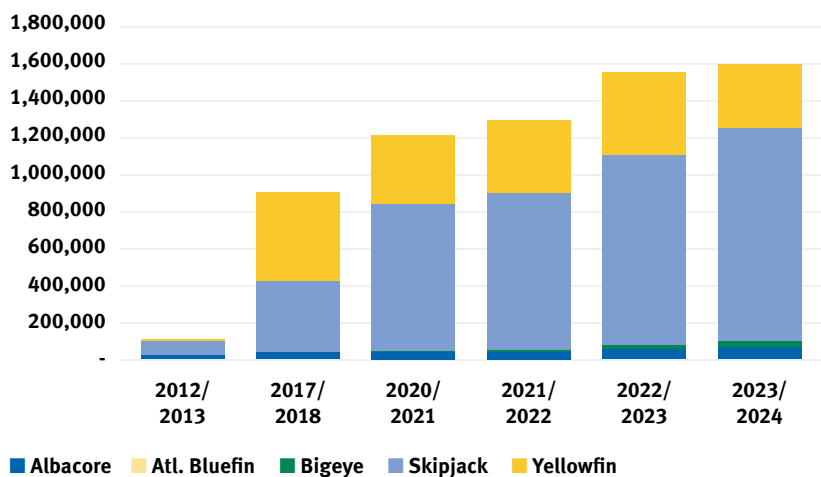


Figure 1: Global volumes of MSC certified tuna catch by species (metric tons)

MSC labeled tuna volume by species

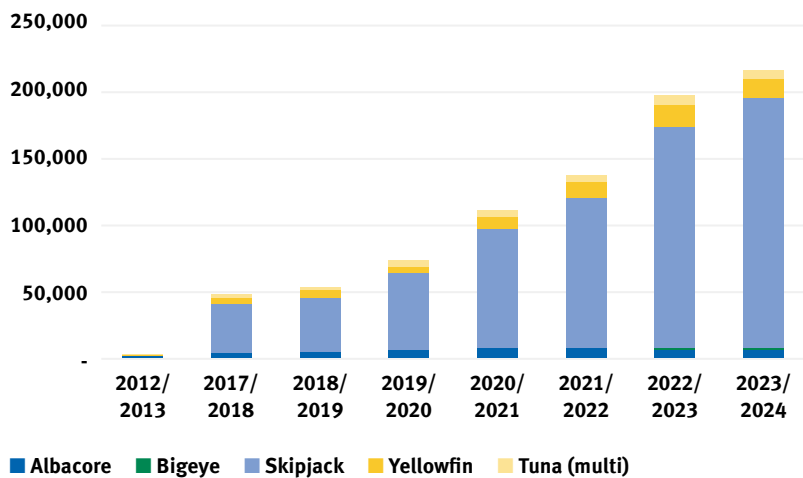


Figure 2: Global volumes of MSC labeled tuna products by species (metric tons)

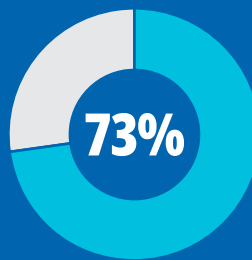
The MSC is making waves in Canada.

We aim to ensure that certified sustainable seafood is not only a viable, but a desirable choice for consumers.

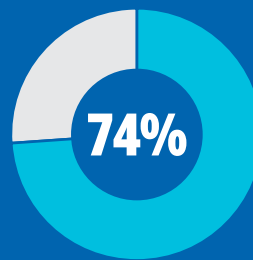
This in turn drives value back to our fishery and supply chain partners who are committed to a similar vision of healthy oceans for this and future generations.



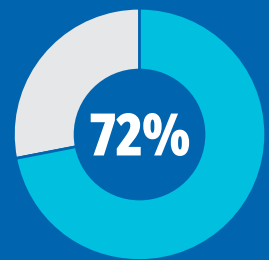
Support for sustainable seafood is indisputable among Canadian seafood consumers.



Agree that to save the ocean, we have to **consume fish and seafood only from sustainable sources**



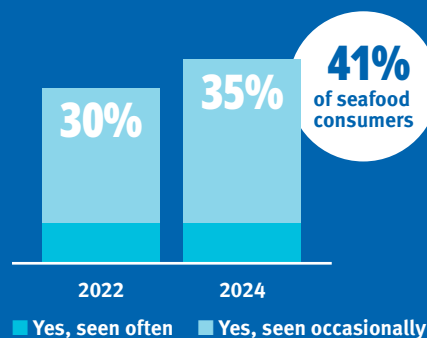
Agree that supermarket and brand claims about sustainability and the environment **need to be clearly labeled by an independent organization**



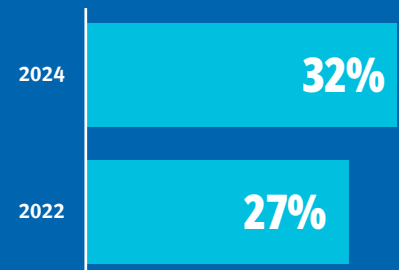
Would like to **hear more from companies about the sustainability of their seafood**

Consumer recognition of the MSC label is on the rise.

Awareness of the MSC label
General public (unaided recall)



Understanding of the MSC label
Among seafood consumers (free text answers)

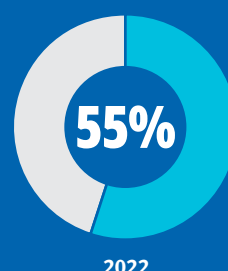


73% of MSC-aware seafood consumers trust the MSC

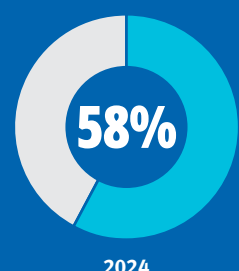
The MSC positively impacts purchase consideration.

MSC label increases likelihood of purchase

Seafood consumers who agree



2022



2024

Source: GlobeScan study of seafood consumers, 2024. Base: General public, Canada n= 2,175; Seafood consumers, Canada n= 1,516; MSC-aware seafood consumers, Canada n= 634

Canada: A global leader in sustainable sourcing practices

The International Trade Center (ITC) reports that in 2023, Canada imported tuna from more than 43 countries, worth approximately \$214 million USD [4].

As one of the 15 largest tuna import markets in the world, Canada is positioned to effect change in tuna harvesting practices.

At number five globally in volume of MSC certified sustainable tuna sold, Canada ranks higher still, putting the country in a leadership position in the adoption of sustainable tuna sourcing practices.

Over the past two years, **the volume of MSC certified sustainable and labeled tuna sold in Canada has increased by 582%**, growing from 1,907 metric tons in 2021/22 to over 13,000 metric tons in 2023/24.

Tuna now outpaces all other species of fish or seafood sold as MSC labeled in Canada by far (more than double that of wild salmon), making up 60 per cent of the country's MSC labeled seafood sold by weight.

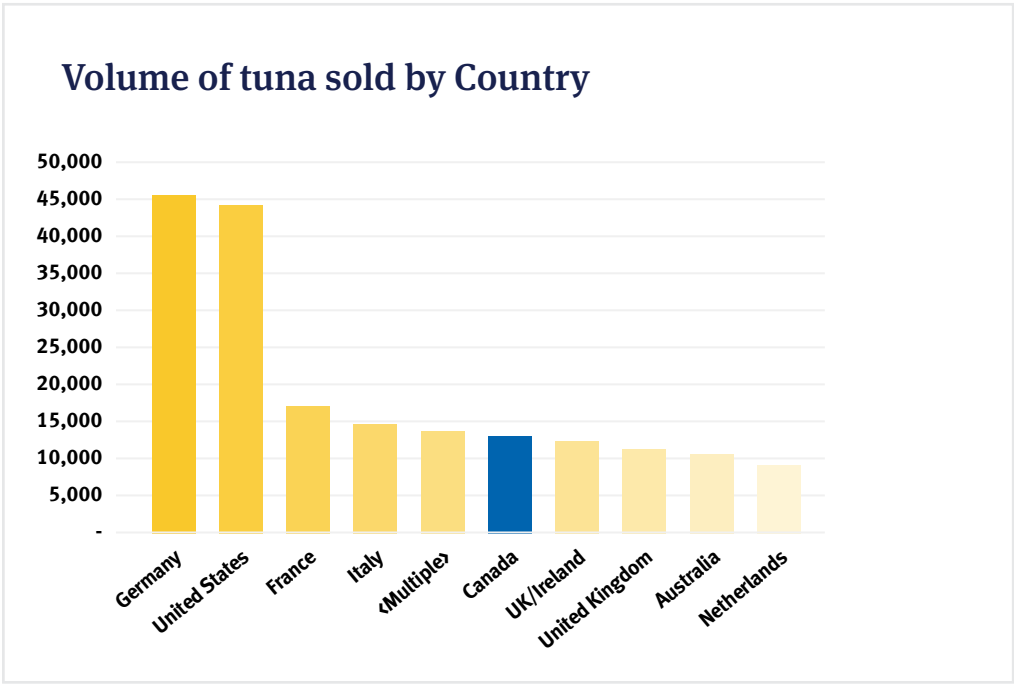


Figure 3: Volume of MSC labeled tuna sold by country in 2023/24 (metric tons)



Volume in Mt

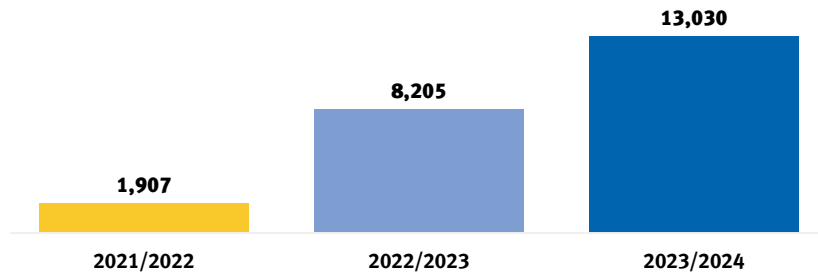


Figure 4. Volume of MSC labeled tuna sold in Canada in 2023/24 (metric tons)

MSC labeled tuna by species

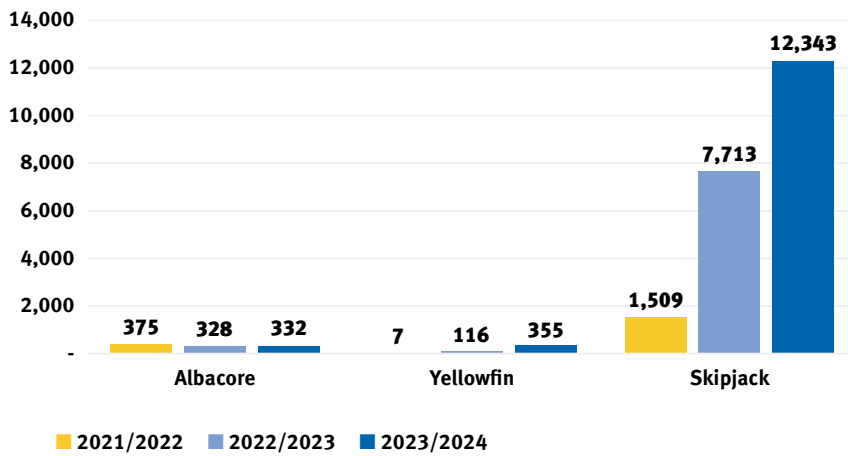


Figure 5: MSC labeled tuna sold in Canada, by species (metric tons)

Volume by species

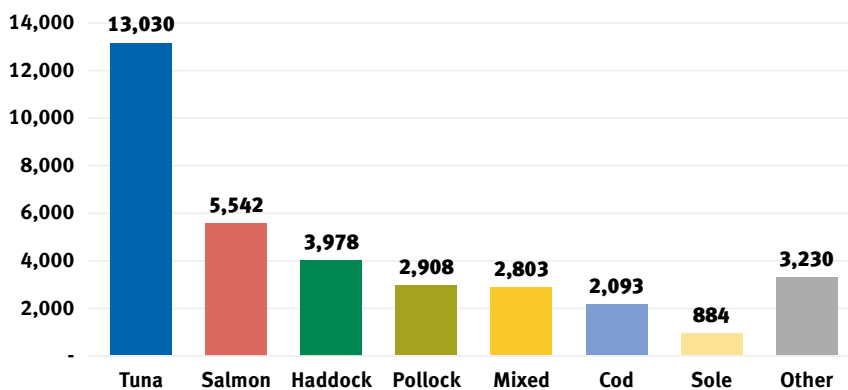


Figure 6: Volume of MSC labeled seafood sold by species in Canada

It's in the can.

The meteoric growth in sales of MSC certified tuna is mainly driven by a rise in the number MSC labeled canned tuna products sold by Canadian companies – from 47 products in 2021/22 to 81 in 2023/24, sold under 12 different brands.

This trend reflects the mounting importance of seafood sustainability in both business sourcing strategies and consumer purchasing decisions.

“Our brand and retail partners play a crucial role in transforming the way we fish and consume tuna. Their engagement and use of the MSC program sends a powerful signal to fisheries and consumers about industry expectations, commitments, and the future of seafood in Canada.”

Kurtis Hayne, Program Director, MSC Canada

MSC labeled tuna sold by product category (by volume)

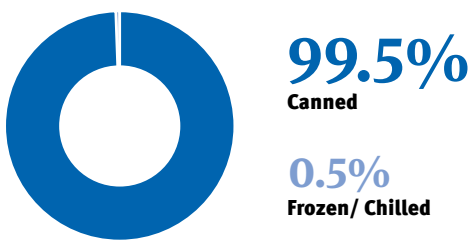


Figure 7: Sales of MSC labeled tuna by product category in 2023/24

Number of MSC labeled tuna products in Canada

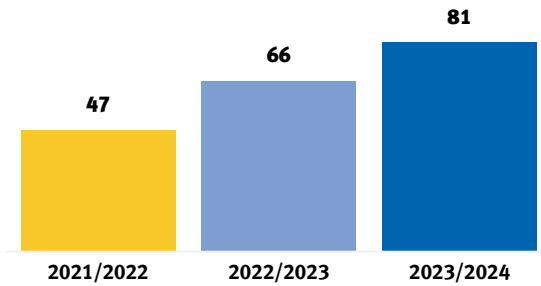
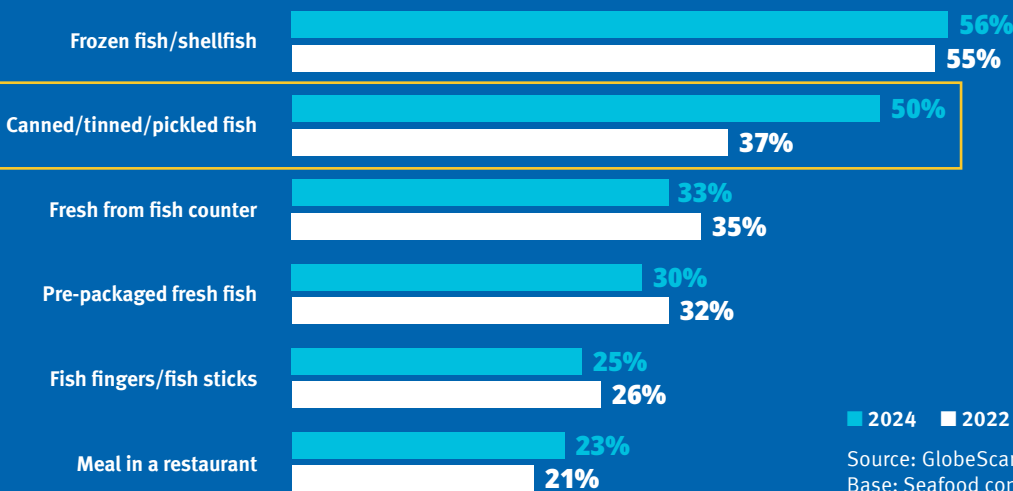


Figure 8: Number of MSC labeled tuna products in Canada

Canadian seafood consumers reported the greatest increase by far in the purchase of canned/tinned seafood, more than any other category of fish/seafood.

Top types of fish/seafood purchased in Canada in 2024 (“purchased frequently”)



■ 2024 ■ 2022

Source: GlobeScan study of seafood consumers, 2024.
Base: Seafood consumers, Canada n= 1,414

Canadian brands leading the way

In 2009, Ocean Brands was the first canned fish company in Canada to partner with the MSC. They are dedicated to preserving the health of our oceans for future generations, and have a commitment to work closely with their suppliers toward the goal of having 95 per cent of the products they sell recognized as sustainably sourced. Currently, there are 26 Ocean's tuna products on retail shelves that bear the MSC ecolabel.

Clover Leaf currently leads the Canadian market with 31 MSC labeled tuna products that can be found in retailers across the country. Clover Leaf has made an overarching commitment to have all its products externally recognized as sustainable or in a formal improvement program moving towards certification by 2025.

Among Private Label brands, Walmart Canada leads with seven Great Value MSC labeled canned tuna products, followed by Loblaw with three under its President's Choice brand.

The year ahead promises to be an exciting one as approximately 30 new MSC labeled canned tuna products are expected to hit retail shelves across Canada.

Sobeys could become the leader in Private Label brands with 12 new MSC labeled canned tuna Compliments products expected to launch in 2025.

“There is still so much work to do when it comes to managing our fisheries. As we take from our natural environment, we also have a responsibility to ensure the vitality of our oceans for years to come. Our long-standing partnership with the MSC is a testament to our investment in the sustainable management of the fisheries that are depended upon by so many nations.”

Ian Ricketts, President, Ocean Brands

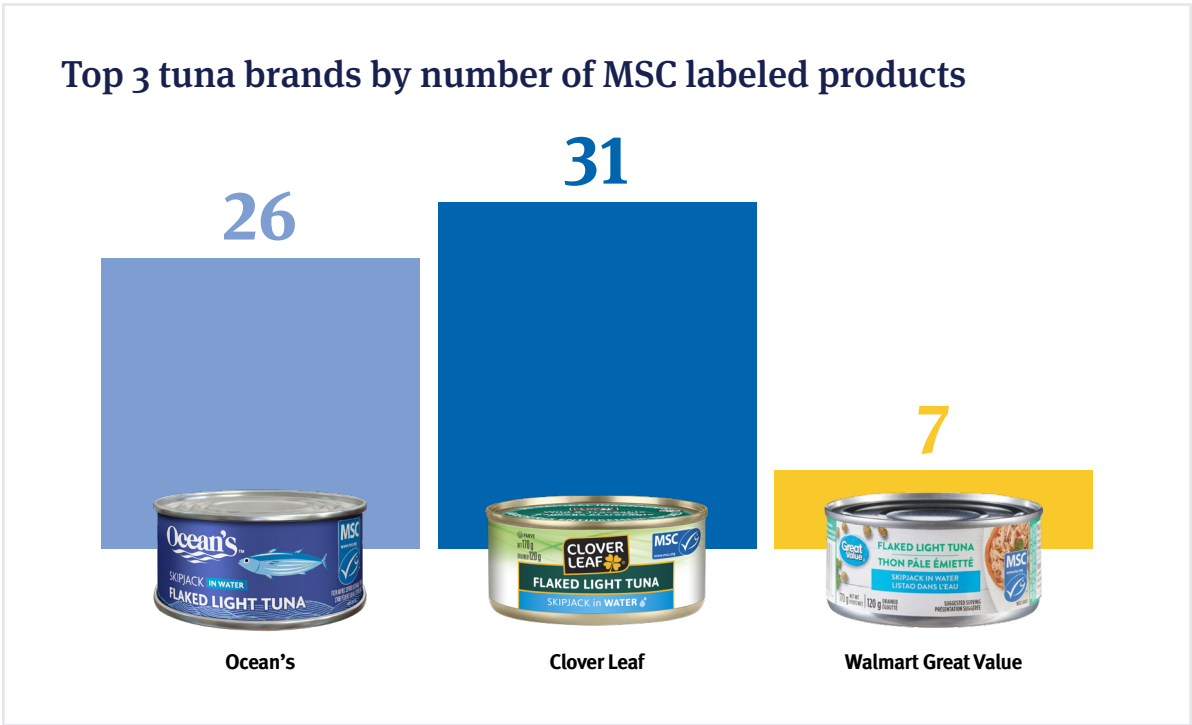


Figure 9: Top 3 canned tuna brands in Canada in 2023/24 (number of MSC labeled products)



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Read the Global MSC Sustainable Tuna Yearbook 2024 at [msc.org/species/tuna/ sustainable-tuna-yearbook](https://msc.org/species/tuna/sustainable-tuna-yearbook)

References

- [1] <https://thecommonsjournal.org/articles/10.5334/ijc.1069>
- [2] <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/knowledgebase/117>
- [3] <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/industry-reports/tuna-fish-market-100744>
- [4] <https://www.seafood.media/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?monthyear=4-2024&day=18&id=129495&l=e&country=0&special=&ndb=1&df=0#:~:text=Canada%20is%20currently%201%20in,2023%2C%20reaching%20214%20million%20USD>

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