

NUTRITION EXPERT'S GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

YOUR GO-TO RESOURCE FOR
UNDERSTANDING SEAFOOD
SUSTAINABILITY



2023
MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL



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HOW NUTRITION EXPERTS ARE STEWARDS OF THE OCEAN

“Registered dietitians are the best-qualified professionals to ensure that the benefits of eating seafood are communicated to consumers accurately and effectively. This resource will help RDs better navigate the maze of sustainable seafood and help create consumer messaging.”



*-Jessica Miller, RDN, LD, Nutrition Communications Manager
Seafood Nutrition Partnership*

Seafood is an exciting and nutritious addition to any diet—but the abundance of information about seafood can be overwhelming.

What species to buy or eat? Fresh or frozen? Wild or farmed? As a nutrition expert, we'll leave the health questions to you, because you already know seafood is a healthy source of protein and other important vitamins and minerals. But we can help with some of the others, because in addition to being a healthy protein, seafood is also an important part of a healthy planet.

The Nutrition Expert's Guide to Sustainable Seafood will provide tools for nutrition professionals to empower clients to choose seafood that's good for them and good for the planet.

We know you're having conversations about seafood, given that the Dietary Guidelines recommend eating seafood twice a week, and that for the first time, seafood is being recommended for young children. So when you recommend seafood to clients, you have a unique opportunity to be an advocate for the ocean. In this guide, we share ways you can encourage people to eat with their health and the planet's health in mind. You may even already be doing it!

This guide provides answers to common questions about ocean health and environmental sustainability, what exactly makes seafood “good for the planet,” and how easy it is to identify and choose sustainable seafood.

We hope this guide is a valuable resource to support healthy people and a healthy planet for this and future generations.

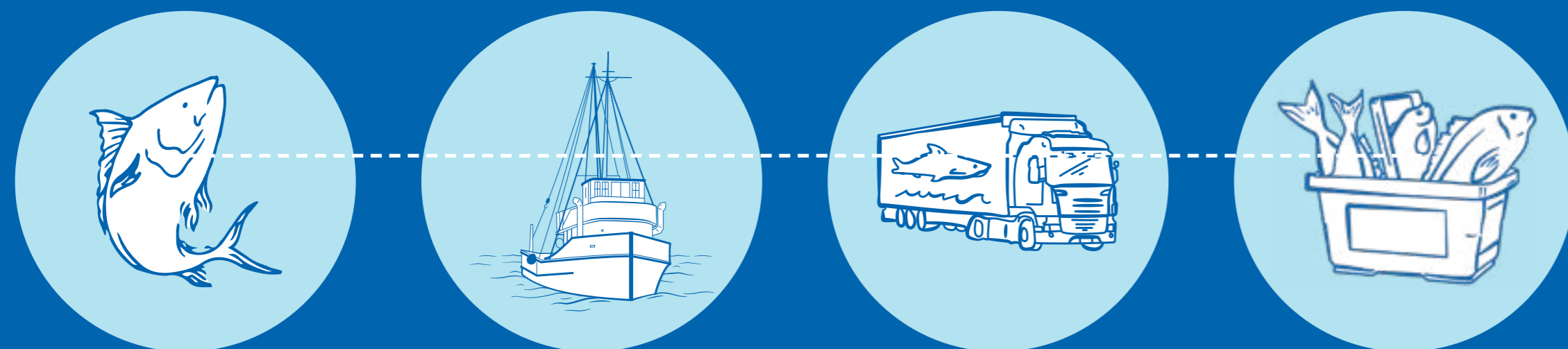


Recent research shows 82% of seafood eaters in the US “feel worried about the state of the world's oceans,” ([GlobeScan for MSC, 2022](#)). But they also want to eat seafood because they know it's a healthy choice for them and their families.

OCEAN HEALTH = HUMAN HEALTH



Hi! We're the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), a global non-profit organization working to end overfishing around the world. In collaboration with scientists, fisheries, industry experts, and other nonprofits, we set the standard for sustainable fishing and verifiable supply chains.



Wild-capture fisheries can volunteer to be assessed against our Standard, and companies that sell seafood can seek certification to verify that they are part of a sustainable supply chain. If fisheries and companies meet the MSC Standards, they're considered "certified sustainable". Once certified, these fisheries and companies can sell their seafood products with the MSC blue fish label, which indicates that the fish or shellfish came from a healthy population, minimizes effects on the surrounding ecosystem, and has an effective management system in place. The certification process is carried out entirely by a third-party organization so the process remains impartial and there's no conflict of interest.

Sustainable fishing plays a vital role in protecting our ocean and keeping our growing population fed. With your help, we can encourage people to take advantage of this healthy protein option while ensuring that fisheries are sustainably harvested and seafood is available to feed our growing population.

OCEAN HEALTH = HUMAN HEALTH

The ocean is a vital to human life. It also is an **important source of protein for over a billion people** daily and provides food for billions more. And approximately 200 million people are employed directly or indirectly by the seafood industry. But the ocean needs our help.

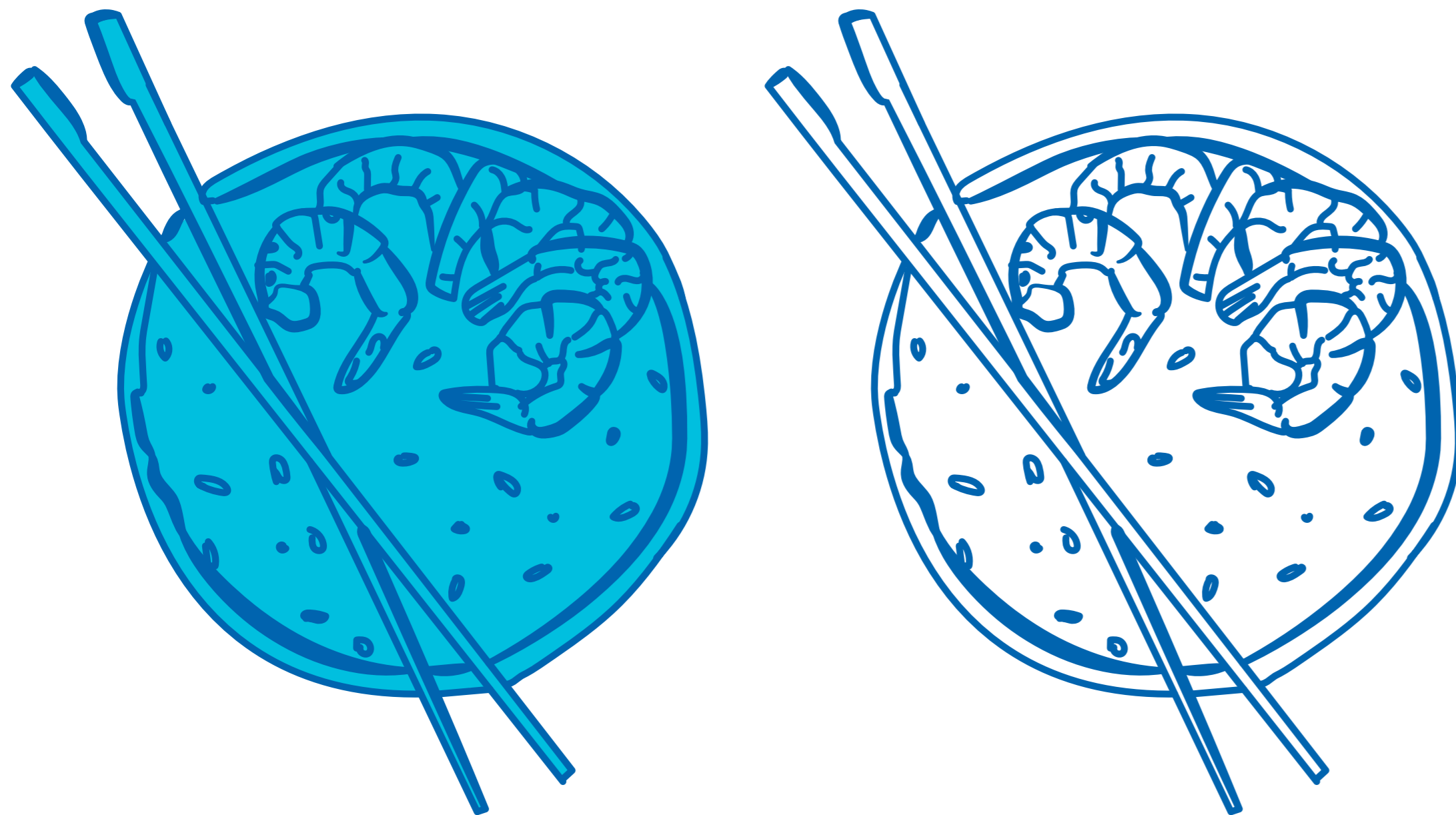
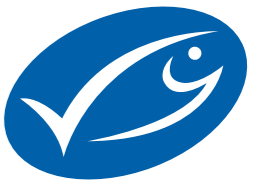
According to the **latest report by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization** (UNFAO), 35% of global fisheries have been fished beyond sustainable limits (SOFIA 2022). But there's still hope, and that's where we come in.

Together, we can feed a growing population and help protect our ocean.

For consumers, buying seafood products that are from a certified sustainable source is a great way to ensure they can continue enjoying the health benefits of seafood while helping to end overfishing.



HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY GO HAND IN HAND



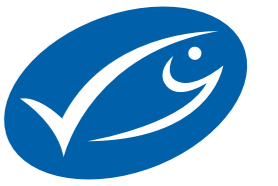
According to research conducted by GlobeScan on behalf of the MSC in 2022, about half of seafood eaters in the US (49%) state that they want to protect the oceans so that they can “enjoy eating healthy seafood” indicating that they already believe in a link between sustainability and health.

This study also showed that in the US, “good for my health/my family” ranks in the top five on a list of motivators for purchasing seafood.

As a health expert, you are uniquely positioned to help seafood eaters balance their desires for a nutritious diet and to protect the planet.

WHY CHOOSE CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD?

Your clients care about the ocean.



64% of seafood eaters in the US “want to know that the fish [they] buy can be traced back to a known and trusted source.”

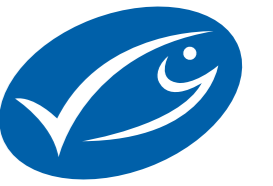
The MSC can help! Only companies that have been assessed against the MSC supply chain standard, known as the **Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard**, can sell seafood products with the blue fish label. Our CoC Standard ensures that products from **MSC certified sustainable fisheries** are kept separate from non-certified products, and can be traced back to a certified source. To achieve CoC certification, businesses are assessed by an independent third party and must reapply every three years. So, when you see the blue fish label, you know that every company in that supply chain has a valid CoC certificate and is audited regularly to ensure proper protocols are followed.

61% of seafood eaters in the US believe that “people should be prepared to change to another type of fish if it is more sustainable”

As a nutrition expert yourself, you can help these flexible seafood eaters make this change by providing alternatives that will still work in a given recipe or still ensure they meet their nutrition targets. For example, if you can't find certified sustainable cod, try hake instead! Or **check out these seafood options to try.**

WHY CHOOSE CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD?

You can correct misconceptions about sustainable seafood.



Sustainable seafood is easy to find!

Many people hold the misconception that sustainable seafood means expensive, inaccessible, luxury seafood options. But that couldn't be farther from the truth! The **MSC blue fish label can be found** on seafood products in almost any grocery store (and even some convenience stores!). If you look beyond the fresh fish counter, you'll find the blue fish on frozen products, in the chilled/refrigerated section, in the preserved foods section on tinned/canned seafood and broths/soups, and even in the supplement aisle! Plus, for those who care just as much about their pet's health, there are even certified food and supplement options for cats and dogs. Walmart, Target, and even CVS are great places to start.

Price continues to rank highly on a list of purchase motivators (5th in the US), and for many, affordability plays a huge role in eating seafood.

The good news is that MSC certified seafood can be found at every price point. From a \$2 can of skipjack tuna for one to a \$24 bag of scallops for a family of six, there's a nutritious seafood option for every budget.

HOW DOES THE MSC IMPROVE THE WAY OUR OCEAN IS FISHED?



What is the MSC?

The MSC was established to work with the ever-growing global demand for seafood—rather than against it—to improve fishery sustainability around the world.

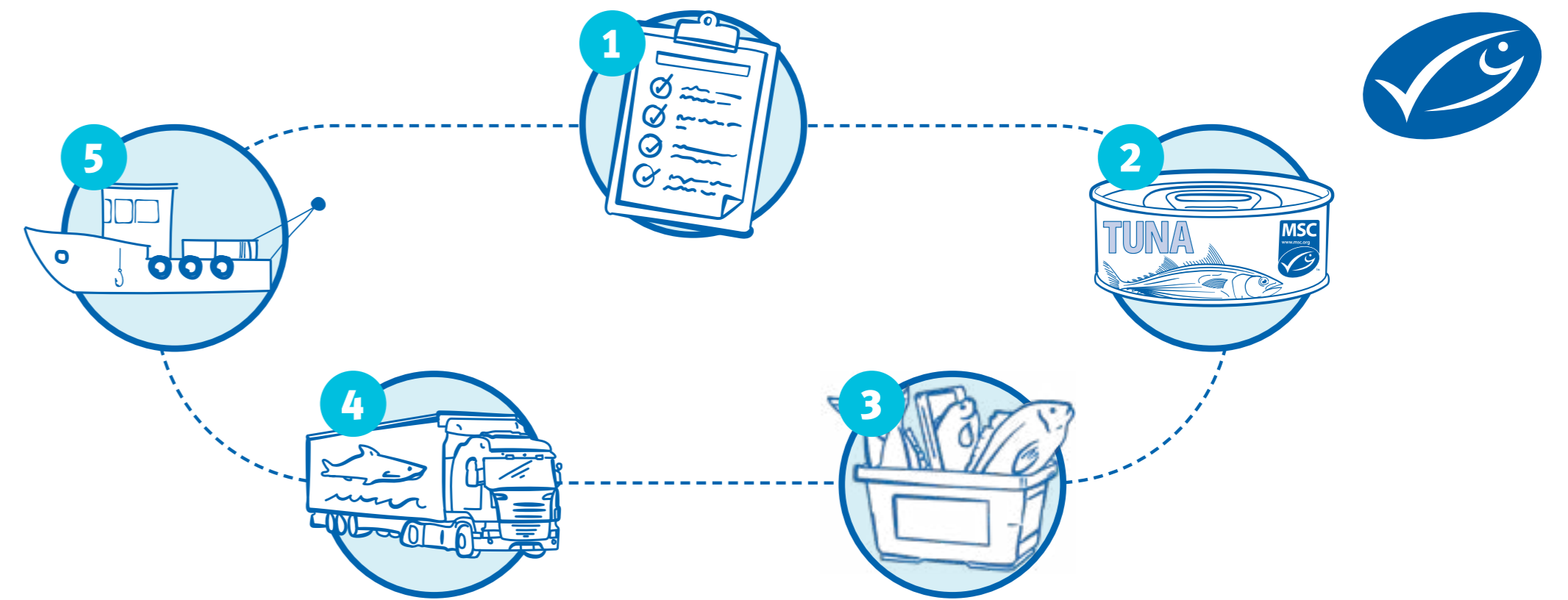
When you purchase MSC certified seafood **you become part of what we call a “virtuous circle”**—which is a fancy way of saying that you become an active part of the solution to overfishing.

What is overfishing?

Overfishing occurs when the fishing rate is higher than the rate at which fish repopulate, or when there are not enough adult fish left to breed and maintain a healthy population.

HOW DO MSC CERTIFIED FISHERIES IMPROVE THE WAY OUR OCEAN IS FISHED?

MSC Theory of Change, a virtuous circle



1

A fishery volunteers to be assessed against the MSC Fishery Standard, which consists of a rigorous, year-long assessment of their fishing practices, environmental impact, and management procedures. The certification period for an MSC certified fishery is five years, during which they are regularly audited, and after which they apply for recertification.

2

Once MSC certified sustainable seafood hits the supply chain, it is important to keep it separate from non-sustainable options, all the way to the shopper's cart! When retailers, restaurants, and brands achieve MSC Chain of Custody certification, it means that they have taken the necessary steps to keep certified sustainable seafood separate from non-sustainable options. They also add the MSC blue fish to product packaging to make it easier than ever for ...

3

... when you enter the circle! Each time you ask for, purchase, and choose MSC certified seafood, you increase the demand for increased sustainable sourcing practices.

4

This increased consumer demand leads these retailers and brands to prefer sourcing from MSC certified fisheries—which, in turn, rewards already certified fisheries while placing pressure on the fishing industry to have more MSC certified fisheries available.

5

As more fisheries join the program, the tides will turn in favor of sustainable fishing practices. The more public pressure for sustainability, the more the fishing and seafood industries will meet that need—helping to fight overfishing.

Within the MSC program, “sustainable fishing” means leaving enough fish in the ocean and preserving biodiversity by protecting habitats and threatened species.

HOW DOES THE MSC IMPROVE THE WAY OUR OCEAN IS FISHED?



Research shows that fish stocks that are well-managed and sustainable are also more productive in the long-term, meaning there is more seafood for our growing global population which is set to reach 10 billion by 2050.

How can we fish with the future in mind?

One of the incredible things about our ocean is that fish populations can recover and replenish if they are managed carefully for the long-term. And if we take care of our fish stocks, they take care of us.

MSC certification is only awarded to fisheries that can demonstrate that the stocks they fish are healthy, and that they have methods in place to maintain their levels or allow stocks to recover if changing circumstances cause them to fall below sustainable levels.

Examples of where we've seen this in action:

- [Groundfish off the United States west coast](#)
- [Patagonian toothfish in the Southern Ocean](#)
- [The increase in some of our major tuna stocks globally](#)

HOW DOES THE MSC IMPROVE THE WAY OUR OCEAN IS FISHED?



Another Benefit of Certified Seafood: Avoiding Seafood Fraud and Mislabeling

No one wants to find out what they bought is something other than what is labeled on the packaging. Imagine buying tuna steaks at the store only to find out when you return home that it's not tuna at all. Seafood fraud is the misrepresentation or mislabeling of a seafood product as something it's not. Mislabeling can be intentional (to increase profits) or due to mismanagement along the supply chain.

The severity of mislabeling varies and can include farmed fish sold as wild-caught, species substitution, and even false claims about sourcing or sustainability.

In addition to leaving seafood eaters feeling deceived and skeptical of the seafood industry, seafood fraud and mislabeling can pose a risk to both human health and ocean health.

The MSC has a rigorous supply chain certification that ensures certified seafood is separated from non-certified options, and that the supply chain is fully audited to verify that, among other things, seafood comes from a certified sustainable source, is properly labeled, and never mixed with non-MSC certified seafood.

DNA testing has shown that the mislabeling rate for seafood products carrying the MSC blue fish label is less than 1% - much lower than rates from other seafood mislabeling studies around the world.

This means consumers can be sure the label matches the contents, and they can feel confident they are getting all the health benefits that particular seafood item provides.

65%
of American seafood consumers demand retailers' and brands' claims about sustainability and the environment need to be clearly labeled by an independent organization*

*MSC GlobeScan research 2022





Want to Know More? Here are some MSC Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can the MSC blue fish label be found on farmed fish?

Nope! The MSC Fisheries Standard only applies to wild-caught fisheries, not farmed fish. Fish products from farms and aquaculture can be certified to the standard of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC). We work closely with the ASC to help consumers buy sustainable fish products, regardless of the method of harvesting. Some products may contain both farmed fish and wild fish, in which case both

seals can be found. Learn more about the [ASC Standards here](#).

Both sustainable caught wild and responsibly farmed seafood play an important role in feeding our growing population in harmony with the planet. For more information, check out [The Blue Food Assessment](#).

2. Does the MSC provide guidance on mercury in different fish species?

No, MSC's focus is on environmental sustainability.

For resources on mercury in seafood, learn more from the [Seafood Nutrition Partnership](#).

3. I've heard of ratings, are those different than certifications?

[Seafood certifications and ratings programs](#) are two ways for consumers to make ocean-friendly choices when buying fish and other seafood products. Both serve an important role in supporting a healthier ocean for this and future generations. Seafood certifications and ratings are

independent from seafood brands, retailers, and restaurants. MSC certification is an independent, third-party validation of a product's environmental sustainability.

4. I've heard seafood referred to as a low carbon protein, what does that mean?

Wild caught seafood is a relatively low carbon source of protein as it doesn't require land or feed to produce like other sources of protein such as eggs, chicken, and beef. A

[2018 study of greenhouse gas emissions of wild fisheries](#)

found that they produce in the region of one to five kilos of carbon for each kilo of fish caught, compared with red meat production which is estimated to range from 50 to 750 kilos of carbon per kilo of meat. For more details on carbon footprint, we recommend [WWF's Planet-Based Diet website](#).

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



Appendix

Reports

- United Nations [State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report](#)
- MSC and GlobeScan's [Consumer Research](#)

About the MSC

- The MSC Standards: [Chain of Custody](#) and [Fisheries](#)
- [Sustainable Seafood Recipes and Resources](#)
- [More MSC Fishery Stories from Around the World](#)
- [About the Blue Fish Label](#)
- Even more [FAQs](#)

Seasonal Opportunities to Highlight Sustainable Seafood with Media

Current events

- Inflation and the impact on grocery shopping: - increasing popularity of tinned and canned seafood

Noteable dates

- **February, Heart Health Month:** Omega-3s and heart healthy nutrients
- **March, Lent:** Fish Fridays
- **April, Earth Month:** Planet-friendly proteins
- **June, National Ocean Month:** What is overfishing and how can we help prevent it through our food purchases?
- **August, Back to School:** RTE meals or after-school snacks
- **October, National Seafood Month:** Sustainable seafood that's affordable and easy to make

THANK YOU!



Scan the QR code to join our newsletter.
For more information, please reach out to
[your local MSC contact](#) or USmarketing@msc.org

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