



**SeaChoice**

*healthy choices, healthy oceans*

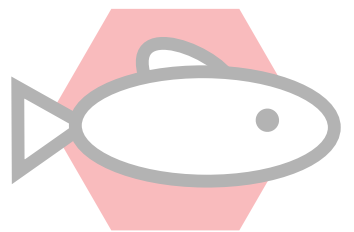
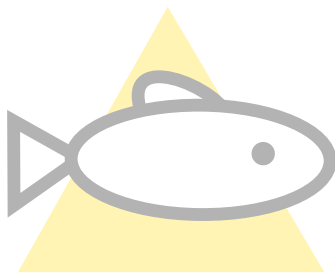
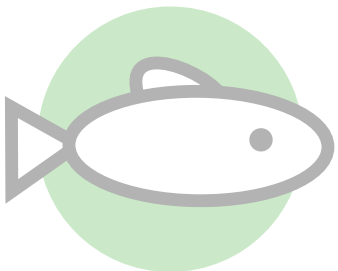
# Canada's **Business Guide** to Sustainable Seafood

[www.seachoice.org](http://www.seachoice.org)

A program developed by the five Sustainable Seafood Canada partners:



David  
Suzuki  
Foundation



## Introduction

The world's oceans are home to a vast array of marine life. When healthy, the oceans' diverse habitats can provide us with important and delicious protein from both wild caught and farmed sources.

But fishing and aquaculture practices can have significant negative impacts on ocean health. Fortunately, some seafood is produced in an environmentally sound manner, ensuring that harvest levels can be sustained without undermining the health of ecosystems. Conservationists, seafood businesses, and consumers can work together to help create a better future for our oceans by supporting sustainable seafood production.

### What is sustainable seafood?

Sustainable seafood is fish or shellfish that is caught or farmed with consideration for the long-term viability of harvested populations and for the oceans' ecological balance as a whole. If you sell seafood, a stable supply is essential for the continued success of your business.

Choosing sustainable seafood is an effective way to support best practices in the fishing and aquaculture industries and to ensure our ocean resources last long into the future.

### SeaChoice

SeaChoice aims to help Canadian businesses and consumers make the most ocean-friendly seafood choices to support the long-term health of marine ecosystems and coastal communities. SeaChoice is supported by a coalition of five conservation organizations from across Canada, including the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre, Living Oceans Society, and Sierra Club (B.C. Chapter).

We assess the sustainability of domestic and imported seafood products, work to increase awareness about the role of seafood in achieving healthy oceans, and help identify sources of sustainable seafood. We use well-established sustainability criteria, based on biological, ecological, and management factors, to rank seafood.<sup>1</sup>

Our assessments are updated as fisheries change and as new information becomes available.

When SeaChoice launched in 2006, we produced a wallet card for consumers that profiled the sustainability ranking of common seafood using a colour-coded system: green, "best choice"; yellow, "some concerns"; and red, "avoid". The wallet cards have been received with great enthusiasm across Canada, and more than 300,000 are now in circulation.

The success of the wallet cards and the consumer demand generated is just one component of what is required to reach our sustainable seafood goals. Businesses that buy and sell seafood can play a powerful role in helping to encourage and reward fisheries and aquaculture practices that are environmentally responsible.

### The purpose of this guide

The SeaChoice Business Guide is a tool designed to introduce companies that buy and sell seafood to ways they can support sustainable seafood. The guide is intended to explain our view on some of the most relevant elements of a sustainable seafood strategy: making a commitment, collecting data, sustainable procurement, transparency, education, and reform. It also outlines a range of specific activities that can help support best practices. The case studies illustrate how some businesses are already acting on their commitment to seafood sustainability.

We recognize that achieving environmental sustainability is a journey involving many steps and that there are different paths to reach the end goals. We offer this guide as a starting point for dialogue and future collaboration with companies that share our interest in supporting the long-term viability of our seafood supply and the health of ocean ecosystems.

<sup>1</sup> Other sustainability considerations such as energy consumption during capture, transport, and processing, position in the food web and socio-economic factors are not included in the rankings at this time.



# Working with SeaChoice

## Incorporating sustainability into your business

SeaChoice recognizes that grocery retailers, food-service companies, and restaurants operate in a rapidly changing, increasingly competitive market. To stay ahead requires innovation, adaptation, and a willingness to take actions that set your business apart from competitors.

Partnering with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can help your business achieve its goals in a more socially and environmentally responsible manner and keep your company on the cutting edge. NGOs can provide external perspectives and scientific expertise that can help support business needs.

We believe that partnerships can demonstrate leadership in meeting the challenges of corporate social responsibility, and can also help a business's bottom line. Consumer demographic studies are documenting a growing demand for healthy food products, including seafood.

Consumers concerned with their own health and wellbeing are also increasingly seeking items produced with the health of the environment in mind; "organic" and "eco-friendly" labels are becoming more and more prominent in grocery aisles and on menus. Customers appreciate it when their concerns are addressed. When a business commits to a sustainable seafood strategy, its customers will recognize that it is taking steps to becoming a leader in sustainability.

## Working towards solutions

Proactive businesses looking to engage in the emerging sustainable seafood sector will face exciting opportunities as well as some new challenges. SeaChoice can help by working with your business to maximize the successes and overcome the obstacles.

Incorporating sustainability into your business's seafood purchasing begins with the decision to make a shift from current practices. From there, SeaChoice can engage in a dialogue that we believe will help determine the choices that best fit your needs and that move your seafood sales toward more sustainable options.

The following pages outline what we view as the key

elements of sustainable seafood purchasing and sales. We also profile some businesses that are already putting their commitment to seafood sustainability into action. We know that each company's path forward is going to be different. SeaChoice can help determine what first steps make the most sense for your business.

## Benefits

Once you start moving toward seafood sustainability, you'll find many benefits for your business. These include customers who appreciate your efforts and knowledge and public recognition that you are taking steps toward being a leader on seafood sustainability.

As your commitment to seafood sustainability progresses, SeaChoice can help you to pursue opportunities for developing educational and promotional materials that highlight your sustainable seafood products as well as your company's efforts to support environmentally responsible fisheries and aquaculture practices.

## Working toward a green future

SeaChoice is working toward a future in which environmentally sustainable fisheries and aquaculture thrive at a level that supports the communities and businesses that depend on them. This sustainable seafood vision can be supported by purchasing environmentally responsible (SeaChoice "green-ranked") seafood and supporting policies and practices that will help sustain ocean health over the long term.

Environmentally sustainable wild fisheries are those that minimize habitat damage, have low levels of by-catch or discards of non-target species, are well managed, and target healthy populations.

Environmentally sustainable aquaculture minimizes the use of marine resources for feed, poses low risks to wild stocks through escapes or disease and parasite transfer, is well managed, and creates little pollution or habitat impact.

To find out more about green-ranked seafood, visit the complete database of SeaChoice seafood assessments and rankings at [www.seachoice.org](http://www.seachoice.org).

## Moving towards sustainable seafood

### Make a Commitment

Creating a corporate policy on sustainable seafood shows an important commitment to action and provides essential guidance for company practices. Commit to implementing a policy that:

- fits with your corporate sustainability values;
- incorporates fisheries and marine-ecology science into purchasing decisions by using SeaChoice rankings;
- includes strategies that involve board members, staff, and customers in your efforts; and
- engages suppliers and policymakers to encourage improvements in fisheries and aquaculture to help create a greater supply of sustainable seafood.

### Collect Data

A greater understanding of products and where they come from enables companies to measure changes in the seafood supply, identify problems, and take action to improve supply over time. Specific information to track includes:

- common and scientific names of seafood,
- country of origin,
- wild stock or farm operator,
- fishing gear or aquaculture production method used,
- volume of product purchased, and
- SeaChoice environmental sustainability rankings.

### Improve Procurement

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

- Promote the best choices. Preferentially sell seafood that SeaChoice ranks as “green-listed”.
- Work with SeaChoice to identify alternatives to “red listed” seafood.
- If purchasing seafood that does not meet sustainability criteria, source products from operators willing to improve their performance and demonstrate progress.
- Phase out all “red-listed” producers and suppliers that refuse to improve their environmental performance.

### Be Transparent

Being transparent about actions taken to improve seafood sustainability is essential for securing and communicating achievements. To do this, you can make the following publicly available:

- Your company's sustainable seafood policy
- An annual status report summarizing your achievements and planned actions
- Information relevant to sustainability that enables your customers to make informed choices

### Educate

Educating customers and key stakeholders along the seafood supply chain will help increase the understanding of seafood sustainability.

- Commit to training seafood sales staff on sustainability issues so they can effectively help your customers choose more sustainable seafood options.
- Ensure that the information necessary to determine seafood sustainability is available to customers and staff for all seafood products.
- Inform your suppliers, senior staff, and the public about your commitment to sustainable seafood and the specific steps you are taking to have a positive impact.

### Support Reform

To achieve seafood sustainability, significant improvements in the environmental performance of fisheries and farming operations are required. Your support for policy and management reforms will help get us there. Work in collaboration with conservation organizations and businesses to support changes in policy or management, such as:

- public access to fisheries data,
- improved labelling for seafood products, and
- rigorous, well-resourced monitoring and enforcement of domestic fisheries and aquaculture management.



## Businesses that are making it work

Across North America more and more businesses are successfully incorporating sustainable choices into their purchasing and marketing decisions. The dedication of Canadian businesses to sustainable seafood has helped propel the movement forward.

Not only do they influence supply through their buying power but, by taking a leadership role and offering sustainable seafood options, businesses are helping to raise awareness and changing consumer preferences in a direct way. Suppliers, producers, and governments are taking notice. The demand for sustainable seafood is up, and progressive purchasing decisions are encouraging concrete improvements in practices and management. That's good news for seafood lovers and our oceans.

### **Alyssa Food's**

#### ***Lower East Pubnico & Halifax, NS***

Fish lovers in Halifax have long been hungry for a consistent supply of sustainably caught groundfish such as haddock, pollock and hake. So when Alyssa Foods of Lower East Pubnico began regular delivery of bottom hook-and-line caught groundfish to local retailer Home Grown Organic Foods, a great many bellies were finally satisfied.



*Alyssa Seafoods' proprietor George Cunningham delivers sustainably harvested groundfish to Home Grown Organic Foods, Halifax. Photo Sadie Beaton*

Alyssa Foods is the first local processor to market a line of bottom hook-and-line fish products in Nova Scotia. As proprietor George Cunningham explains, "Last winter a few of us started talking about kids and grandkids, wondering what we're going to leave them with. We

decided it was time to do something different, and market a sustainable fishery and a better fish."

The fish are being caught on Georges Bank, using a selective fishing gear that allows for superior quality product and doesn't negatively impact groundfish habitat. Bottom hook-and-line groundfish is a sustainable alternative to dragger-caught groundfish. Currently, most of the bottom hook-and-line fish caught by Nova Scotia fishermen is exported to the U.S., where savvy chefs and consumers are increasingly demanding sustainable, high-quality seafood.

### **Jamie Kennedy Kitchens**

#### ***Toronto, ON***

Marine-conservation issues may be more visible on Canada's coasts, but in regions where the oceans aren't in sight, Canadians are by no means blind to the sustainable seafood movement.

Toronto's Jamie Kennedy, owner and executive chef of the Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar, Jamie Kennedy Restaurant, and Jamie Kennedy Gardiner, has shown exceptional commitment to the welfare of the environment by supporting sustainable, local products at his restaurants and advocating for environmental causes. Through his involvement with SeaChoice and other conservation initiatives, he extends his advocacy to healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries.

Kennedy's view is that chefs can play an important role in influencing the public about the types of fish they should be eating. And, judging by the nightly lineups of people vying for a chance to savour the cuisine, the clientele are receptive to this influence. Once inside, each diner is provided a copy of the SeaChoice Canada's Seafood Guide, which customers can use to verify that all the seafood items listed on the menu are on the SeaChoice "Best Choice" sustainable seafood list.

The restaurant company does not stop at supplying the seafood guides. The open setup of the Wine Bar, for instance, encourages dialogue between the cooks and customers, who are invited to ask questions. The commitment to sustainability is a collective effort; Jamie Kennedy staff members are all well prepared to speak to the company's conservation efforts as well as about any



*Jamie Kennedy preparing fish for a sustainable dish. Photo Mary Elizabeth Armstrong*

of the seafood menu items. Understanding leads to better choices. Newly educated and impressed customers often return with reports that they have carried the information onward, encouraging other individuals, restaurants, and retailers to green up their seafood-buying practices. The Wine Bar also has a unique reservation system that allows the restaurant to make donations to the SeaChoice program.

The Jamie Kennedy restaurants' constant search for suppliers offering these best-choice seafood items helps to promote the green networks of suppliers and encourages improved traceability of sustainable seafood products. Tobey Nemeth, chef at the Wine Bar, says it's gratifying to set an example for customers and colleagues and to be able to influence the seafood industry. She mentions that, despite some challenges, such as finding consistent, good quality supplies, changing the business model was easier than anticipated. Ms. Nemeth encourages other businesses to adjust their thinking and subsequently improve their business practices, particularly when it comes to placing priority on quality, sustainable ingredients.

### **Bon Appetit Management Company Palo Alto, California**

For many people, the mention of cafeterias conjures up images of bland, generic, mass-produced grub. This is not the case at the Bon Appetit Management Company (or BAMCO), where dishes are concocted from scratch with recognition of where the ingredients come from and how they are produced. BAMCO has taken environmental responsibility and sustainable seafood to heart, and the company's progressive business practices are leading the

way in restaurant company sustainability practices.

Located in Palo Alto, California, BAMCO is an onsite food-service provider for educational institutions, corporations, and specialty venues. As the food-service provider for the Monterey Bay Aquarium, BAMCO made an early commitment to sustainable seafood procurement, deciding to follow the aquarium's Seafood Watch guidelines. Some specific changes to their practices included elimination of Atlantic cod from their menus; a 20 per cent reduction of farmed shrimp and salmon volume; elimination of other red-list species from menus; promotion of more sustainable, local choices; and supporting positive changes in aquaculture.

In 2005, BAMCO partnered with Seafood Watch, and with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, helped to educate more than 1,000 customers and 400 staff about sustainable seafood choices. BAMCO's experience in fine-tuning its own sustainability practices has now allowed the company to foster sustainable seafood purchasing practices at its sister companies throughout the Compass Group and in the industry as a whole.



*BAMCO offers fish that are lower on the food chain, such as tilapia, to minimize environmental impacts.*

As the BAMCO website states, "There's no sense in spending anyone's resources just to talk; we want to affect change. That's why our goal...is to transform the purchasing practices of the food services industry—and to change the underlying dynamics of the food web." With that kind of initiative, BAMCO is definitely a company that is making waves.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. How does consumer interest in seafood for health reasons relate to environmental sustainability?**

The health benefits of eating seafood are definitely increasing seafood sales. However, according to a survey conducted by Seafood Choices Alliance in 2003, 37 per cent of the 1,000 U.S. seafood consumers surveyed reported that they had decided not to buy seafood items because of potential environmental impacts.

This is a significant number of consumers who are already modifying their seafood purchases based on environmental concerns. If supplied with the proper information, these consumers can purchase seafood with the assurance that they are making the best decision for themselves and the environment.

### **2. Aren't government standards for seafood labeling enough to show what is sustainable?**

Unlike in the United States and the European Union, Canada's seafood-labelling regulations do not require labels to include the country of origin of seafood, whether it is wild-caught or farmed, or whether the product contains colourants or other additives. Because of the lack of labelling requirements, tracking of this information at the retail level and staff knowledge are critical to ensuring your company can confidently provide sustainable choices and information for your customers.

### **3. What about organic seafood?**

Although organic-certification regulations are in place

for other food products, there are no national organic standards for seafood products in Canada. And organic standards for seafood adopted by other countries do not necessarily meet the same standards that you would expect in Canada. For example, many European organic standards allow the use of antibiotics and chemicals. In addition, organic standards do not necessarily cover all seafood sustainability issues.

### **4. Are there suppliers or processors that specialize in sustainable seafood that I can work with?**

Yes, a growing number of seafood suppliers, processors, and producers are offering seafood from SeaChoice's green list. With demand for sustainable seafood growing, new options are becoming available. Contact SeaChoice for more information on potential sustainable seafood supply; we can also help you work with your existing suppliers to identify product sustainability and the best choices to meet your needs.

### **5. I am interested in supporting sustainable seafood; how should I get started?**

Reading this guide is a great first step to becoming more acquainted with sustainable seafood and the ways businesses can support environmentally responsible practices. If you would like to learn more, please contact SeaChoice and we would be happy to explore the best options for your company. SeaChoice contact details are provided on the following pages.



*Traps, an environmentally responsible fishing gear choice, deliver sustainable seafood options. Photo Natalie Ban*

## Find out more

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For more information about SeaChoice visit our website at: [www.SeaChoice.org](http://www.SeaChoice.org)

For inquiries about our programs and to learn more about how to get involved contact:

**National SeaChoice Coordinator**

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## SeaChoice Coalition Members

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### Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

[www.cpawsbc.org](http://www.cpawsbc.org)



Founded in 1963, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)

is Canada's grassroots voice for wilderness. CPAWS mission is to ensure a healthy ecosphere where people experience and respect natural ecosystems. We achieve this by protecting wild ecosystems and promoting awareness, understanding and action. CPAWS is a national non-profit organization, with a national office in Ottawa, and unparalleled regional strength through 13 chapters across the country, representing our 32,000 members.

CPAWS has a reputation for achieving on the ground results in conservation, having helped protect over 100 million acres of wild spaces in Canada. The Oceans and Great Freshwater Lakes Program was approved by the national board of trustees in 2005 as one of five national conservation programs that are grounded in a science-based approach to protecting large, interconnected wilderness on land and in the sea. Our vision is that at least one-half of Canada's public lands, freshwater and ocean environments will remain permanently wild. CPAWS has been involved in promoting marine conservation in Canada for over 20 years with a view to ensuring healthy ocean ecosystems, through the development of integrated ocean management plans, networks of marine protected areas, and increasing public awareness and support for action.

### David Suzuki Foundation

[www.DavidSuzuki.org](http://www.DavidSuzuki.org)



David  
Suzuki  
Foundation

Since 1990, the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) has worked to find ways for society to live in balance with

the natural world that sustains us. Focusing on four program areas—oceans and sustainable fishing, climate change and clean energy, sustainability, and the Nature Challenge – the Foundation uses science and education to promote solutions that conserve nature and help achieve sustainability. The David Suzuki Foundation is committed to ensuring that our oceans remain healthy and that marine life remains abundant well into the future.

The DSF's Oceans and Sustainable Fishing program works towards changing fisheries policies and destructive fishing practices, undertakes scientific assessments of the status of commercial fish stocks, protects critical marine and freshwater habitat, reduces industrial impacts in marine environments and increases awareness among the public, government and industry about options for the capture, processing and marketing of sustainably harvested seafood.

## SeaChoice Coalition Members

### Ecology Action Centre

[www.EcologyAction.ca](http://www.EcologyAction.ca)



Established in 1971, the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) is Nova Scotia's largest and most active environmental organization. Since its inception, the EAC has been working to build a healthier, more sustainable Nova Scotia. The centre works on a variety of conservation issues, including wilderness protection, sustainable transportation, local food production, renewable energy, urban issues, and coastal access and protection. For the past decade, marine issues have been an important part of EAC's work.

The collapse of coastal fisheries in Atlantic Canada has had serious and longer than expected consequences both for the marine environment and for the people who live in the region. Making extensive use of science and fishermen's knowledge, the EAC has focused much of its efforts on reducing the impact of trawling or dragging on the ocean floor and the protection of fish habitat, including long lived species such as cold water corals and sponges. EAC's motivation to work on fisheries (and other ocean issues) is the desire to live and work in a region where there is a healthy ocean as well as healthy communities.

### Living Oceans Society

[www.LivingOceans.org](http://www.LivingOceans.org)



The Living Oceans Society (LOS) is a non-profit research and public education organization committed to conserving marine biological diversity

in order to ensure a healthy ocean and healthy coastal communities. Currently, LOS is working towards this goal through the following four programs: developing fisheries that are ecologically sustainable; establishing a network of marine protected areas through engagement in the marine planning process for the Pacific North Coast region in British Columbia; stopping the negative impacts of open-net cage salmon farming; and maintaining the moratorium on offshore oil and gas development in Canada's Pacific Ocean.

Living Oceans Society was established in 1998. In addition to the head office in Sointula, an island community on the Central Coast of B.C., LOS has an office in Vancouver.

### Sierra Club of Canada – BC Chapter

[www.SierraClub.ca/bc](http://www.SierraClub.ca/bc)



The Sierra Club of Canada – BC Chapter (SCCBC) is a democratic, grassroots organization dedicated to the conservation of British Columbia's

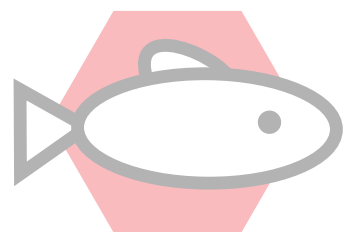
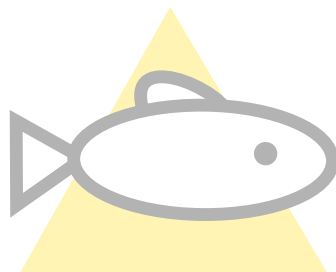
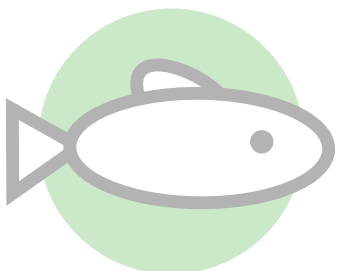
natural legacy. Their mission is to protect and restore British Columbia's rich tapestry of species, ecosystems, and human health by promoting innovative, evidence-based solutions, inspiring and engaging a broad network of grassroots support, and linking people and decision-makers.

The marine conservation goals of SCCBC are to ensure that the public interest in the conservation of all marine resources is afforded the highest policy priority; that human activities are managed in ways consistent with that priority; and that conservation in public policy is informed by the most rigorous conservation principles. Sierra Club of Canada has been active in Canada since 1969, starting in BC. The national office of Sierra Club of Canada was established in Ottawa in 1989. We have five active chapters (BC, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic) with offices in every region of Canada; Ottawa, Vancouver, Victoria, Sydney, Corner Brook, Halifax, Edmonton and Toronto.



*Purchasing sustainable seafood supports coastal communities over the long-term. Photo Natalie Ban*

[www.seachoice.org](http://www.seachoice.org)



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