

## 10 trends shaping the future of sustainable seafood

Sustainable seafood programs are a critical part of buying and selling seafood in these modern times. But like everything, the concept of sustainable seafood is changing -- here's how.

The seafood industry's focus on seafood sustainability has been growing for more than a decade. And over that time, seafood buyers and suppliers have changed the way they procure seafood to make sure their products are in line with today's sustainability ethic. The idea of what is sustainable seafood and ways to improve the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture, too has changed – and continues to change. Here are 10 trends that are reshaping and defining this decade's definition of sustainable seafood.

**1. The rise of the CSO:** With every major corporate trend comes the need for a high-level corporate position to oversee and implement the trend. Suppliers such as High Liner Foods and Phillip's Foods broke new ground when they named Chief Sustainability Officers (CSO) several years ago. Other companies have followed suit. And retail and foodservice buyers, too, have created new offices to oversee sustainability and social responsibility. This eco/social ethic is just part of doing business in a globalized economy.

**2. Fishery improvement projects:** When it was apparent that many fisheries couldn't afford or were unable to organize certification through the typical channels, NGOs and industry leaders joined forces to focus on how to improve these left-out fisheries. Today fishery improvement projects, or FIPs, are a powerful force in improving fisheries – and aquaculture operations – in a very focused and efficient manner.

**3. Boutique aquaculture:** Companies such as Grieg Seafood and AquaChile have discovered that by changing their farming methods slightly they can create a whole new niche of hand-crafted farmed fish that outshines standard farming practices when it comes to sustainability issues such as feed conversion, disease and pen density. Grieg's Skuna Bay and AquaChile's Verlasso salmon are two examples of a new breed of fish farming.

**4. Consumers arrive:** It took longer than most thought it would, but consumers now seem aware of and interested in the sustainability of the fish and shellfish they buy. Nearly every seafood supplier automatically recites how its seafood is sustainable, but it's largely thanks to the efforts of the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Program and the Marine Stewardship Council that consumers are noticing eco-friendly fish.

**5. Don't throw that away:** Trash fish, discards -- whatever you want to call the unwanted sea creatures caught incidentally when fishing – are in vogue and indirectly express the growing desire to not waste any of the ocean's bounty. Particularly in Europe, chefs have jumped forward to show consumers how these lowly misfits of the sea can be used to make scrumptious meals.

**6. Trace me:** Traceability has always been a component of sustainability, but the industry's ability to trace fish from sea to plate is improving by leaps and bounds through the use of DNA, traceability services and partnerships with seafood firms.

**7. Don't touch my genes:** The next big battle front in the sustainable seafood arena will definitely involve genetically engineered (GE), or genetically modified (GM), seafood. US company AquaBounty is striving to have government approval to begin selling GM salmon in the United States, and there is no shortage of groups out there who are doing their best to stop the company from doing so. GM seafood will again challenge suppliers and buyers to further define their definition of sustainability.

**8. Workers' rights:** Sustainability in the modern era is no longer just about the environment; it is about the men and women who working on the boats, farms and in the factories where seafood is produced. Are these workers being treated fairly, provided safe conditions and paid appropriately? These questions will become an ever-growing test of a product's sustainability credentials.

**9. Fraudsters:** Seafood fraud is a separate matter from sustainability, but the importance of product integrity is being blended more and more with eco-ethics. High profile case of seafood mislabeling are highlighting the substitution of inferior species for more expensive ones, and raising concerns this substitution could also have environmental impacts.

**10. Benchmarking:** Leaders in the seafood industry are getting behind what could become a centralizing force in the eco-labeling bench marking mishmash. The organization, the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), hopes to launch its bench marking tool by summer 2015 . Retailers Sobeys, Loblaws, Sainsbury's, Morrison's and Metro have already signed a letter of intent to participate, as have top seafood suppliers Bumble Bee Foods, Icelandic Group, Trident Seafoods, Marine Harvest Seafood and Gorton's. Associations such as the National Fisheries Institute (NFI) have signed on, as have conservation organizations the New England Bay Aquarium and the Marine Conservation society.

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