

## New Oceana Report Highlights Success and Value in Seafood Traceability

Today, Oceana released a new report titled *Fish Stories*, showing the success and value in seafood traceability. The report, which highlights how seafood traceability benefits more than 15 companies interviewed along the supply chain – from fishermen and distributors to grocery stores and restaurants – was released at Seafood Expo North America in Boston.

“Traceability is the future of seafood,” said Beth Lowell, senior campaign director at Oceana. “Testimonials from these pioneers show that full-chain traceability isn’t just feasible, but that it’s also profitable. These businesses are telling the stories of their products, growing their seafood’s value, and establishing trust with their customers. Fishermen and wholesalers are able to earn more for their catch when they can tell the story of their fish, empowering consumers to make more informed decisions. The federal government should require boat-to-plate traceability for all seafood sold in the U.S. so that the entire supply chain can reap its benefits.”

Here are a few of their stories:

"We have learned that consumers care about where their fish comes from," said Jared Auerbach, owner of Red's Best in Boston, Massachusetts. "We built proprietary web-based software that starts at the point of unloading and makes it really easy for us to package the story of the catch so it stays with the fish throughout the supply chain."

"Working directly with local growers, delivering product within 24 hours of harvest, and product traceability are all major components of our company's success," said Brad Blymier, founder and co-owner of War Shore Oyster Company in Onancock, Virginia. "Traceability of product is not a request, but rather an expectation of our customers. Empowering them with the knowledge of exactly where their shellfish was grown and harvested is an invaluable asset and has helped make War Shore Oyster Company a trusted supplier to the region's top chefs, restaurants, grocers and shellfish connoisseurs."

"Traceability in its simplest form is being able to see where the product is being caught and what stores or restaurants it ends up at," said Reese Antley, vice president of Wood's Fisheries in Port St. Joe, Florida. "However, Wood's Fisheries sees traceability in a much more detailed way -- we believe that you can't have true sustainability and fishery improvements without traceability. For our customers, we are 100 percent transparent; if you want to know every step in the supply chain, it's at your fingertips."

"Seafood traceability allows the consumer to make factual decisions about their purchases," said John Rorapaugh, director of sustainability at ProFish in Washington, D.C. "In turn, it allows our company to present the finest products, free of comparison to illegally harvested or inferior quality ones. Transparency is the key to a sustainable global food chain, and seafood traceability is a key component."

“Traceability not only helps us to better track our inventories, it also ensures that we are sourcing our product responsibly,” said Steve Vilnit, director of fisheries marketing at J.J. McDonnell in Jessup, Maryland. “This storied fish is more than just a piece of protein with a price tag on it; it is a centerpiece on a plate that took the hard work of many to get there. Being able to trace a product, and therefore create a story about it, adds value along the entire supply chain.”

“Ariel Seafoods has observed a substantial increase in orders from restaurants that use Fish Trax to inform their guests about the fish they are eating,” said David Krebs, president of Ariel Seafoods in Destin, Florida. “Consumer confidence about their meal is proving invaluable to the seafood industry.”

“Traceability is a critical part of bringing sustainably caught and responsibly farmed seafood to Whole Foods Market stores,” said Carrie Brownstein, seafood quality standards coordinator for Whole Foods Market. “We have rigorous quality standards and labeling requirements, so tracking our products through the supply chain gives us the assurance that each item comes from sources that truly meet those standards. At the end of the day, traceability helps build customer trust and provides the information people need to make more informed choices.”

“Customers expect safe and nutritious seafood and that all parties in the supply chain utilize best practices to deliver this every day,” said Dave Wagner, vice president of seafood merchandising at Wegmans Food Markets. “Having traceability and the right partners is the only way to accomplish this.”

“Trace Register’s traceability platform and analytical software really empowers the supply chain to make business improvements, reduce costs and manage risk,” said Alex Miller, vice president of business development at Trace Register in Seattle, Washington. “Without having the data and without analytical tools, your ability to document or observe variations or changes in the data and subsequently make improvements is very limited.”

In February, the Presidential Task Force on Combating IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud released a proposed rule aimed at tackling these problems in the United States. The rule, which is currently open for public comment, proposed new requirements for seafood, including requiring traceability to the first point of entry into U.S. commerce for a select number of species considered “at risk” of IUU fishing and seafood fraud.

“The new rule is missing critical components to stop IUU fishing and seafood fraud,” said Lowell. “Full-chain traceability for all U.S. seafood is a must to ensure that it’s safe, legally caught and honestly labeled. Until then, pirate fishing and seafood fraud will continue to threaten the oceans and consumers’ wallets, while undermining honest fishermen and businesses that play by the rules.”

### **Background:**

Since 2011, Oceana has worked to stop seafood fraud in the United States.

Oceana’s investigations of [fish](#), [shrimp](#), [crab cakes](#), and most recently [salmon](#), in retail markets and restaurants found that, on average, one-third of the seafood

examined in these studies was mislabeled—the product listed on the label or menu was different than what the buyer thought they purchased, often a less desirable or lower-priced species. Oceana has observed threatened species being sold as more sustainable, expensive varieties replaced with cheaper alternatives and fish that can cause illness substituted in place of those that are safe to eat.

In 2014, Oceana conducted the most current and comprehensive review of seafood fraud literature to date, compiling 103 studies in 29 countries and on all continents except Antarctica. Every study found some level of seafood fraud, demonstrating that it is not just an issue that narrowly affects a handful of species or regions. In the U.S. alone, 50 different types of seafood have been found mislabeled with over 150 species substituted in their place. The U.S. currently imports more than 90 percent of its seafood, yet a recent study found that between 20-32 percent of wild-caught seafood crossing our borders comes from ‘pirate’ fishing.

To access Oceana’s full report, video and other materials, please visit [www.oceana.org/fishstories](http://www.oceana.org/fishstories).

*Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization focused solely on ocean conservation. We run science-based campaigns and seek to win policy victories that can restore ocean biodiversity and ensure that the oceans are abundant and can feed hundreds of millions of people. Oceana victories have already helped to create policies that could increase fish populations in its countries by as much as 40 percent and that have protected more than 1 million square miles of ocean. We have campaign offices in the countries that control close to 40 percent of the world’s wild fish catch, including in North, South and Central America, Asia, and Europe. To learn more, please visit [www.oceana.org](http://www.oceana.org).*

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