



Fisheries Council of Canada
Conseil Canadien des Pêches

BOAT TO PLATE TRACEABILITY

Overview

Fish and seafood is one of the most globally traded food commodities and has the potential to undergo many different stages of processing, such as filleting, breading or frying. To ensure food safety is traceable throughout the supply chain, processors are regulated and kept to a high standard with regards to their labelling requirements. These requirements guarantee that consumers can feel confident the product they receive is exactly what the label indicates.

Canada enjoys a strong seafood brand in export markets as a result of our robust fisheries management regulatory regime, our world-leading adoption of third-party certification, and Canada's strong food safety system.

Objective

Assist the government as it considers a Boat-to-Plate Traceability system to recognize existing best practices and avoid unnecessary regulatory burden and associated costs.

Key Messages

1. Canada enjoys a strong seafood brand in export markets as a result of our robust fisheries management regulatory regime, our world-leading adoption of third-party certification, and Canada's strong food safety system.
2. Canadian fish and seafood processors maintain strict quality control measures within their operations that include internal trace back systems in case of food safety concerns.
3. The seafood sector was the first food sector in Canada to develop and implement what is now called the Preventative Control Plan, one of the first regulatory systems in the world to embrace the concepts of HACCP (hazard analysis critical control point) inspection systems.
4. It is more sustainable to buy Canadian seafood rather than imported products.



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Background & Facts

While societal changes in attitude have been an increasing driver towards traceability demands, it is notable that perceived cost of fish and seafood are still the principal factor in many consumers' purchasing decisions. The Fisheries Council of Canada (FCC) commissioned our own market research in 2019, showing that 37% of those surveyed indicated that perceived cost was the main barrier to consuming fish and seafood while quality (lack of trust) and sustainable harvesting was between 4-6%. The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity indicated in their 2020 Public Trust Research that Canadians are most concerned about cost of food which has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic where many individuals have less money to spend on food and inflation has become a major factor.

There are concerns in the Canadian seafood industry that any additional costs due to increased traceability and labelling requirements will be detrimental to the sector, especially since the current system is already one of the best in the world.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) found in their 2022 report that 93% of seafood samples sold in Canadian retailers are labelled correctly. The samples were broken down even further with domestic processors shown to have the highest compliance (96%) followed by importers (94%), and lastly by retailers (88%). This report highlights that mislabeling, while uncommon, is more likely to occur further along the supply chain than at the processor level.

Canadian fish and seafood processors also maintain strict quality control measures within their operations that include internal trace back systems in case there is a food safety concern. The health and safety of consumers is of utmost importance of our members, and batches of product are able to be traced to address any health and safety concern.

FCC has created a comprehensive Canadian seafood consumer guide that provides information on how to find, buy and enjoy Canadian seafood products. This guide encourages the consumption of domestic products to take advantage of the sustainability benefits and the supporting-local movement.