



Fisheries Council of Canada
Conseil Canadien des Pêches



FISHERIES SCIENCE

Overview

DFO has fallen behind on core fisheries science that underpins sustainable fisheries management. Missed fish surveys have created serious data gaps and some stock assessments have not been conducted. At the same time, the department does not always follow science when making fisheries management decisions. Both are hurting the sector and communities that rely on it.

The Canadian fisheries industry has a high standard of sustainability, ranking second in the world in rates of third-party sustainability certifications from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Fisheries and Oceans Canada also reports that 98% of Canadian fish stocks are harvested at sustainable levels. These data points must be considered among other facts in fisheries management decisions.

Objective

Ensure DFO prioritizes sufficient resources and commits to fisheries science in support of evidence-based management decisions and does so in a predictable, transparent and consistent manner.

Key Messages

1. Increase funding resources for fisheries science in support of management decision-making.
2. Implement a resource management framework that is evidence-based, predictable, transparent, and consistently applied.
3. Sustainable use of fisheries is critical to the wellbeing of Canadian coastal and Indigenous communities, as well as the millions who rely on Canadian fish as a healthy protein source.
4. The Canadian fisheries industry has a high standard of sustainability, ranking second in the world among large countries in rates of third-party sustainability certifications from the Marine Stewardship Council.



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Background & Facts

Fisheries science is fundamental to understanding fish stocks, including their health, their impact on the surrounding ecosystem and the disruptions of climate change. The Canadian fisheries industry works hard to provide their own industry-led studies, observations and knowledge, but it is the role of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to provide regular surveys and assessments of fish stocks to inform management decisions.

Increasingly, activities that carry out data collection critical for analysis have been disrupted, due to either lack of funds, inability to procure a survey vessel, or other processes taking precedence over stock assessments because of staffing issues. These science gaps are leading to overly precautionary decisions that undermine the economic prospects for the industry. At the same time, the industry relies on DFO science as evidence for its audits under the Marine Stewardship Council certification. The industry has already lost certifications because of DFO. When that happens, Canadian products lose value in the market.

Canada has the resources to be a sustainable fisheries powerhouse, but only if we understand, manage and optimize our stocks. The industry has an ambitious growth vision but is being held back by lack of fisheries science.

Sixty percent of Canada's fisheries are third-party certified to ensure the product is sustainably sourced. This determination is dependent on stock assessments performed by DFO. Gaps in these assessments have already cost the industry certifications with devastating effects on the hard work to build the market and labeling required to continue the program. This puts Canadian fish and seafood at a market disadvantage, costing operators potential revenue.