



# SUSTAINABILITY MANIFESTO

*A Fish and Seafood  
Industry Perspective*



# FOREWORD

Ensuring future food security is an existential challenge for us all. Our individual and collective economic and physical well-being depend on our having continued access to healthy, sustainable and affordable nutrition. Over 70% of the planet's surface is covered by oceans – from where most life is believed to have evolved – and which have the capacity to provide abundant renewable resources to help us continue to thrive, especially at a time when other food sources are coming under increasing pressure from the impacts of climate change and competition for land use. We have a shared responsibility to protect and enhance the unique contribution which seafood and aquatic fishery products can make to all our lives.



President of Seafood Europe

**Guus Pastoor**

Seafood Europe ([www.seafoodeurope.eu](http://www.seafoodeurope.eu)) is the combined European Trade Association for seafood processors and traders, currently consisting of 15 national associations from 9 EU Member States and 2 third country associate members (UK and Norway). Together these represent some 3,900 individual businesses, employing around 128,000 people and accounting for roughly 80% of the total European sector, with a combined output of about EUR 34 billion.

# OVERVIEW

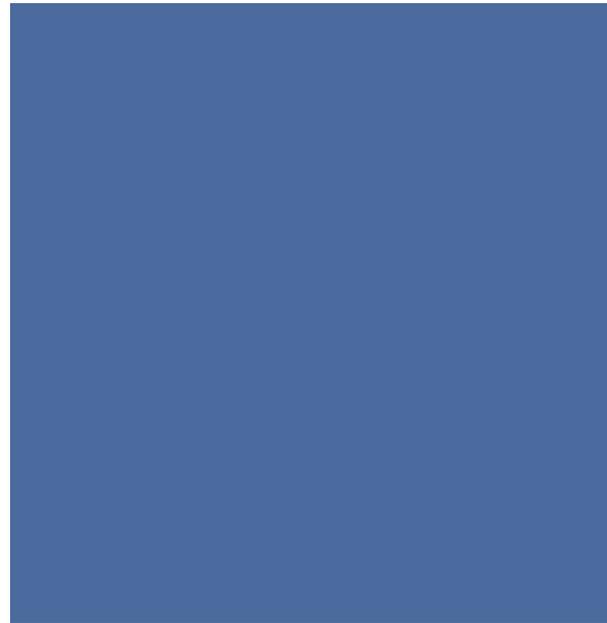
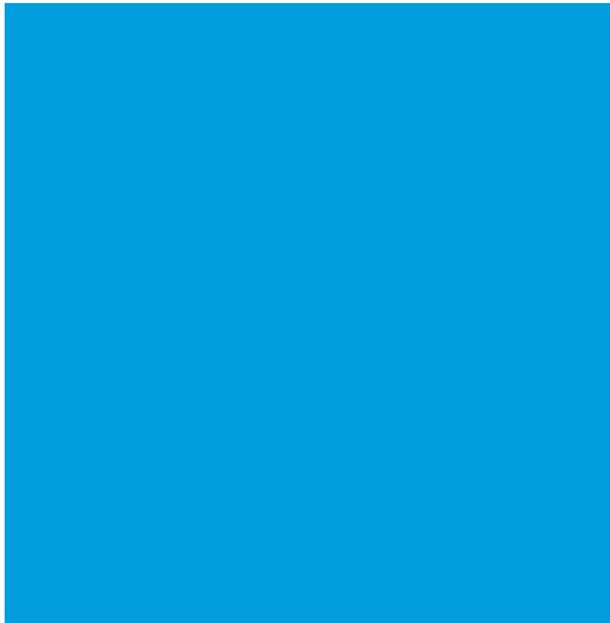
This Manifesto sets out the collective commitment of the European Seafood Industry to safeguarding the future of our marine and aquatic resources by promoting and integrating sustainable practices across all supply chains and actively working to preserve the health of marine ecosystems for the benefit of all who depend on them – as well as contributing to future food security.

Our vision is for oceans abundant with life, where fish and seafood stocks are robust and resilient and to ensure that the industry operates in harmony with the natural world, adopting practices which guarantee the long-term sustainability of marine resources – acting responsibly today to protect ocean health for future generations and to support sustainable ocean economies.

Central to this is the well-being of coastal communities, whose livelihoods depend on healthy marine ecosystems. These communities are vital to our industry, and supporting their stability and prosperity through sustainable practices is a priority. We aim to enhance their economic opportunities while ensuring the sustainability of the environments they inhabit.

In the individual Chapters below, we outline our approach to balancing the economic, environmental, and social challenges facing our industry, serving as a public statement of what Seafood Europe intends to achieve in the field of sustainability. Our industry must remain economically viable while embracing methods that conserve aquatic resources and foster biodiversity. We are committed to a holistic approach to sustainability, recognizing that our efforts must integrate environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability to be truly effective. Healthy and affordable food is a cornerstone of our approach.





**Chapter One** - looks at the crucial role which seafood plays in global nutrition and the need to make those benefits accessible and affordable for all.

While seafood is widely prized as a rich source of protein, there is emerging and robust scientific evidence which demonstrates its broader significance for human nutrition and health. Rich in essential fatty acids and other vital nutrients, seafood makes a far greater dietary contribution than commonly believed. As such, it is a vital component of future food security, both in helping to combat problems of hunger and in providing balanced nutrient intakes to tackle obesity. In addition, a range of by-products not suitable for direct human consumption can be transformed into valuable raw materials and resources for the aquacultural, pharmaceutical, agricultural, and cosmetic industries, adding further societal and ecological benefits.

We pledge to innovate and continuously improve our performance, guided by scientific research and an unwavering commitment to best practice methods. This includes

upholding sustainable fishing, responsible aquaculture, and ethical sourcing and processing, which together form the core areas of our vision:

**Chapter Two** - explains why responsible fishing and healthy oceans are fundamental. This includes responsible management of the initial stages of harvesting in wild fisheries through to the final stages of landing for wild-caught fish and seafood. It emphasizes science-based resource management, fishing best practices, and the importance of transparency, traceability, and international cooperation.

**Chapter Three** - addresses the parallel need for responsible aquaculture. This focuses on sustainable farming practices that minimize environmental impacts while maximizing productivity and fish health. It includes innovations in feed, health management, and farming systems that promote ecological balance.

**Chapter Four** - looks at issues of responsible processing, highlighting the need for ethical sourcing and environmentally friendly pro-

cessing methods. Prioritizing CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction and decarbonisation, we aim to reduce waste, improve energy efficiency, and ensure that all byproducts are utilized effectively, in line with circular economy principles.

**Chapter Five** - deals with the pivotal issues of protecting human rights and promoting community development. We are committed to improving the lives of those within our supply chains, advocating for fair labour practices, and supporting the socio-economic development of coastal communities.



**Chapter Six** - sets out the importance of responsible communication as key to our overall strategy. Transparent and accurate communication about our practices and products builds trust with consumers and stakeholders, fostering an informed and supportive community.

Developed with the involvement of the leading experts from across the sector, this Manifesto serves as a roadmap for driving improvement throughout the entire value chain. In collaboration with European institutions and others – and in alignment with global sustainability goals - we aim to lead by example and to inspire others.

We call upon stakeholders within and beyond the seafood industry to join us in this crucial mission. Together, we can ensure that our practices are sustainable, responsible, and in line with global efforts to preserve our oceans. Embracing this Manifesto signifies a collective commitment to a path that respects and nurtures marine life and the communities dependent on it, leading to a sustainable and prosperous coexistence with the sea, for people and the planet.



Chair of Sustainability  
Working Group  
**Luciano Pirovano**



Vice-Chair of Sustainability  
Working Group  
**Jennie Montell**

# CHAPTER ONE

## The role of Fish and Seafood in healthy and sustainable diets

*“Aquatic foods provide unique micronutrients that can help secure healthy diets. It’s about time we harnessed aquatic foods to their full capacity to deliver ecological, economic and nutrition benefits around the world.<sup>1</sup>” - Manuel Barange*

1.1. To address the global challenge of malnutrition, poor-quality diets, and unprecedented environmental damage from food production and consumption, we must adopt healthy and sustainable diets and food systems. Sustainable diets are also instrumental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and are at the core of Food System reforms across the globe. While the reduction of animal-sourced foods has been frequently suggested as key to improving the sustainability of food systems, fish and seafood offer an animal food source with a lower environmental impact. Today, the role of fish and seafood is still largely absent or insufficiently articulated in the sustainable diets literature, making their contribution towards healthy diets unclear. This knowledge gap extends to food security literature, in which the role of fish and seafood remains under-recognised and undervalued.

1.2. Fish and seafood have a wide range of nutritional benefits and should be included as part of a healthy diet. Firstly, they are a concentrated source of highly bioavailable nutrients including vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, and high-quality protein. Their health benefits are well documented, including protection against chronic disease as well as benefits for child growth and development. Although food safety issues such as

<sup>1</sup> <https://mowi.com/news/blue-food-assessment-shows-benefits-of-salmon-farming>



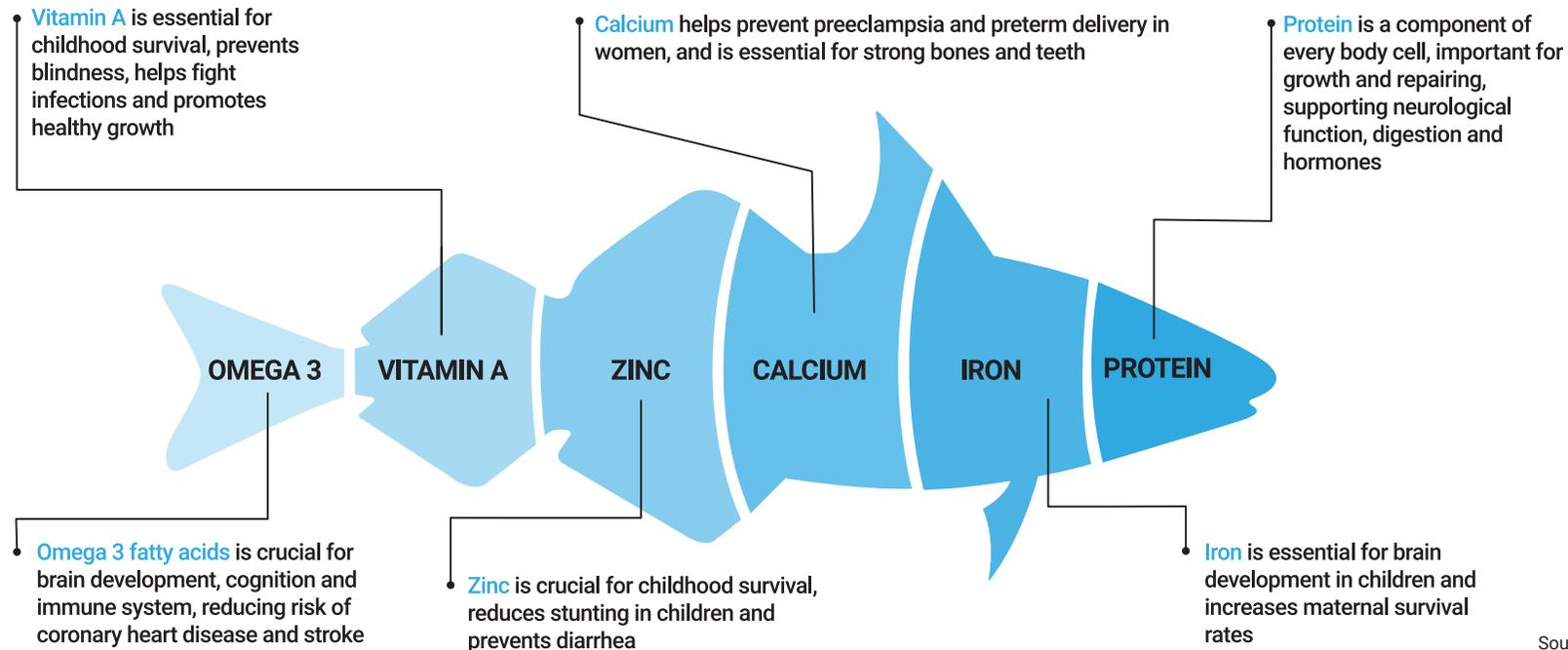
contamination with methylmercury are a concern for some susceptible groups, the benefits of fish and seafood consumption generally outweigh the risks. Consumption of fish and seafood as part of a healthy diet offers a unique prospect to address the global health issue of malnutrition (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency, and non-communicable diseases associated with overweight or obesity), which are simultaneously experienced in many parts of the world.

1.3. **Given its health benefits, prospects for substantial expansion, and potential for a relatively small environmental footprint, the EAT-Lancet report<sup>2</sup> suggests seafood to be a particularly promising and accessible source of protein and nutrients in the future.** In fact, fish and seafood, together with fruits and vegetables, are recognized as emphasized foods, meaning their consumption should be encouraged when pro-

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31788-4/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31788-4/abstract)

moting diets that are good for people and for the planet. They play an important role in fighting hunger and malnutrition throughout the world, especially for populations in many developing countries. However, seafood is also increasingly important for contributing to healthy diets in developed countries.

1.4. **All seafood contains important protein and, depending on the species, various amounts of fats and micronutrients.**



Source: EAT – Lancet

1.5. **Fatty and medium-fat fish are generally major dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids.** Lean fish such as whitefish (cod, haddock, Alaska pollock, saithe, plaice and pike) generally contain relatively less omega-3 compared to medium-fat fish (halibut, catfish, tuna) and fatty fish (sardines, herring, mackerel, trout, salmon, eel), but they can still be a good source of micronutrients in a varied diet.

1.6 **Iodine, selenium, calcium, iron, zinc, vitamin D, vitamin A and vitamins B12** are crucial micronutrients also provided through seafood consumption, though again the nutrient content and quality differs between species and can vary within the same species depending on fishing areas and seasons.

### ***Cardiovascular and Metabolic Health***

1.7. Over the last decades, the increase in human lifespan and the growing older population worldwide has led to a substantial rise in age-related diseases alongside conditions like cardiovascular diseases and



cancer. The nutrients fish and seafood may contribute to a healthier metabolic profile. Most of these protective effects are generally attributed to the content in omega-3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (PUFAs) which are known to exert anti-inflammatory and lipid-lowering effects therefore reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. In this regard, the Global Burden of Disease study estimated that in 2017 almost 800,000 deaths worldwide could be attributed to diets low in seafood omega 3 fatty acids<sup>3</sup>.

1.8. For these reasons, different national and international organisations have provided recommendations on the optimal amounts of fish and other seafoods to consume to reduce the risk of certain diet-related diseases. For example, **the European Food Safety Authority states that the benefits of fish and seafood consumption are achieved with between one to four servings per week.** To reach these dietary recommendations, fish and seafood can be consumed fresh, frozen, or as canned products, a category growing in popularity due to its ease-of-use and affordability<sup>4</sup>.

1.9. Also, beneficial effects of fish and seafood consumption (in general) on cardiovascular disease have been revealed over the past decades, and several studies have suggested an inverse relationship between levels of consumption and heart failure, cerebrovascular disease, coronary calcification, ischemic stroke, and sudden coronary death risk. Other studies suggest that fish and seafood consumption protects or improves metabolic health.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>3</sup> GBD 2017 Diet Collaborators, 2019

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/data-report/food-consumption-data>

<sup>5</sup> Fish Intake in Relation to Fatal and Non-Fatal Cardiovascular Risk: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cohort Studies



## *Fish consumption and risk of Cancer*

1.10. **The results of several studies<sup>6</sup> suggest that, in addition to the potential beneficial effect of fish and seafood consumption on cardiovascular disease risk, the intake of even relatively small amounts is a favorable indicator of the risk of several digestive tract cancers, notably colon and rectal cancer,** which are among the leading causes of cancer mortality in developed countries. Further, recent and convincing evidence shows that intake of fish and seafood are not risk factors for gastric cancer regardless of preservation method.

## *Cognitive Health*

1.11. In addition to other health issues, mental and cognitive health have been reported to represent an emerging global issue for elderly individuals worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation, conditions like Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have been estimated to account for nearly 60 million cases glob-

<sup>6</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36495166/>

ally, projected to rise 3-fold by 2050. These conditions are influenced by polygenic predisposition and lifestyle and environmental factors. With a lack of effective treatments available to date, prevention and a focus on reaching older age in better health represent the most important strategies to reduce the burden of such conditions. **Dietary patterns characterised by fish and seafood consumption as one of the main sources of protein have been consistently associated with lower risk of neurodegenerative conditions.** Three recent reviews and meta-analyses explored the role of fish and cognitive outcomes reporting a dose-response association with lower risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Current findings<sup>7</sup> suggest that higher fish and seafood intake is associated with better cognitive status in older individuals. Whether its consumption may actually decrease the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease is still to be confirmed, but current results are promising.

<sup>7</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39162889/>

## *Contribution of Fish and Seafood towards combatting Malnutrition*

1.12. Micronutrient deficiency presents an expanding Public Health concern across all countries. For example, micronutrient deficiencies account for an estimated one million premature deaths annually, and for some nations can reduce gross domestic product (GDP) by up to 11%, highlighting the need for food policies that focus on improving nutrition rather than simply increasing the volume of food produced. People gain nutrients from a varied diet, although fish and seafood, which are a rich source of bioavailable micronutrients that are essential to human health, are often overlooked. A lack of understanding of the nutrient composition of most fish and seafood and how nutrient yields vary among fisheries has hindered the policy shifts that are needed to effectively harness their potential for food and nutrition security. A recent study, published on Nature, using the concentration of 7 nutrients in more than 350 species of marine fish and seafood, estimated how environmental and ecological traits predict nutrient content of marine finfish species.

Some key findings include:

- Species from tropical, thermal regimes contain higher concentrations of calcium, iron and zinc; smaller species contain higher concentrations of calcium, iron and omega-3 fatty acids
- Species from cold thermal regimes or those with a pelagic feeding pathway contain higher concentrations of omega-3 fatty acids
- There is no relationship between nutrient concentrations and total fishery yield, highlighting that the nutrient quality of a fishery is determined by the species composition.

1.13. For many countries in which nutrient intakes are inadequate, nutrients available in marine finfish catches exceed the dietary requirements for populations that live within 100 km of the coast, and a fraction of current landings could be particularly impactful for children under 5 years of age. **Current analyses suggest that fish-based food strategies have the potential to substantially contribute to global food and nutrition security.**



# CHAPTER TWO

## Responsible Fisheries & Healthy Oceans

*“Sustainable fishing helps maintain healthy and diverse ocean ecosystems and minimise impacts on endangered, threatened and protected species... We need to manage fish stocks, globally, on a sustainable basis so they can continue to provide renewable, healthy, affordable and low-carbon protein for humanity.<sup>8</sup>” - Marine Stewardship Council.*

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.msc.org/en-us/what-we-are-doing/our-approach/what-is-sustainable-fishing>

2.1. As representatives of the European Union seafood industry, we recognise the critical importance of maintaining the health and sustainability of our oceans. As stewards of marine resources, we commit to playing our part to foster responsible practices that ensure the long-term viability of fisheries, the preservation of marine ecosystems, and the economic prosperity of coastal communities. This section of the Manifesto outlines our commitment to supporting responsible fishing practices and our role in ensuring the sustainability of our oceans for generations to come.

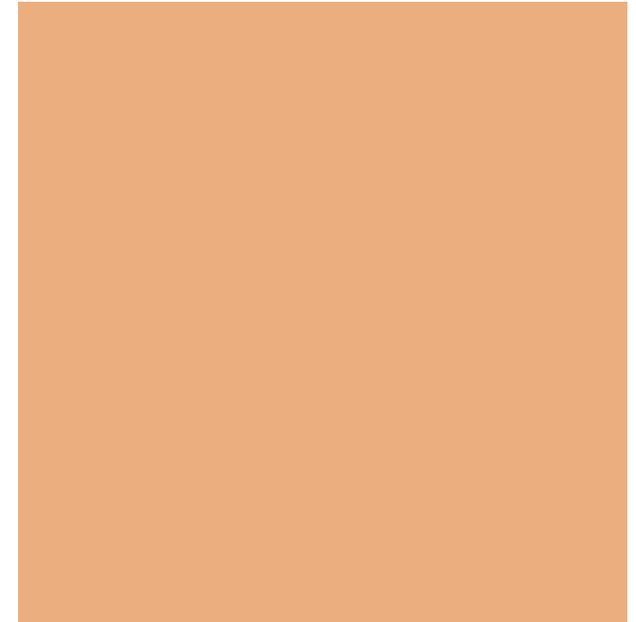
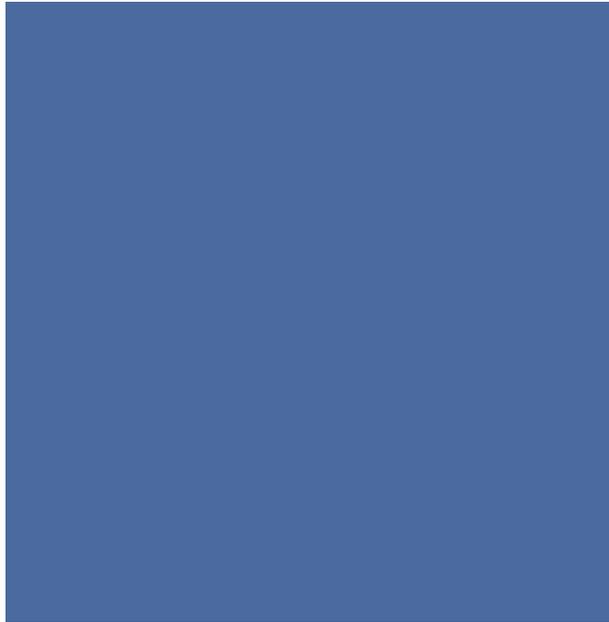
2.2. The scope of this section encompasses the responsible management of the initial stages of harvesting in wild fisheries<sup>9</sup> through to the final stages of landing for wild-caught fish and seafood. We stand united in recognising our essential role and profound responsibility in helping to shape the future of our oceans and fisheries. Our commitment extends beyond the boundaries of our industry, reaching into the very heart of marine ecosystems and the broader global community. This section of the

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<sup>9</sup> Wild fishery is defined as fish and seafood wild caught and excludes any form of aquaculture.

Manifesto is a testament to our unwavering dedication to sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.

2.3. Envisioning a world where oceans brim with life, we are dedicated to maintaining fish and seafood stocks that are not only robust and resilient but also managed to thrive in synchrony with the rhythms of the natural world. We see a future defined by our actions today—a future where our practices support the long-term sustainability of marine resources, ensuring that these treasures are preserved for the generations to come.



## ***Marine Fisheries and Ecosystems: Committing to Future Generations***

2.4. To future-proof our industry, we must commit to certain measures to maintain our fisheries and ecosystems:

a) Science-based Resource Management: Prioritising rigorous scientific research to guide fisheries management, will ensure that decisions are data-driven for optimal fish and seafood stock health. We expect all parties involved in fisheries negotiations to improve communication channels for de-

cision making to ensure implementation of the scientific advice.

b) Responsible Treatment of Wider Marine Ecosystem: recognising our responsibility towards the entire marine ecosystem drives us to adopt approaches to fisheries management to protect and preserve marine biodiversity as a whole.

c) Responding to Climate Change: We must proactively address the effects of climate change on marine ecosystems on a precautionary basis until the dynamics are fully un-

derstood and adapt our practices for their resilience. Science will inform changes to practices and policies to protect the most vulnerable marine habitats and species. We will explore solutions to reduce emissions from fishing activities where needed and mitigate climate-related impacts.

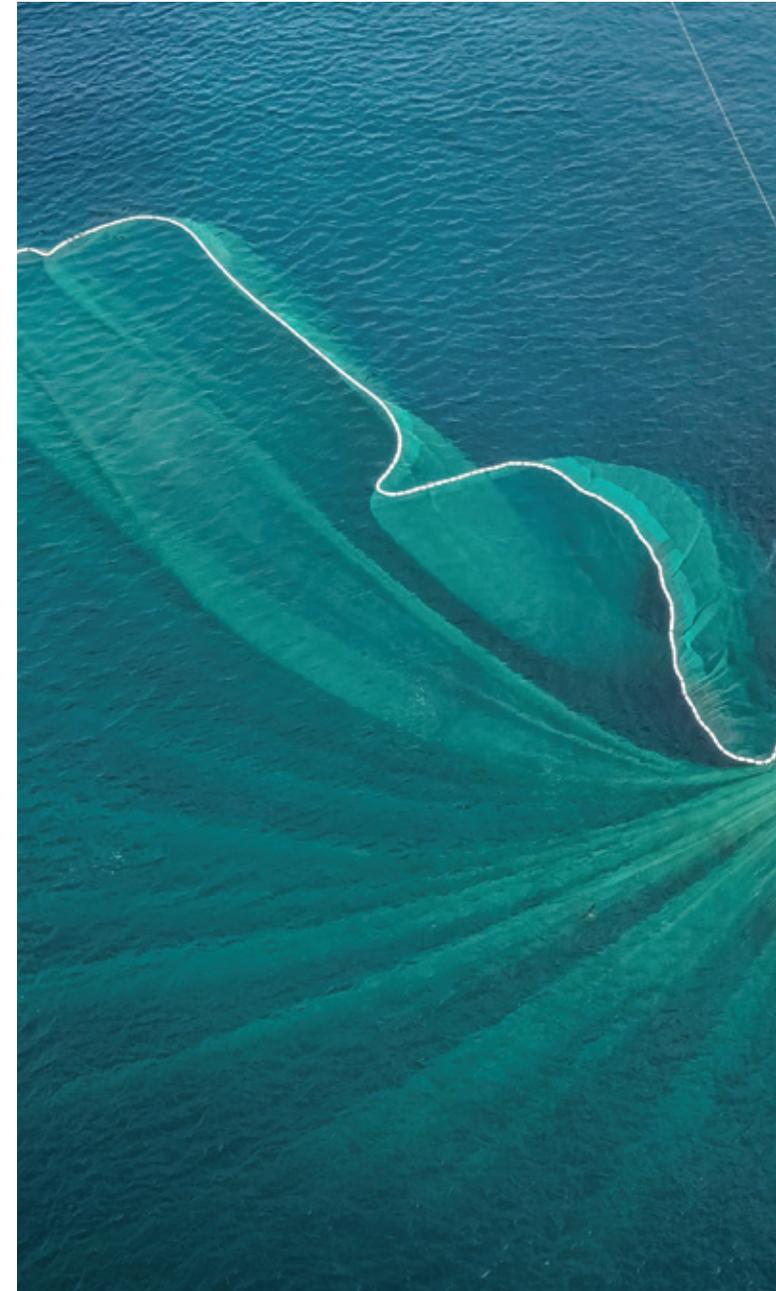
## ***Responsibility and Progress: Industry's role within stewardship of the seas***

2.5. The health and sustainability of our oceans is paramount to everything we do. In our role as environmental stewards, we must hold our industry to certain standards such as fishing best practice. By rigorously supporting sustainable fishing methods to avoid overfishing, we can manage and minimise ecosystem impacts including bycatch, especially for Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species, lost fishing gear and other elements thereby respecting the oceans' balance.

**2.6. Further improving transparent practices and ensuring traceability along the value chain** will also foster trust and accountability for our industry. We are dedicated to building a comprehensive system of traceability from the point of catch, including information on origin, gear type and net size. Fishing boatowners and fleet managers will be required to substantiate their adherence to responsible fishing practices, demonstrating that their activities are of course

legal, appropriately reported, and regulated. We work towards the implementation of a chain of custody across all links in the supply chain as a tool to demonstrate correct traceability, supplemented by other forms of independent verification where necessary.

**2.7. Investment in research and development** is also critical to innovation and to delivering improving practices that will ensure a sustainable future and environment. These will include advanced fishing technologies that minimise environmental impact, minimise energy consumption, and optimise resource utilisation. We are committed to continuous evaluation and improvement of our methods, aligning them with the highest sustainability standards and to reviewing and updating policies, procedures and practices regularly in response to new scientific findings, technological advancements, and changing environmental conditions.





## ***Management and Regulations: Safeguarding Our Oceanic Heritage***

2.8. We also have a responsibility to care for our oceans and their health, adapting our practices to protect our marine environments. This includes:

- a) **Strong Regulatory and Management Systems:** Advocating for and adhering to stringent regulations that enforce sustainable fishing and protect marine resources.
- b) **Robust Harvest Strategies:** Implementing strategic, well-planned, science-based approaches to managing fish and seafood populations sustainably and responsibly.
- c) **Precautionary Approach:** Exercising a precautionary principle in our operations to avoid unintended negative impacts on marine ecosystems.
- d) **International Cooperation:** Agreement of harvest strategies between nations that share stocks is critical for conservation efforts as fish and other marine species populations across man-made boundaries.
- e) **Long-Term Economic Viability:** Ensuring the fishing industry's economic sustainability while prioritising environmental stewardship.

## ***Accelerating Progress: A culture of collaboration and working together***

2.9. For maximum impact, our efforts must be underpinned by international cooperation. We will actively engage with regional and international stakeholders and partners to exchange knowledge and best practice. We will strengthen agreements that promote sustainable fishing practices, combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and protect vulnerable marine areas.

2.10. Partnerships with governments, NGOs, scientists, fishing communities, and other stakeholders will help us reach our common goal of sharing knowledge, exchanging best practices, and developing effective policies that address challenges, promote responsible fishing, and safeguard marine environments.

2.11. Aside from industry connections, our collaborations must also involve key stakeholders like coastal communities and consumers. Our work must support them as well. We are committed to the well-being of

coastal communities that rely on fishing for their livelihoods. We will support initiatives that provide training, capacity-building, and alternative income sources to ensure the socio-economic sustainability of these communities in harmony with ocean conservation goals.

2.12. We will also collaborate with governments, NGOs, and educational institutions to raise awareness about the importance of sustainable seafood consumption.

2.13. In conclusion, in the spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility, we, the seafood industry representatives in the European Union, hereby commit to uphold this Manifesto for Sustainable Fisheries and Healthy Oceans. We acknowledge the important role that the seafood industry plays for fishing communities, coastal regions, livelihoods and consumers. Through our united efforts, we will drive improvements and advancements in ocean conservation and safeguarding the valuable resources that we are afforded by our oceans.



# CHAPTER THREE

## Responsible Aquaculture

*“Aquaculture has undeniably established its crucial role in global food security and nutrition, reducing the supply-demand gap for aquatic food.<sup>10</sup>” – FAO State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report 2022.*

<sup>10</sup> <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9df19f53-b931-4d04-acd3-58a71c6b1a5b/content/sofia/2022/expanding-sustainable-aquaculture-production.html>



3.1. As the global population grows, the demand for sustainable food intensifies. Aquaculture holds immense potential to meet this need – if done responsibly. Unsustainable practices threaten marine ecosystems, local communities, and future food security. This Manifesto calls for a collective commitment to responsible aquaculture practices that prioritise environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic viability. By embracing innovation, minimising waste, and ensuring the well-being of aquatic life, we can contribute to the sustainable development of aquaculture into a

solution for feeding the world sustainably. Together, we must protect our oceans, rivers, and wetlands, ensuring that aquaculture thrives in harmony with nature and benefits all of humanity. This is our moment to lead change and secure a sustainable future.

3.2. Aquaculture has increased by 6.6% since 2020, contributing over 57% of aquatic animal products used for direct human consumption. In fact, the most recent 2024 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report on the status of fisheries and aquaculture indicates that for the first time,

aquaculture surpassed capture fisheries in aquatic animal production. 94.4 million tonnes, representing 51% of the world total and a record 57% of the production destined for human consumption now comes from aquaculture.

Furthermore, aquatic animal production is expected to further increase by 10% by 2032, driven by aquaculture expansion and capture fisheries recovery.

3.3. For the purposes of this Manifesto, we are using the FAO 1988 definition of aquaculture as meaning: “The farming of aquatic organisms, including fish, molluscs, crustaceans and aquatic plants. Farming implies some form of intervention in the rearing process to enhance production, such as regular stocking, feeding, protection from predators, etc. Farming also implies individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated.<sup>11</sup> The specific scope of aquaculture ranges from hatcheries to grow out facilities in either body of water, Freshwater, Brackish, and Marine Water as well as different production systems”.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/4/x6941e/x6941e04.htm>

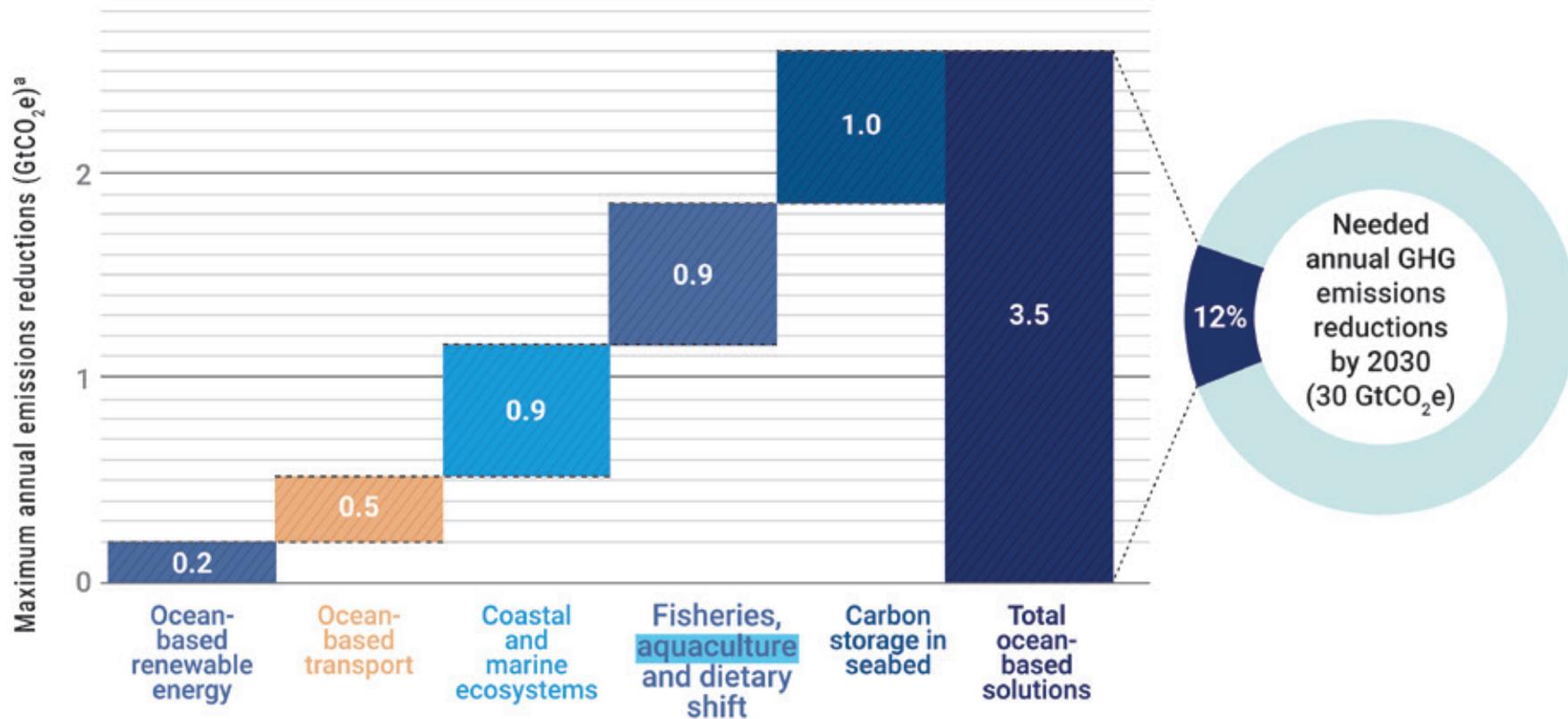
Based on this, the remaining section of this Manifesto focuses on the environmental and animal welfare aspects of aquaculture.

### ***The role of Aquaculture in facilitating a more climate-friendly diet***

3.4 Producing food from the ocean is more climate-friendly than livestock. Fish do not need to spend energy maintaining their body temperature like mammals do, or, due to their buoyancy in the water, to carry the weight of their bodies. This means they require less feed per kilogram of body weight compared to cattle or pigs, resulting in a lower carbon footprint than land-based proteins. To meet the dietary needs of 9.7 billion people by 2050 and reduce reliance on emission-intensive land-based proteins, we can reform wild-capture fisheries and increase sustainable ocean-based aquaculture. These measures will provide better health outcomes for consumers, higher revenues for farmers after fishers, lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduced land-based conflicts, and lower water usage.



**Figure 2: Contribution of Five Ocean-Based Climate Action Areas to Mitigating Climate Change in 2030 (Maximum GtCO<sub>2</sub>e)**



Note: To stay under a 1.5°C change relative to pre-industrial levels.

Source: Hoegh-Guldberg, O., et al. 2019. "The Ocean as a Solution to Climate Change: Five Opportunities for Action." Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. [https://oceanpanel.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/HLP\\_Report\\_Ocean\\_Solution\\_Climate\\_Change\\_final.pdf](https://oceanpanel.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/HLP_Report_Ocean_Solution_Climate_Change_final.pdf).

3.5. Aquaculture and fisheries are essential for shifting diets from land-based to climate-smart proteins, helping to close the emissions gap needed to meet the Paris Agreement (see in Footnote <sup>12</sup>).

3.6. By adopting additional sustainable practices, aquaculture can further minimise its environmental footprint and support climate change mitigation. Key actions to take are:

- Further reduction in Feed Conversion Factor (FCR) - the biggest lever to minimise environmental impact, by improving feed formulation.
- Reducing GHG emissions through energy-efficient technologies, renewable energy sources, and better feed practices.
- Adopt more sustainable feed sourcing by using alternative, low-impact feeds
- Improving waste management with efficient waste treatment and recycling to reduce GHG emissions.

### ***Responsible Farm Management***

3.7. As global populations continue to grow, we need to work to ensure food security becomes increasingly important. Aquaculture can play a significant role in meeting the rising demand for nutritional and protein-rich foods. However, this must be done responsibly to avoid depleting natural resources. The solution is responsible fish and seafood farm management, which is crucial for environmental sustainability<sup>13</sup>, economic viability, social responsibility, and food security. Responsible Farm management practices will help mitigate negative social and environmental effects. These practices should be promoted

<sup>12</sup> From Stuchtey, M., A. Vincent, A. Merkl, M. Bucher et al. 2020. "Ocean Solutions That Benefit People, Nature and the Economy." Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. [oceanpanel.org/publication/ocean-solutions-that-benefit-people-nature-and-the-economy](https://oceanpanel.org/publication/ocean-solutions-that-benefit-people-nature-and-the-economy)

<sup>13</sup> The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) report, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), highlights the growing importance of aquaculture in addressing global food security and nutrition needs. According to the SOFIA report, aquaculture has become the fastest-growing food production sector, significantly contributing to the supply of fish and aquatic products. The report underscores aquaculture's role in relieving pressure on wild fish stocks, as it now accounts for more than half of the global fish supply for human consumption. The SOFIA report emphasises that sustainable aquaculture can contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, and promoting sustainable economic growth. However, it also stresses the need for improvements in sustainability practices to reduce environmental impacts and enhance social equity.

by promoting sustainable ways of working including site selection to operate environmentally friendly, staff training and qualifications and promotion of good husbandry practices.

3.8. The implementation of 4.0 technology is already happening in European Aquaculture (e.g. seabream, seabass and salmon), meaning a digital strategy leveraging advanced technologies like AI, IoT (Internet of Things), and automation to revolutionise the industry from roe to plate, enhancing efficiency, sustainability, and fish welfare.

### ***Farming in harmony with nature***

3.9. Protecting biodiversity in sensitive habitats is crucial for aquaculture farms to ensure ecosystem health and sustainability. One such habitat is the benthos (seabed), which includes organisms living at the bottom of water bodies and play a key role in nutrient cycling and supporting marine food webs. Aquaculture operations monitor the benthos and demonstrate their activities do not have a cumulative impact, meaning an impact beyond the carrying capacity of the environment.



3.10. Concerns about the potential impact of aquaculture on aquatic and surrounding ecosystems are valid and need to be addressed. Using optimal feeding management and effective waste management systems preventing unnecessary nutrient run-off into surrounding waters (which can lead to ecological imbalances). Additionally, technological advancements like underwater cameras can help avoid feed waste. Aquaculture operations can also minimise pollution and other negative impacts on ecosystems by adhering to strict environmental regulations, including environmental risk assessments and environmental impact assessments. This includes properly disposing of waste, avoiding the use of harmful chemicals, and monitoring and managing water and seawater quality to ensure the health of both the farmed species and their surrounding habitats.

3.11. The risk of escapes in aquaculture may disrupt local biodiversity. Farms must take measures to minimise interactions with wild animals, especially those known to be at threat, and to prevent escapes. Technical standards applied by farming operations

have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of escape incidents over the last 20 years. Further measures that can be taken to prevent escape incidents include the use of resilient farming equipment and training of site personnel to ensure standard operational protocols are followed. Additional technological innovations in new net materials and design can be used to further minimise the risk of escape incidents.

3.12. Aquaculture operations must also implement proper waste management practices to minimise pollution of water bodies and surrounding ecosystems. Aquaculture operations must strive to minimise freshwater use and utilise sustainable water management practices to preserve this precious resource and prevent salinisation of surrounding environments like agricultural land.

### ***Animal welfare***

3.13. Maintaining good water quality and animal welfare is essential for aquaculture farms to ensure the health of farmed animals and protection of the environment.

Good water quality (biotic and abiotic parameters and science-based thresholds) is the backbone of animal welfare. Poor water quality can lead to disease outbreaks, stress in aquatic animals, and even mass die-offs. Additional practices that ensure the health and well-being of farmed fish and seafood include:

- Species specific approaches throughout the rearing period
- Optimal environmental conditions such as water quality
- Monitoring of animal behavior
- Good Feeding management, feed quality and the right feed per life stage
- Protection against predators and parasites
- Staff training on how to handle and work with aquatic animals
- Implementation of biosecurity measures optimal transportation and handling
- Responsible medicine use to maintain animal health
- Optimal species, production system, and life stage specific stocking density
- Species specific stunning and slaughtering methods

## *Precision feed and feeding*

3.14. Farms must also optimise feed formulations using sustainable feed raw materials to prevent overfishing of wild fish used as a source of fish meal and oil, reduce deforestation of agricultural crops like soy and palm oil, and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Optimising feed formulations to meet nutritional needs without excess reduces feed waste and improves efficiency. Using feed raw materials that lead to further reductions in Food Conversion Ratios, and optimal feeding strategies are the most important lever to reduce environmental impact related to feed.

- a) **Alternative Ingredients:** Using alternative feed raw materials that enable further growth of the aquaculture sector without increasing the environmental impacts of the feed is important.
- b) **Utilise By-products:** Incorporation of by-products from other industries, like agricultural or fish and seafood processing materials for re-use, helps reduce waste and resource use.
- c) **Certified Feed:** Sourcing feed from suppliers with sustainability certifications ensures responsible practices in feed production.

## *Appropriate Medicine Use*

3.15. Responsible medicinal use is key for a sustainable European aquaculture. Applying biosecurity measures and using/developing effective vaccines is key for disease prevention. Antibiotics are not an appropriate prevention measure due to the potential for antimicrobial resistance (AMR). They must only be used to protect the welfare of fish stocks, prescribed by health professionals. A withdrawal period must be respected to avoid any antibiotic residues reaching the end consumer. Encouraging examples exist in Europe, praised by the World Health Organisation, where the use of effective vaccines in Norway has contributed to a close to zero use of antibiotics in farmed salmon. Farms shall maintain sustainable practices, such as good water quality, proper nutrition, vaccines and disease prevention strategies to minimise the need for antibiotics. We also encourage governmental support to a more effective development and approval of new vaccines that incorporate the latest scientific knowledge.

## ***Transparency and verification of best practices***

3.16 While all areas mentioned have their unique importance, proof of documentation and following best practices are of utmost importance. Consumers are increasingly seeking sustainably sourced fish and seafood. The same can be said of stakeholders interested and/or potentially impacted by aquaculture operations; this includes (but is not limited to) academia, civil society/NGOs, regulators, other water-users and local (including indigenous) communities. Fish and seafood farms that adhere to responsible management practices can therefore capitalise on this trend by marketing their products as environmentally friendly and socially responsible, provided they go through a traceable supply chain. This not only enhances brand reputation, provides social license to operate, but in return also encourages investment in sustainable production.

3.17. In conclusion, sustainable aquaculture practices are already in place, and with ongoing innovations in the sector, even more impactful solutions will emerge to enhance the sustainability of European aquaculture.



# CHAPTER FOUR

## Responsible Manufacturing & Processing

*“Climate change and overfishing transform ocean ecosystems, that is why reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fishing sustainably are so important for ocean health. Food is an important part of total greenhouse gas emissions and major reductions of dietary emissions can be achieved by shifting from red meat to low-impact seafood, a shift that would also come with beneficial health effects.<sup>14</sup>”*  
- Friederike Ziegler, Senior Scientist, RISE Research Institutes of Sweden.

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<sup>14</sup> Ziegler, F. (2003). Environmental impact assessment of seafood products. Environmentally-Friendly Food Processing, 70–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-85573-677-1.50010-0>

4.1. For the purposes of this Chapter, the following are regarded as being in scope:

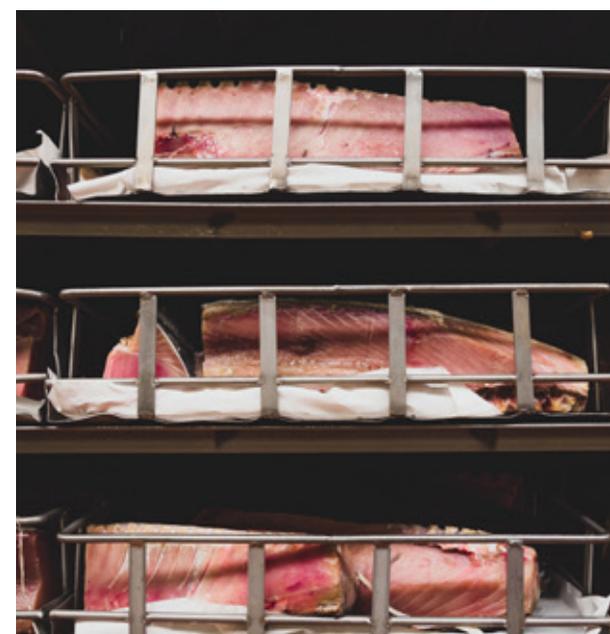
- From landing port and slaughter to factory gate of finished products
- Post-harvest

The following are considered as being **out of scope**:

- Post-factory gate, i.e. retail, storage and consumer consumption
- Wild fishing and aquaculture rearing, farming, or harvest
- Food Safety: As processors of fish products, food safety through effective management of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and social compliance is a pre-requisite for responsible processing. However, these aspects are not included within the scope of this document.

### ***Responsible Management of Resources overall***

4.2. The threat of natural resource scarcity and natural resource competition are at a critical level. The food system contributes to more than a third of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>15</sup> and so it is our responsibility to source, manufacture and sell our food to consumers in a responsible way. To reduce pressure on resources and deliver a more resilient and inclusive food system, there is a need to support the wider transformation of responsible production practices. Responsible and sustainable management is required.



<sup>15</sup> FAO - News Article: Food systems account for more than one third of global greenhouse gas emissions

4.3. We also need to be conscious of a growing global population. The world's population is expected to rise to 8.6 billion people by 2030<sup>16</sup> from 8 billion in 2023<sup>17</sup> and simultaneously, we expect a doubling of global fish consumption by 2050<sup>18</sup>. As consumers look to reduce red meat consumption, fish and seafood remains an important source of protein and other essential nutrients. It is also lower in carbon emissions than many other terrestrial animal food ingredients, especially red meat<sup>19</sup>. We must therefore all focus on where we can have the greatest impact. It is our collective responsibility to set targets that directly contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, more than 50% of which could be seen to be impacted by global fish and seafood production.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/desa/world-population-projected-reach-98-billion-2050-and-112-billion-2100#:~:text=The%20current%20world%20population%20of,Nations%20report%20being%20launched%20today>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-population-day#:~:text=State%20of%20World%20Population%202023%3A%208%20Billion%20Lives%2C%20Infinite%20Possibilities>

<sup>18</sup> Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2021

<sup>19</sup> The recommendation to eat fish regularly is shared by virtually all national and international guidelines for healthy eating, see chapter 5 on Healthy and affordable Food

## ***Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

4.4. As previously mentioned, according to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the food system contributes to more than a third of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>20</sup>. Every company, as part of the Seafood Europe, is called upon to take responsibility in reducing their Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. A notable number of our companies are demonstrating important progress toward their established targets and commitments.

## ***Understanding Factory / Manufacturing & Corporate Carbon Footprints***

4.5. As Seafood Europe, representing around 80% of fish processing in the EU, we recommend that all companies assess their corporate carbon footprint annually. This will allow them to identify emission

<sup>20</sup> FAO - News Article: Food systems account for more than one third of global greenhouse gas emissions





hotspots within their value chain, enabling them to take action to reduce them. We also recommend conducting a Product Carbon Footprint or even better, a cradle-to-grave Life Cycle Assessment, on your company's products to identify hotspots and provide a foundation for future product developments with lower carbon footprints as compared to their predecessors.

***Setting ambitious Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi): recommended public carbon reduction targets***

4.6. To be able to set ambitious reduction targets it is key to understand the GHG emissions across the whole value chain of a company, full upstream and full downstream. Once this has been assessed the hotspots become visible and clear reduction targets can be set with the ultimate goal of ambitious public carbon reduction targets. The SBTi is a partnership between CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project), the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute (WRI) and the

Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). Targets adopted by companies to reduce GHG emissions are considered 'science-based' if they are aligned to the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement – to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.

4.7. Having a neutral third-party body to scientifically advise and judge whether GHG emission reduction activities are ambitious - and in line with latest climate science - is key to tackling climate change and ensuring a level playing field for all. In this space our recommendation is to engage with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) to get GHG emission reduction targets approved.

***Responsible Energy Management***

4.8. Using energy from renewable sources. Energy sourcing is linked to energy vulnerability which depends on a country's self-sufficiency, alternatives to fossil fuels, accessibility, efficiency, and economic resilience.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Energy vulnerability index: <https://www.strategic-risk-global.com/esg-risks/spotlight-on-the-risks-of-energy-vulnerability-and-how-to-manage-them/1445257.article>

Given current vulnerabilities within energy markets, one of the best ways to ease pressure on networks is to transition to renewable or green energy, and energy that is more locally sourced or decentralised.<sup>22</sup> The more demand for renewable energy the more it can facilitate a shift away from and reliance on fossil fuels and reduce GHG emissions.

4.9. Reducing energy use. While some studies declare that there will be enough energy from renewable sources to transition to a net-zero economy by 2050<sup>23</sup>, if we consider ever-increasing energy demand from increasingly higher living standards, current energy supplies from renewable sources are globally not at a quantitative and widely accessible state yet to supersede fossil energy-based supplies. Consequently, in an effort to reach net-zero, manufacturers and processors will need to look to reduce their energy consumption (the greenest kWh is the one not used).

22 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301421521004365#:~:text=Further%20in%20this%20regard%2C%20renewable,the%20energy%20supply%20and%20security.>

23 LUT University in Finland and Energy Watch Group: <https://www.endesa.com/en/the-e-face/energy-sector/future-renewable-energy>, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/03/electricity-generation-renewables-power-ia/>





## ***Responsible Transportation***

4.10. Estimates suggest that transportation accounts for between 0.5% to 10%<sup>24</sup> of a product's overall carbon footprint. The higher the inherent carbon footprint of the food itself, the less transportation of the food will contribute to the total product carbon footprint. As far as fish and seafood is concerned, these products will be at the lower end of this percentage range<sup>25</sup>. Techniques and practices used in the wild capture, farming and/or processing of fish and seafood will generally determine the overall carbon footprint, compared to any GHG savings made through transportation. Therefore, this is where the focus should lie. Nevertheless, there will always be a responsibility to drive down transportation-related emissions, by using optimised transportation routes, increase transportation by sea and /or transition to more sustainable energy sources when using road or air freight transportation<sup>26</sup>.

## ***Responsible Product Design***

4.11. Fish and seafood is critical in supporting human health due to its unique nutritional profile, which can often be better than many plant-based protein food equivalents, with similar carbon footprints<sup>27</sup>. Given this, it is important for manufacturers to consider smarter, low carbon end-to-end preservation and preparation methods, packaging design and recommended portion sizes, to avoid edible food loss and waste in the category. It is vital that this valuable food source ends up on plates and not elsewhere or lost.

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24 <https://ourworldindata.org/food-choice-vs-eating-local>

25 <https://ourworldindata.org/food-choice-vs-eating-local>

26 Transport emissions grew at an annual average rate of 1.7% from 1990 to 2022, faster than any other end-use sector except for industry (which also grew at around 1.7%). To get on track with the Net Zero Emissions (NZE) by 2050 Scenario, CO2 emissions from the transport sector must fall by more than 3% per year to 2030 <https://www.iea.org/energy-system/transport>

27 <https://www.nomadfoods.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/lca-study-100-page-summary-report.pdf>



## **Responsible Water Management**

4.12. Globally, we should strive for access to fresh and clean water for all. Therefore, responsible water management, including using water in a more circular way, is critical to prevent local water scarcity and pollution. Use of seawater, if available, to substitute fresh water during parts of the preparation of fish, is recommended to reduce the freshwater consumption.

## **Responsible Waste Management**

4.13. Because fish and seafood can be expensive, consumers try to avoid waste and there are relatively low quantities of edible food loss and waste (FLW) compared to cheaper foods.<sup>28</sup> However, we also know that a third of all food produced does not end up being used for human consumption<sup>29</sup>. Each actor within the supply chain has a responsibility to minimise edible food loss and waste by building food loss

<sup>28</sup> <https://foodwastestories.com/2020/11/08/what-gives-food-more-value/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/mb060e/mb060e00.htm> , <https://www.fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf> , <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/why-global-fight-tackle-food-waste-has-only-just-begun>

and waste programmes into their business plans. For example, practice like upcycling processing waste from offcuts into fish meal and oil that can enter the market as pet food or feed raw materials to aquaculture species, is key to increase circularity in the processing sector.

## **Supply Chain Transparency**

4.14. The role of a third-party chain of custody should be seen as an act of transparency and currency of trust to stakeholders, enabling end-to-end traceability of a product and processes. Certification to the Chain of Custody Standard ensures an unbroken – sometimes long and complex -chain where certified fish and seafood is easily identifiable, separated from non-certified products, and can be traced back to another certified business. External and independent certifications are good examples of practice in this area.

## **Conclusion**

4.15. Improving resource efficiency within businesses and supply chains is a win for everyone. It saves cost, reduces waste, cuts emissions, lowers prices and helps protect the natural environment on which we all depend.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## Protecting human rights & promoting community development

*“Achieving the highest possible social impacts; we can only achieve this by returning the value that we derived back into the environment and society in amounts that are greater than what we initially acquired.”*

5.1. The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSRD), establishes far-reaching mandatory obligations regarding human rights and the environment. These apply to companies both within and outside the EU that meet certain revenue thresholds. These obligations extend to a company’s own operations, its subsidiaries, and to those conducted by its business partners within its supply chains.

5.2. In a wider context, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights set the expectation that companies respect human rights by implementing human rights due diligence. This process involves identifying, preventing, mitigating, and accounting for adverse human rights impacts in which a company is involved. Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) is a critical step within this process, and Human Rights Impact Assessment is a key methodology for identifying actual and potential human rights impacts.

5.3. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>30</sup> also recognise businesses as a significant driver of economic growth and

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>



aim to “unlock the transformative potential of the private sector.” Respecting human rights in business activities is inherent in many of the SDGs, and impact assessment can be a fundamental step towards contributing to the achievement of these goals.

5.4. As members of Seafood Europe, we are committed to acting under this regulatory and ethical framework through the following priority actions:

- a) **Promoting and ensuring respect for human rights throughout the entire value chain**, embracing this responsibility as an unavoidable obligation for all producers and suppliers in the industry.
- b) **Implementing a human rights due diligence system** that enables the identification, prevention, mitigation, and remediation of potential negative impacts on people throughout the entire value chain, ensuring ethical and legal compliance in operations and business relationships.
- c) **Adopting proactive measures against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing** to prevent, identify, and address these practices, ensuring that all operations and supply chains comply with international and national regulations. This commitment includes monitoring and eliminating any human rights abuses associated with such activities, promoting transparency and accountability across the sector.
- d) **Supporting communities, particularly small-scale ones**, as an opportunity to drive job creation, promote equality, conserve ecosystems, and strengthen resilience. This support is essential for enhancing their development capacity and ensuring the sector’s sustainability as a whole.

## *Commitment to Human Rights by members of Seafood Europe*

5.5. As Seafood Europe, we reaffirm our commitment to respecting and promoting internationally recognised Human Rights, establishing values and principles that guide the business activities of our partners in all areas of operation. This commitment requires an active role in protecting Human Rights, proactively working to prevent, mitigate, and, when necessary, remedy any negative impact arising from business activities.

5.6. All business partners and supply chain participants are urged to adopt ethical behaviour encompassing labour conditions, business ethics, and environmental sustainability. This approach includes, among other aspects, the prevention of child and forced labour, the promotion of gender equality, the guarantee of decent working conditions, and respect for the socio-economic impact on local communities.

5.7. Additionally, partners are encouraged to ensure compliance with labour laws in the



countries where they operate, respecting internationally recognised Human Rights and always acting transparently and responsibly. This ethical framework not only contributes to the protection of individuals but also strengthens sustainability and trust in global supply chains.

5.8. Below are relevant recommendations for Seafood Europe members across labour and non-labour rights:

### *Non-Labour Human Rights*

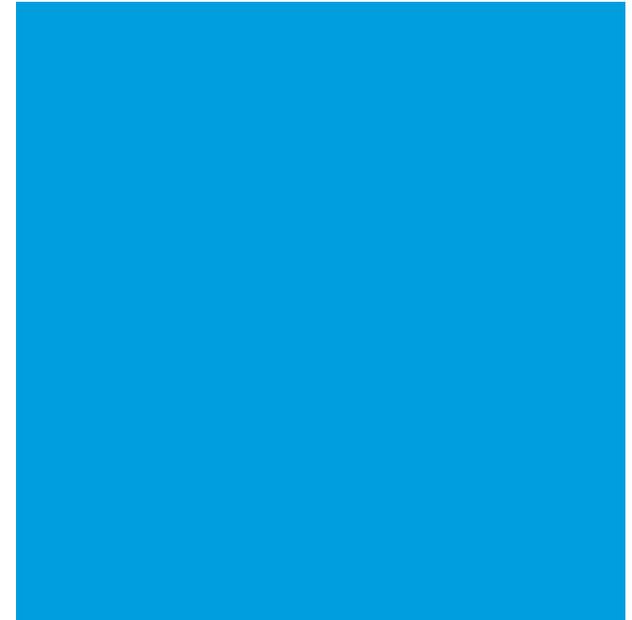
- **Rights of Minorities and Local Communities:** Laws, cultures, and local customs must be respected, maintaining open dialogue with stakeholders, especially with the most vulnerable groups. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct emphasises the importance of consulting affected communities and respecting their rights.
- **Right to Privacy:** The appropriate use and protection of personal data and information collected, particularly that of employees and customers, must be ensured. The

Spanish Data Protection Agency has published a guide on data protection and labour relations with clear guidelines.

- **Right to Safety and Health:** All actions must ensure that products and services do not compromise customers' health and food safety or those of their employees. This includes implementing quality management and food safety systems that meet international standards.
- **Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression:** Diversity of opinions must be respected, and reciprocal communication with stakeholders should be promoted. Effective channels must be created for stakeholders to express their concerns and suggestions.
- **Right to Personal Security:** Relationships with private security bodies must comply with applicable legislation and respect human rights. The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights provide a framework for managing these relationships responsibly.

## **Labour Human Rights**

- **Rejection of Forced and Compulsory Labour:** All forms of forced labour, modern slavery, or coercion must be prohibited, ensuring workers have the freedom to accept or leave employment, and personal documents must not be retained. This aligns with the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s fundamental conventions on the elimination of forced labour.
- **Rejection of Child Labour:** Child labour must be strictly prohibited, ensuring that workers under 18 do not perform hazardous tasks or interfere with their education. The ILO provides clear guidance on the elimination of child labour in its international standards.
- **Fair and Equitable Working Conditions:** Salaries and benefits must align with legal regulations, including fair compensation for overtime. The workplace must remain free of harassment, abuse, or violence, ensuring respect and dignity. This should include access to grievance mechanisms and clear and fair terms of employment



for all workers. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct provides guidance on implementing these practices.

- **Non-Discrimination and Diversity:** Any form of discrimination at all stages of employment must be prohibited, and equal opportunities for all workers must be fostered, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or social status. This is supported by ILO's fundamental principles on non-discrimination in employment.

- **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining:** Workers' rights to form unions, join them, and participate in collective bargaining must be recognised and respected. Retaliation against union representatives must be avoided. The "Practical Guide for Union Action: International Instruments for Defending Human Rights" highlights the importance of these rights and how to defend them.

- **Reasonable Working Hours:** Work hours, including overtime, must not exceed legal limits. Overtime must always be voluntary

and adequately compensated. The ILO establishes guidelines on working hours in its international standards.

- **Protection of Migrant Workers:** Migrant workers must receive the same treatment and rights as local workers and must be informed in a language they understand about their rights, responsibilities, and working conditions. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct also addresses the importance of protecting migrant workers' rights.



5.9. For Seafood Europe members, it is crucial to implement policies and procedures that ensure the respect and promotion of these rights across all operations. This comprehensive approach aims to ensure ethical business practices, fostering a responsible supply chain that respects and promotes human rights in all their forms.

### ***Human Rights Due Diligence: promote ethical and legal compliance***

5.10. Human rights due diligence (HRDD) is the process through which companies and organisations identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how they address their impacts on human rights. This concept, rooted in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)<sup>31</sup>, involves a proactive approach to understanding and managing risks related to human rights throughout a company's operations, supply chain, and business relationships.

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<sup>31</sup> [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#)

### ***Key elements of human rights due diligence include:***

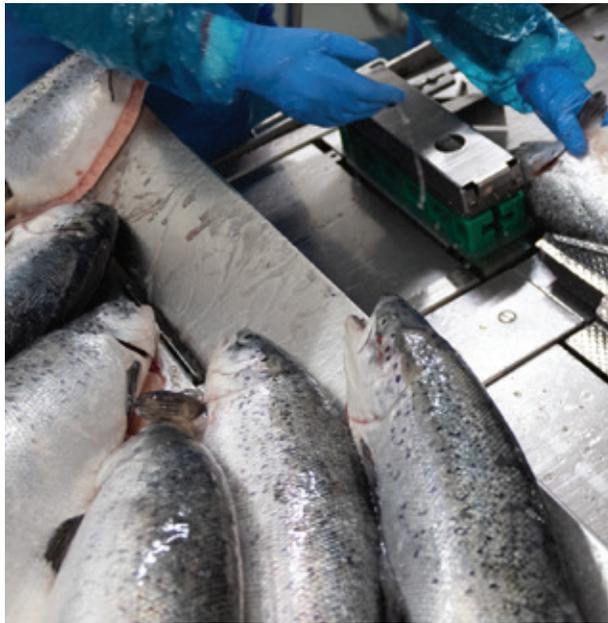
- a. Identifying human rights risks: Assessing where there might be potential or actual human rights impacts associated with business activities.
- b. Preventing and mitigating adverse impacts: Taking steps to address any identified risks to avoid or lessen negative outcomes.
- c. Tracking effectiveness: Monitoring the measures in place to ensure they are effective in managing human rights risks.
- d. Communicating and reporting: Being transparent about efforts and outcomes, including public reporting on how human rights are being respected within operations and value chains.

HRDD is an ongoing process, designed to create accountability and promote ethical business practices, particularly in environments or sectors with heightened risks for human rights abuses.

### ***Commitment against IUU fishing and HR abuses***

5.11. This statement suggests a specific commitment within the responsible sourcing policy to address Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and human rights (HR) abuses. The ways this could be included within a seafood sourcing policy include:

- a. Commitment Against IUU Fishing: Pledge to source only from fisheries that are fully compliant with legal standards and avoid those engaged in illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing. This includes partnering with suppliers who use traceable methods and requiring documentation that ensures legality at every step of the supply chain.
- b. Zero Tolerance for Human Rights Abuses: Explicitly state a zero-tolerance approach to any form of human rights abuses, such as forced labour, unsafe working conditions, and exploitation. Require suppliers to provide fair wages, safe work environments, and respect for workers' rights, aligning with international labour standards.



c. Implementation and Verification: Describe the mechanisms for monitoring compliance, such as supplier audits, third-party certifications, and risk assessments to ensure that IUU fishing and HR abuses are effectively identified and mitigated.

Adopting these practices should ensure that seafood sourcing proactively flags and mitigates IUU fishing.

### ***Promoting community development***

5.12. Small-scale fishing communities are essential for marine sustainability and coastal development, providing livelihoods, food security, and cultural values to millions of people. Recognising them as key partners in protecting human rights and managing and conserving marine resources requires establishing relationships based on ethics, transparency, and respect for local regulations. Their involvement represents both an ethical responsibility and a strategic opportunity to foster resilience, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

Recommended actions include:

- **Encouraging active participation** of communities in decision-making processes related to natural resource management, increasing their capacity for control and autonomy over their development.
- **Providing technical training and support** to improve fishing practices and diversify income sources, thereby ensuring their long-term economic stability.
- **Respecting and valuing traditional knowledge**, integrating it collaboratively into sustainability and ecosystem conservation strategies.

### ***Conclusion***

5.13. Taken together, all these measures not only promote long-term economic stability but also have a positive impact on communities, strengthening their role as key actors in coastal sustainability and development. At the same time, they ensure the sustainability of raw materials, which is essential for preserving marine resources and maintaining the viability of fishing activities for future generations.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Responsible Communication

*“The art of communication is the language of leadership.”*

– James Humes

6.1. Consumers are increasingly demanding products and services which minimise harm to, or have a positive effect on, our environment and our oceans. We are fast approaching this tipping point where sustainability will be considered a baseline requirement for purchase.<sup>32</sup>

6.2. Despite this, consumers cannot easily verify important attributes of their food, such as its nutritional value and sustainability performance; they rely on others to provide this information, and their choices are influenced by the information they receive from many different sources.

<sup>32</sup> <https://hbr.org/2023/09/research-consumers-sustainability-demands-are-rising>

6.3. An important factor in how consumers respond to this sustainability information is whether they trust the source. Greenwashing is a concern for many and can undermine genuine efforts to promote environmental sustainability and misleads consumers who want to make responsible choices. As consumer demand for sustainability grows, so does the need to ensure effective, transparent, and responsible communication about fish and seafood.

6.4. Fish and seafood should be celebrated for their unique nutritional and health benefits and their story should be communicated. As an industry, we are aware of the work that goes into developing, supporting, and





maintaining our supply chains, from sea to plate. Communicating the benefits of fish and seafood effectively involves highlighting their nutritional, health, environmental, and sourcing advantages.

6.5. Alongside the many benefits of fish seafood, we recognise that there are challenges when it comes to responsible sourcing, and that we should also focus on communicating transparently and honestly when it comes to these challenges. Highlighting the challenges the seafood industry faces on its journey to continue to source responsible seafood, can build trust and transparency with consumers and customers.

## Scope

6.6. Transparent, accurate and responsible communication about our practices and products builds trust with consumers and stakeholders, fostering an informed and supportive community. This section addresses the seafood industry's responsibility to effectively communicate the benefits of seafood, including its nutritional, health, environmental, and sourcing advantages,

targeting seafood businesses, sellers, and the end consumer.

6.7. There is growing consumer demand for food that is both ethical and sustainable<sup>33</sup>. Studies also show that an increasing number of people want to ensure they are making responsible decisions when it comes to their seafood choices. We, as the seafood industry, must play a big role in communicating the benefits of seafood as a healthy and sustainable protein choice.

## Principles of responsible communication

6.8. We suggest companies consider the following five key points when it comes to communicating their sustainability journey. These areas are largely aligned with the UNEP Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> [Consumers want sustainable options. What food producers, suppliers, and retailers can do now | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org/articles/consumers-want-sustainable-options-what-food-producers-suppliers-and-retailers-can-do-now/)

<sup>34</sup> UN Environment & ITC (2017) Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information. UNEP. [Product Sustainability Information: State of Play and Way Forward | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](https://www.unep.org/press-releases/unep-its-launch-guidelines-providing-product-sustainability-information)

## Reliability

6.9. To ensure confidence, we must provide clear and specific information on sourcing. This should come from science-based and verifiable sustainability standards, such as independent third-party certification schemes that are recognised and benchmarked by the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative<sup>35</sup>

6.10. Navigating the world of eco-certifications can be bewildering for consumers and burdensome for brands. Time and interest are often limiting factors for consumers when making a purchasing decision and consumers rarely have the capacity or inclination to consider all the information provided on packaging or to assess the credibility of different claims. Most labels focus on just one or a few sustainability issues, for example, a tight lens on the environmental impacts of fishing or farming, and less of a focus on the social implications which only provides a partial picture.

<sup>35</sup> <https://ourgssi.org/>



6.11. Nevertheless, many consumers do rely on food labels to guide their purchasing decisions. The effectiveness of a label, apart from any accompanying communication, depends partly on the extent to which consumers are aware of the label and understand what it means.

### Clarity

6.12. Clarity on messaging is important if we want to reach consumers or wider stakeholders and convey meaningful and useful information. To maintain credibility, it's essential to substantiate sustainability claims with evidence and independent proof. This can be through schemes that are recognised and benchmarked by the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative.

6.13. Vague and broad environmental statements via communication platforms, such as *'good for the environment'* should be avoided if claims cannot be supported by evidence.

6.14. The Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC)<sup>36</sup> provides a case study for aligning on labelling directed to the end consumer. SSC is a pre-competitive collaboration platform comprised of seafood businesses and organisations from across the seafood value chain who align to a set of codes that act as voluntary agreements on responsible sourcing and labelling and are developed by SSC members. The codes provide guidance on when a final product could be labelled as 'Responsibly sourced', or 'Sustainably sourced', based on risk assessments and proof of third-party certification. The codes are currently being updated to reflect updated seafood sourcing issues and advice.

### Transparency

6.15. Consumers are more aware than ever about sustainability matters. However, we also need to communicate how sustainability is achieved so they can make an informed decision. At the core of impactful sustainability communication lies transparency and honesty.

<sup>36</sup> <https://sustainableseafoodcoalition.org/>

6.16. Seafood businesses play a crucial role in responsible communication about their products, practices, and the benefits of seafood consumption. Here are some examples of how seafood businesses can be more transparent about their efforts:

- Policy documents can be a tool to clearly communicate a company's commitment to sourcing seafood sustainably, such as the criteria used to determine which suppliers a company works with.
- Regular sustainability reports or statements that detail business efforts, achievements, and future goals in seafood sourcing can offer a platform to be transparent on business targets and highlight where they are met. It also encourages a company to remain transparent on the challenges they face in meeting their targets.
- If a company decides to do a report it is best to follow best practice reporting standards such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), or the [Global Reporting Initiative \(GRI\)](#) for example.

## **Accessibility**

6.17. Sharing information builds trust with ethics-driven consumers, customers and stakeholders and allows consumers to be able to make conscious and informed decisions. Sharing sourcing policies and sustainability commitments via a company website or in the public domain can show a company is working towards goals and highlighting their successes as well as the challenges.

## **Collaboration**

6.18. Collaboration and alignment on messaging is needed across the industry. Communicating consistent messages via multiple sources and channels can help build consumer trust so alignment is key.

6.19. Sustainability communication strategies should be informed by an understanding of what drives consumer choices. This will vary among different regions and population segments, and at different times.

To be agile and responsive, seafood businesses and marketing agencies should be encouraged to share information and collaborate on studies to determine which messages and media are most effective for encouraging sustainable seafood choices among different consumer segments.

## **Conclusion**

6.20. It is not enough to have a good story to tell. We need to be clear, open, honest and compelling in the way we communicate it to others.



