

Seafood Progress:

A summary of Canadian retailers’ sustainable seafood commitments and how well they are performing against them.

June 2018

In 2016, SeaChoice showed that only 11% of the seafood available in Canada was rated a “Best Choice” for sustainability. Public awareness of seafood sustainability issues is increasing and businesses are more aware of the risk to their bottom line if seafood is not sustainable. In response, retailers have developed sustainable seafood commitments to use as the basis for their seafood procurement decisions.

Seafood Progress is an online resource to increase the transparency of major Canadian retailers’ sustainable seafood commitments and to profile their progress in meeting those commitments. Every retailer’s commitment is structured differently and has a different focus, so Seafood Progress provides a standardized assessment framework to evaluate each commitment and compare it to the national average.

SeaChoice based the assessment framework on recommendations produced by the [Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions](#) in their [Common Vision for Sustainable Seafood](#). The Common Vision outlines six steps – making a public commitment, collecting data on seafood products, making responsible sourcing decisions, being transparent, educating staff, customers and vendors, and supporting improvements in fisheries and aquaculture – which SeaChoice broke down into twenty-two key performance indicators (KPIs; for more information see the [Methodology page](#)).

SeaChoice contacted all retailers included in Seafood Progress and invited them to collaborate in the development of their assessment profile, including sharing information that is not currently publicly available (referenced throughout with personal communications). The profiles of retailers that did not engage are based solely on published information that SeaChoice could find online.

Establishing a baseline

In addition to providing insight into what Canadian retailers are currently doing to support sustainable seafood, Seafood Progress also establishes a baseline against which we will be able to gauge performance trends over time.

Nationally, retailers scored highest on the Commitment, Data and Responsible Sourcing steps, with average scores of 62, 63 and 63 (out of 100), respectively. This means that overall, Canada’s largest food retailers have seafood sustainability commitments that are relatively detailed, they are collecting information to support their commitment, and they are taking steps to source products in line with their commitment.

NATIONAL AVERAGES



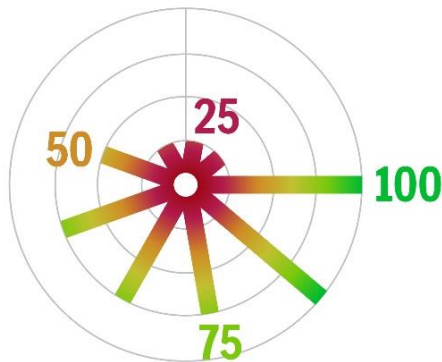
The Seafood Progress step on Supporting Improvements had the lowest average score (20), followed by Transparency (37) and Education (50). There are several specific actions retailers could take to improve their Transparency and Education scores, for example, publishing how much of their procurement is in line with their seafood commitment, or posting information about their commitment in store. However, many retailers SeaChoice spoke to said that they didn't feel they have sufficient market leverage to make some of the changes they would like to see, particularly with globally traded commodities like tropical farmed shrimp and prawns, or Skipjack tuna. Pre-competitive collaboration, either through existing initiatives or through the creation of a Canadian specific group, could be an effective way of utilizing the retailers' joint market leverage to lead to change on the water.

SeaChoice recommendations

The six steps developed by the Conservation Alliance represent the accepted best practice for sustainable seafood commitments. Based on our first assessment of commitments and procurement policies, SeaChoice has the following recommendations for how Canadian retailers can have the biggest positive impact on seafood sustainability:

KPI 1.2

Retailer has a publicly available commitment or policy to source more socially sustainable seafood

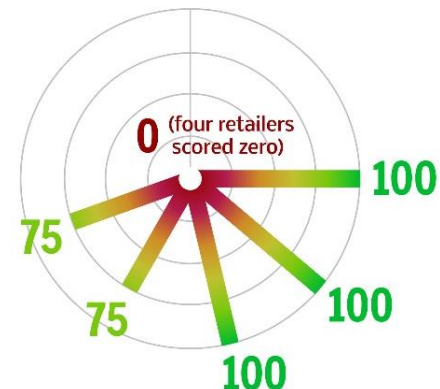


Social responsibility – There is a wide range in the detail and level of ambition with regard to retailers' commitments to source socially sustainable seafood. Currently, only two retailers have social responsibility commitments that reference a credible international standard and include clear objectives and expectations for their seafood suppliers. SeaChoice recommends that all retailers publish clear Codes of Conduct for their suppliers that include their social and environmental expectations. Additionally, SeaChoice recommends that these Codes require suppliers to take action to confirm that no human rights abuses or labour violations are taking place in their supply chain, instead of just requiring a confirmation that they are not aware of these practices.

Progress against commitment – Three of the nine retailers featured in Seafood Progress have met or exceeded the goals set out in their seafood sustainability commitments and two are well on their way, but four have not publicly disclosed any quantitative information about how much of their seafood procurement is in line with their commitment in the last three years. Without this information, consumers can't tell how well their retailer is actually abiding by their commitment. SeaChoice recommends that all retailers regularly publish information on how much of their procurement (by volume or value) is meeting their commitment.

KPI 3.2

Retailer can demonstrate that X% of their seafood sold in the last three years meets their sustainability criteria by volume/value



Quality of seafood labelling – Only one retailer that engaged in Seafood Progress is currently labelling all of their seafood with the species’ scientific (Latin) name, country of origin, whether it is wild or farmed, and the gear type or farming method. Two retailers label all of their products with country of origin and two label some of them with this information. Five out of the nine retailers don’t label any of their products with the species’ scientific (Latin) name, and seven don’t include information on the gear type or farming method (or had no information in their commitment and didn’t provide additional information).



Although this might seem like a lot of information to fit on a seafood label, where consumers can use it to make a decision, the fact that one Canadian retailer is doing it shows that it is possible. In fact, all retailers in the European Union are [required to do this](#) already. SeaChoice recommends that all other Canadian retailers start voluntarily including this information on at least their fresh and private-label products.

Conclusions and next steps

The launch of Seafood Progress with the profiles of nine major Canadian retailers’ sustainable seafood commitments establishes a baseline from which SeaChoice can monitor and report on changes and developments. SeaChoice will continue to engage with retailers and will be providing them with a set of tailored recommendations for how they could improve their scores across Seafood Progress, starting with those actions likely to have the most impact “on the water”. Seafood Progress will be updated periodically as new information becomes available and reviewed in-depth in June 2019.