

LOSING INFORMATION ALONG CANADIAN SEAFOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

HARVEST

Information collected: Fishers are required to report catch information in a logbook such as species, common name, weight, biological characteristics, bycatch, gear type and landing/harvest date. Onboard observers also collect data.

AT THE DOCK

Information collected: In accordance with food health and safety regulations, first buyers (e.g. brokers, processors, exporters who buy from harvesters) are only required to retain some product information, including the common name, lot code, name of business the product was sold to, and the date the product was sold.

PROCESSING

Information collected: Processors collect limited information for their internal records or regulatory requirements such as common name, business the product was bought from, and date.

RETAIL/ POINT OF SALE

Information collected: Retailers are required to include a species' common name on food packages and the place of processing ("country of origin") if imported.

IMPORTS

Information collected: Seafood is the most highly traded food commodity. Information accompanies a product through a maze of databases and portals to comply with health codes, duties, trade treaties, or other internal regulatory requirements. Product identification codes may be unique to each nation or may be internationally agreed upon Harmonized System codes for trade.

Information lost: The detail required of on-board information varies widely between fisheries, especially for species identification (e.g. in some fisheries 'flatfish' can be reported for 5-7 species, low value fish may not be reported at all). Often catch information is considered proprietary and is available only to government managers; it does not enter the supply chain by design. Thus, details about species, fishing location, and gear used can all be lost.

Solution: A requirement to record species-level information for all catch retained and discarded, as well as fishing location and gear, in at-sea log books, observer records, and/or when sold at dockside would ensure this information is available to remain with the product along the supply chain.

Information lost: All or most of the information pertaining to location of harvest, species name, and gear type - except for the required common name - is lost because this additional information is not required for the sale of the catch.

Solution: Stronger traceability regulations, which require first buyers to collect species names, catch location, and gear information details of all catch they buy.

Information lost: Information is lost when several species are processed together to become a single product, when fish and seafood from different fishing vessels or farms are combined in a processing plant and because product labels only require location of processing if this occurred outside of Canada (called "country of origin") to be listed - not where the seafood was caught/harvested. Thus, most information pertaining to location of harvest, species name, and gear type is lost, except for the required common name.

Solution: Stronger traceability regulations, which ensure that processors collect and provide additional key information.

Information lost: If labelling regulations do not require information on seafood product labels, retailers may not receive, collect, retain or share this information. Most information pertaining to location of harvest, species name, and gear type is lost.

Solution: Improvements to food labelling and traceability regulations, and/or voluntary improvements by the seafood supply chain, that track and label species scientific names, areas of catch or landing, gear used and whether it is wild or farmed.

Information lost: Trade codes, which function only to facilitate global trade, may or may not relate to a specific species or group of species. Canada does not have import regulations that require species name, origin of harvest, type of gear/harvest to accompany imported seafood products. All or most information is lost except the required common name and "country of origin" (where it was processed).

Solution: Improve Canada's trade regulations and trade agreements to incorporate specific considerations for seafood. Require mandatory collection of key information to ensure traceability of seafood products.