

Fisheries and Oceans' standing committee recommendations would bring Canada's lax seafood traceability requirements into 21st century

For Immediate Release

June 16, 2022 - Halifax/Kjipuktuk AND Vancouver/traditional unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-waututh) First Nations — Canada's sustainable seafood watchdog SeaChoice welcomes the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' "Traceability of Fish and Seafood Products" report and recommendations.

Released yesterday, the committee's 13 recommendations are designed to strengthen Canada's lax traceability and labelling requirements. Christina Callegari presented and [provided recommendations](#) to the committee in March 2022 on behalf of SeaChoice and the Ecology Action Centre.

"We are glad the committee's recommendations recognize the need for government to set and commit to a target date for implementing a seafood traceability and labelling system. Otherwise, Canada will continue to lag behind and face increasing trade requirements from our international peers," Callegari said.

The committee recommends the Government of Canada:

- Develop a traceability and labelling system compatible with European Union standards and establish a set target date for implementation.
- Apply traceability and labelling requirements to all domestic and imported fish and seafood products.
- Improve labelling standards for fish and seafood products to include the scientific name, whether the fish is caught or farmed, the origin of catch or farming and the harvesting or farming method.
- Establish a working group of agencies and stakeholders to develop a new traceability system.
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency review the guidance for common names of fish and seafood products, as well as improve DNA testing for enforcement and verification.

The committee recommendations reflect many globally recognized best practices for robust traceability systems currently missing from the government's stated scope of its proposed "boat-to-plate" program for Canada. The initiative, announced in 2019, is unfortunately limited to seafood marketing and missed the opportunity to ensure clear information for consumers and level the playing field for domestic industry.

"We strongly encourage the federal government to accept and implement the recommendations in full," Callegari said. "Doing so could make Canada a world leader in promoting sustainable fisheries management, deterring illegal practices, verifying environmental and social responsibility claims and encouraging Canadians to support local, sustainable seafood producers."

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Background

A group of 26 grocery chains, seafood industry stakeholders and experts (including SeaChoice) recently sent a [letter](#) calling on the federal government to commit to a timeline and plan to fulfil this mandate.

SeaChoice has been engaging the development of federal seafood policies and regulations closely for a number of years to ensure improvements to traceability and labelling. SeaChoice has provided comments and recommendations for:

- The government's public consultations on the boat-to-plate traceability program: <https://www.seachoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SeaChoice-boat-to-plate-CFIA-consultation-submission-FINAL.pdf>
- The Food Labelling Modernization Initiative consultation: <https://www.seachoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FLM-CG1-Comments-SeaChoice-T-Buck-Foundation.pdf>
- The Safe Food for Canadians regulations consultation: <http://www.seachoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/SeaChoice-Submission-to-the-CFIA-Safe-Food-for-Canadians-Regulations.pdf>

SeaChoice also advocates for improvements to the Canadian government's "Fish List," which provides guidance for common names on seafood product labels. Our report examines the most problematic and misleading common names and provides recommendations for improvement. <https://www.seachoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Fish-List-Wish-List.pdf>

About SeaChoice

SeaChoice is a collaboration of three internationally recognized organizations — the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre and Living Oceans Society — that use their broad, national expertise to find solutions for a healthy ocean. SeaChoice is a science-based, solutions-focused influencer, advocate and watchdog leading the next evolution of seafood sustainability in Canada. SeaChoice is a member organization of the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions, and works with consumers, retailers, suppliers, government and producers to accomplish its objectives.