



SeaChoice and Oceana Canada recommendations for an interdepartmental task force on boat-to-plate seafood traceability

To deliver on the government's recommendation to establish an interdepartmental task force from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO) in its 2022 report *Traceability and Labelling of Fish and Seafood Products*, and the government's support of this recommendation in its responseⁱ, SeaChoice and Oceana Canada are making the following recommendations for the establishment and work plan of a task force.

Regarding the formation of the task force and its work plan, SeaChoice and Oceana's recommendations are as follows:

- 1. Define Government Roles:** The task force should include representatives from the departments and agencies with jurisdiction in seafood traceability. This is a complex file with input needed from the departments of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard; Labour; Health; Trade; and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO); the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA); Global Affairs Canada (Trade); Canada Border Services Agency, Public Safety Canada, and relevant provincial authorities, with the potential to bring in representatives from other departments as needed. The task force should report to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard. Seafood traceability is a feasible and critical solution to multiple supply chain issues that have been highlighted in recent years; to establish a working system, input is required from multiple departments. To avoid gaps or overlap, establishing the roles and responsibilities of each department with regard to developing, implementing, and monitoring traceability should be a key first step.

2. **Develop a detailed plan with ambitious timelines supported by regulations:** To deliver on the government's commitment to implement full chain traceability in seafood supply chains in order to combat fraud, mislabelling, illegal fishing practices, human rights violations, and threats to Canada's fisheries from cheaper, lower quality imported products. The objective of the working group should be to develop a detailed plan and ambitious timeline in which to develop and oversee implementation of a mandatory, regulations-based Canadian seafood traceability framework that is scalable and interoperable with existing global best practices. This plan and timeline should be completed and made public before the end of summer 2023. The timeline for the full implementation of a traceability program should be no longer than three years.
3. **Include Stakeholders:** As well as government representatives, a wider group of participants from industry, ENGOs, civil society, international experts from jurisdictions with existing traceability requirements, and retailers should be included in the task force. Individuals from diverse backgrounds as well as associations and organizations of varying sizes should be represented on the task force.
4. **Utilize Existing Research:** The working group should draw on the work already done by CFIA, DFO, and the FOPO Committee rather than duplicating these processes. Multiple consultations with stakeholders have taken place since 2019 and this information has been consolidated into reports which are now public. The task force should instead focus on developing the regulatory and technical specifics of implementing a Canadian seafood traceability program.
5. **Allocate Resources:** The task force should be provided with adequate funds to allow it to develop a detailed technical plan for implementing traceability in Canada. Resources should further be allocated for the committee to develop interoperable traceability standards and data management practices, to conduct industry training, and for initial implementation support, including undertaking any necessary pilot projects.

SeaChoice and Oceana Canada are encouraged that the Federal government is taking this step to develop stronger seafood labelling and traceability standards that would bring Canada more in line with global best practices. We look forward to assisting the task force in its work on this file.

ⁱ Recommendation from the Standing Committee's report: That the Government of Canada establish an interdepartmental task force led by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and involving key agencies, supply chain participants and other stakeholders to develop a coordinated response to fish and seafood product mislabeling and to implement full boat-to-plate traceability for all fish and seafood products harvested, farmed or sold in Canada.

This task force should also consider the creation of an oversight entity to enforce the effective implementation of the Canadian traceability and labelling system and to measure progress outcomes.

Government's response: The Government supports this recommendation and is committed to addressing this issue in a way that recognizes the critical importance of ensuring that the views of all stakeholders are considered in the decision-making process. The Government of Canada recognizes that this is an important issue, which touches on many stakeholders, each with their own experiences, interests and perspectives. Boat-to-plate traceability is an important conservation measure that supports an orderly and well-managed fishery and is a critical tool in the prevention of overfishing. An effective interdepartmental forum will be key to making progress on mislabeling and boat-to-plate traceability. DFO will work with partners to determine how progress can be made most quickly through an existing forum or whether to create a new standalone forum.