Why Sustainable Seafood is Important

Responsible, sustainable fishing and aquaculture are critical ways to keep oceans healthy and maintain a plentiful fish supply for both marine mammals and the 3 billion people who depend on seafood for protein. Worldwide, people are eating nearly double the seafood they did 50 years ago. Unfortunately, depleted fish stocks and destructive fishing practices threaten the marine ecosystems that are vital to the health of the ocean. Climate change is also impacting the health and vitality of many aquatic species.

Our food choices can contribute to climate change. Plant-forward diets are an environmentally responsible choice followed by sustainably sourced fish and seafood. The production of meat contributes to substantial greenhouse gas emissions because it requires more food, water, land and energy to produce.

Climate change and overfishing are harmful to marine mammals. At the Marine Mammal Center, we’re witnessing whales die of starvation off the California coast, and responding to seals, sea lions and whales that are entangled and in distress from derelict fishing gear. It’s estimated that approximately 300,000 dolphins, whales and porpoises are inadvertently killed every year worldwide from being trapped in fishing nets.

To better protect marine mammals and ensure a healthy fish supply for future generations, our relationship with ocean resources must evolve. By purchasing fish that is fished or farmed in sustainable ways, we can all contribute to a healthier ocean and meet the needs of future generations without compromising ours today.

By taking into consideration what types of fish are used and how they are caught or farmed, our approach rethinks how fish and seafood are sourced. Actions we take today can protect and preserve our shared ocean environment and a critical food source for marine mammals and people alike for generations to come. Our strategy protects marine mammals by:

- Sourcing fish for our patients that is certified sustainable.
- Supporting aquaculture with the highest environmental and social standards.
- Sharing resources for how to identify what sustainable seafood means
- Making it easier for consumers and businesses to choose sustainable seafood.
- Collaborating with reputable leaders in sustainable seafood to regularly update practices, including:
  - Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)
  - James Beard Smart Catch
  - Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
  - Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch
  - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
  - Surfrider Foundation
How to Select Sustainable Seafood

The Marine Mammal Center offers tip sheets for selecting sustainable varieties of these common seafood choices:

- SHRIMP
- SALMON
- STRIPED BASS
- HALIBUT
- SCALLOPS

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR CHOOSING SUSTAINABLY:

**BUY LOCALLY HARVESTED FOOD THAT IS IN SEASON.**
The transportation of food over long distances accounts for increasing carbon emissions into the atmosphere that create climate change.

**CHECK THE PACKAGE.**
Look for a certification from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), or Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) label.

**ASK THE RESTAURANT.**
When dining out, ask where the seafood is from and if the restaurant participates in the James Beard Smart Catch Program, Seafood Watch and other regional sustainable certification programs.

**JOIN A COMMUNITY SUPPORTED FISHERY.**
Similar to Farm to Table, where you can get produce from local farmers, Community Supported Fisheries allow for “Fish to Fork” and get you access to fish direct from local fisherman. See what options are available in your area at www.localcatch.org.
Resources to Research and Select Sustainable Seafood

THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER
Learn more about sustainable seafood and why it is important, and find tips and resources available on the Center’s Sustainable Seafood education page.

AQUACULTURE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (ASC)
Certifies environmentally and socially responsible seafood, incentivizes farms to follow thoughtful practices.

BEST AQUACULTURE PRACTICES
Verifies safe, responsible practices among farmed fish producers, the most trusted rating system for sustainably farmed seafood.

MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (MSC)
Only fisheries that meet its strict standards earn MSC’s blue fish label, letting you know the seafood you’re buying was caught in a well-managed way that contributes to healthier oceans.

MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM SEAFOOD WATCH
Updates its recommendations seasonally to help you choose fish that’s farmed or caught in ways that least impact the environment, using labels for fish that’s a “Good Choice” (green) or “Good Alternative” (yellow) or should be skipped “Avoid” (red). Download the Seafood Watch App.