

Canada-Wide Adoption of the Seafood Watch Program's Seafood Recommendation Labels

Summary

Many marine species purchased in Canada exacerbate problems of overfishing, social injustices and environmental destruction caused by the global fishing industry, and most Canadians may be unaware. Seafood products must be identified with their respective ecological and social impacts. Adopting the Seafood Watch system of labeling for all marine products sold in Canada will begin to shift consumer demand towards responsibly managed fisheries.

Recommendations

- Adopt the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch traffic light system of seafood recommendations.
- Implement label system at all wholesalers, retailers and restaurants throughout Canada.

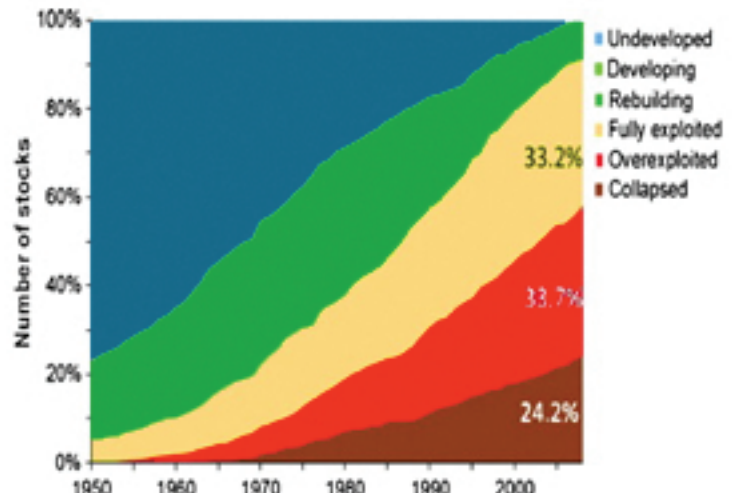
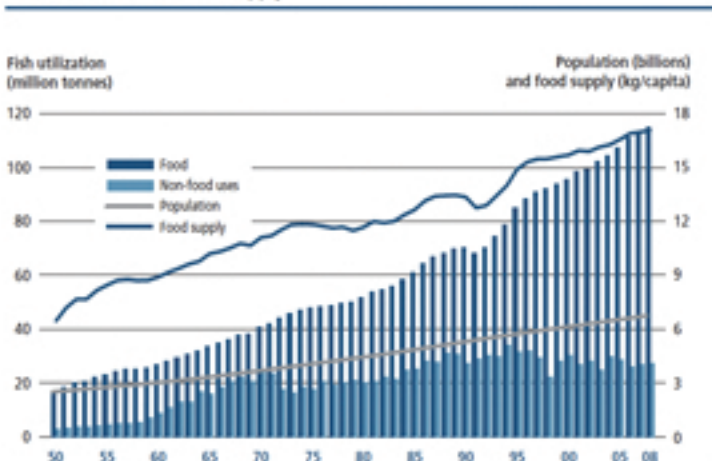


Seafood Watch "traffic light" labeling system. [4]

Need For Policy Change

Currently, 60 % of marine populations have collapsed or are overfished [1] and pressure on the world's fisheries will continue to increase in order to fulfill the demand from an ever-growing population.

World fish utilization and supply



Percentage of world fish populations under threat [1]

Indiscriminate fishing methods and ecologically disastrous farming techniques result in an estimated annual 38.5 million tonnes of discarded non-target species [1] and the diminished capacity for marine ecosystems to recover from fishing pressures.

The difficulty faced by Canadian consumers when making informed decisions regarding seafood purchases, stems from the diversity of options available and the variety of eco-certifications used to advise consumer choice.


Many species sold in Canada such as shrimp, swordfish and Chilean sea bass [4] are part of or contribute to continued reduction of vulnerable species and environmental damage; and consumers may be largely unaware.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program provides a recognizable and tiered set of labels for nearly all the species purchased in Canada. Assessment criteria include: inherent vulnerability, abundance, and impacts on habitat and ecosystem for the target species and other affected species which is condensed into a simple coloured label system.



Shrimp



AVOID	Type	Method	Location
	Shrimp, Atlantic Seabob (Prawn, Seabob, Shrimp)	Small trawl	Mexico (Gulf of Mexico)

Example rating by Seafood watch system [4]

The **Best**, **Good**, and **Avoid** colour labels should be clearly visible on all fresh, frozen or processed marine products. The responsibility will be on seafood importers and wholesale distributors to ensure that these labels correspond to the correct product. The Seafood Watch label will be a prerequisite for any seafood product to be sold in Canada.

By adopting the Seafood Watch system as the single certification for in Canada, all seafood will be assessed using the same metrics, allowing consumers to directly compare their options. The annual ~\$3.58 billion [2] that is spent on seafood should shift to reflect consumers' education regarding the environmental effects of a products' production and consumption. Canada can begin prohibiting the sale of seafood categorized as **Avoid** once education fosters consumer buy-in.

The complete recommendations guide and assessment criteria are available at <http://www.seafoodwatch.org/>