



# Seafood Health Facts: Making Smart choices

## Balancing the Benefits and Risks of Seafood Consumption

### Resources for Healthcare Providers and Consumers

## Sustainability and Fisheries Management [1]

### Sustainability

Sustainability is a hot topic in most fisheries discussions being held around the world today. There are different stakeholder groups - from non-governmental environmental organizations to fishing associations attempting to define sustainability. There are many "3rd party certifiers" who have their own criteria for identifying and certifying a sustainable fishery. Unfortunately, there are numerous viewpoints and even more varying criteria used by different organizations to define sustainability. Thus, there is no generally accepted definition of sustainability by all the stakeholder groups. For purposes of this website, we have chosen to acknowledge the variety of organizations and definitions on sustainability but focus our attention on the sustainability assessments for U.S. fisheries that are produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Fish Watch Website.

NOAA Fisheries is the United States governmental organization that regulates ocean fishing in this country through implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. All federally managed fisheries are required to have fishery management plans that are designed to result in sustainable fisheries. Further, NOAA Fish Watch examines each fishery/species currently managed by the federal government and provides information on the health status of the stock, including a "sustainability status" based on the best available scientific information.

The NOAA Fish Watch definition for sustainable seafood is:

*Seafood is sustainable when the population of that species of fish is managed in a way that provides for today's needs without damaging the ability of the species to reproduce and be available for future generations. If you buy fish managed under a U.S. fishery management plan, you can be assured it meets [10 national standards](#) [2] that ensure fish stocks are maintained, overfishing is eliminated, and the long-term socioeconomic benefits to the nation are achieved.*

For more information on sustainable seafood guides that are intended to rate various types of fish and shellfish based on biological or environmental criteria or ecolabels designed to provide third party certification of various sources of seafood products visit the [NOAA Fish Watch Sustainability Page](#) [3] or the University of [Rhode Island Sustainable Seafood Initiative Page on Seafood Guides](#) [4].

### How Fisheries are Managed

Fisheries management in the United States is guided by the Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act first enacted in 1976. The Act created the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which includes ocean waters out to 200 miles and U.S. federal regulations apply to those waters within the EEZ. The Act requires that fisheries be managed for conservation and benefit to the nation. The Act also established eight Regional Fishery Management Councils in the country where regulations are proposed through a stakeholder process that emphasizes public participation. These Councils make regulatory recommendations to the National Marine Fisheries Service who is responsible for implementing the regulations. Federal fisheries in the United States are some of the most highly regulated fisheries in the world. For more information about fisheries management in the U.S. [click here](#) [5]. For more information regarding international fisheries management please visit the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) [6].

For more information about sustainable seafood and individual federally managed fish species please [visit NOAA Fish Watch](#) [7].

**Sidebar Image:**

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**Source URL:**

<https://www.seafoodhealthfacts.org/sustainability-regulations/sustainability-and-fisheries-management>

**Links**

- [1] <https://www.seafoodhealthfacts.org/sustainability-regulations/sustainability-and-fisheries-management>
- [2] <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/management.htm>
- [3] [http://www.fishwatch.gov/buying\\_seafood/choosing\\_sustainable.htm](http://www.fishwatch.gov/buying_seafood/choosing_sustainable.htm)
- [4] [http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/sustainable\\_seafood/guides.html](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/sustainable_seafood/guides.html)
- [5] <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>
- [6] <http://www.fao.org/>
- [7] <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/>