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THE  
BLUE OCEAN INSTITUTE

Guide to Ocean Friendly  
SEAFOOD

Updated September 2007

FOLD GUIDE &



KEEP IN WALLET

**Atlantic Halibut**

Fishers use bottom trawls and longlines to catch Atlantic Halibut. Long-lived and slow to mature, this fish is naturally vulnerable to fishing pressure. Like Atlantic Cod, Atlantic Halibut in U.S. and Canadian waters crashed in the 1980s from overfishing and remain extremely depleted today.

**Atlantic Cod**

Decades of overfishing drove Atlantic Cod populations to historic low levels. Even with heavy management, populations show no sign of rebuilding. Bottom trawling for Atlantic Cod destroys habitat.

**Sharks**

Sharks grow slowly, have few young, and are victims of widespread overfishing and bycatch. Despite laws in some countries (including the U.S.) against killing sharks just for their fins, demand for shark-fin soup in Asia drives heavy and sometimes illegal fishing worldwide.

**Shrimp, imported**

Bottom trawls used to catch most wild shrimp damage habitat and unintentionally kill many unwanted invertebrates, fish, and sea turtles. Coastal shrimp farming ruins life-supporting ecosystems such as mangroves and causes water pollution. Shrimp fisheries and farms in the U.S. are generally better monitored and regulated.

**Farmed Salmon**

High environmental costs of farming salmon include water pollution, spread of diseases to wild fish populations, high content of wild fish in feed, and overuse of antibiotics. In addition to Atlantic Salmon, farmers are now raising Chinook and Coho Salmon. All Atlantic Salmon sold in the U.S. are farmed.

**Caviar, from wild-caught sturgeons**

Wild sturgeons mature late and suffer from overfishing and habitat degradation worldwide. Outside the U.S., management efforts are generally poor. Caviar from farm-raised sturgeon is a good alternative.

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Fresh Inspiration for Ocean Conservation

P.O. Box 250, East Norwich, NY, 11732  
Toll-free Tel: 877-BOI-SEAS  
[www.blueocean.org](http://www.blueocean.org)

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**Farmed Clams, Mussels, and Oysters**

Shellfish filter feed and don't require fishmeal or fish oil for food. When farmed using suspended bags, nets, or cages—as opposed to being dredged—mollusks top our list.

**Mackerels**

Mackerels grow fast and produce many young, qualities that have enabled Atlantic, King, and Spanish Mackerels to rebound recently from depletion. Atlantic, Cero, King\*, and Spanish\* Mackerels are at healthy levels of abundance. Most mackerel fishers use hook-and-line and net gears, with little bycatch. Marine mammal catches remain a problem in the mid-water trawl fishery that catches Atlantic Mackerel.

**Tilapia, U.S.-farmed**

Not native to the U.S., tilapia are freshwater fish that require very little fishmeal. When they are raised in closed systems in the U.S. they have very low environmental impact.

**Wild Alaska Salmon**

With good management and fairly healthy habitat, wild Alaskan salmon remain abundant. There are concerns, however, that more needs to be done to protect natural spawning habitat and to properly manage hatcheries.

**Farmed Arctic Char (Canada, Iceland, U.S.)**

Most Arctic Char are farmed in land-based tanks or raceways, so there are few problems with escapes and wastewater is well treated before release. High content of wild fish in feed remains a concern.

**Striped Bass**

Striped Bass are wild-caught\* and farmed. Effective fisheries management helped wild Striped Bass recover from severe depletion in the 1980s to high abundance today. Farming hybrid Striped Bass results in few escapes and minimal pollution. However, their feed contains high levels of fishmeal and fish oil.

FISH KEY



Species is relatively abundant, and fishing/farming methods cause little damage to habitat and other wildlife.

Some problems exist with this species' status or catch/farming methods, or information is insufficient for evaluating.

Species has a combination of problems such as overfishing, high bycatch, and poor management, or farming methods have serious environmental impacts.

A fishery targeting this species has been certified sustainable and well managed by the Marine Stewardship Council.

These fish contain levels of mercury or PCBs that may pose a health risk to adults or children. Please refer to [www.oceansalive.org/eat.cfm](http://www.oceansalive.org/eat.cfm) for more details.



\* The health advisory for this group refers to this species.

## THE BLUE OCEAN INSTITUTE GUIDE TO OCEAN FRIENDLY SEAFOOD



### Mahimahi, pole- and troll-caught

Mahimahi grow fast, live short lives, and withstand high fishing pressure. Pole and troll fisheries catch Mahimahi with little bycatch compared to long-line fisheries.



### Albacore, Bigeye, and Yellowfin Tuna, (U.S. Pacific Albacore) pole- and troll-caught

Tunas are fast-growing, prolific breeders, and wide-ranging, but many populations remain depleted. The low bycatch associated with pole- and troll-caught tuna makes them a better alternative to longline, drift gillnet, or purse-seine caught tuna.



### American ("Maine") Lobster, Maine and Canada

Maine and Canadian lobster populations today remain abundant. However, North Atlantic Right Whales, an endangered species, still become entangled in lobster fishing gear.



### Sablefish (Black Cod)

Sablefish are a sustainable alternative to severely depleted Atlantic Cod. Widespread adoption of better fishing practices successfully reduced bycatch, particularly benefiting Short-Tailed Albatrosses.



### Squid

Many squid species exist worldwide. Squid grow fast and often reproduce before they are a year old, characteristics which help them withstand high fishing pressure. Most are vulnerable to changes in environmental conditions.



### Dungeness, King, and Stone Crabs

These crab species are fairly abundant thanks to wise management. Crab fishers use relatively low-bycatch traps (or pots).



### Catfish, U.S.-farmed

Fish farmers raise catfish in the southern U.S. in large earthen ponds, resulting in some water pollution. But escapes are rare, and catfish require much less fishmeal and fish oil in their feed than other farmed fish.



### Shrimp, U.S.-farmed

Farmed shrimp require high amounts of fishmeal and fish oil in their food compared to other farmed fish and shellfish. U.S. Farmers usually treat discharged water to reduce pollution.



### Lingcod, U.S. West Coast

Lingcod dwell along the ocean bottom off the U.S. West Coast. Commercial trawlers that target Lingcod also incidentally catch rockfish, which remains a problem. While overfished for several years, Lingcod populations are considered to be rebuilt.



### Pacific Cod

Faring much better than their Atlantic counterparts, Pacific Cod populations are healthy and abundant. Managers limit catches and account for bycatch. Albatross deaths declined with the widespread adoption of seabird avoidance measures.



### Pacific Halibut

Although they grow slowly and can live over 50 years, Pacific Halibut remain abundant due to responsible management. Fishers may own shares of the total annual catch, eliminating the dangerous incentive to fish competitively.



### Farmed Rainbow Trout

Feed for Rainbow Trout contains large amounts of fishmeal and fish oil. Most U.S. Rainbow Trout farmers use freshwater flow-through systems (called raceways), which spread pollution. Rainbow Trout are native to the Pacific Northwest where the majority of U.S. farms are located.



### Swordfish

Swordfish in the North Atlantic are showing signs of recovery following stronger catch regulations. Their abundance appears healthy in the North Pacific, but their status is unclear in other parts of the Pacific. Most Swordfish are longline-caught, with high bycatch of albatrosses, sea turtles, and sharks.



### Blue\*, Snow, and Tanner Crabs

Exploited heavily, depletion affects some populations of these crab species. Blue Crabs suffer from habitat loss and pollution problems. Certain biological traits in Snow Crabs—like eggbrooding for almost a year—make them particularly vulnerable to fishing pressure. Fishers catch crabs mainly with low-bycatch traps.



### Albacore\*, Bigeye\*, Yellowfin\*, and Skipjack Tuna, canned or longline-caught

Despite having naturally high fertility and wide ranges, many Albacore Tuna ("chunk white") and Bigeye, Yellowfin, and Skipjack Tuna ("chunk light") populations are declining from heavy fishing pressure. Globally, few regulations exist for tuna longline, drift gillnet, and purse-seine fisheries. These fisheries also catch large numbers of marine mammals, sea turtles, sharks, and young tunas. Despite U.S. "Dolphin Safe" standards for the canned tuna market, affected dolphins are not recovering.



### Monkfish

Monkfish are caught along with other groundfish like Atlantic Cod and Haddock in the Northeast U.S. Overfishing, high bycatch, poor management, and depletion all mar this fishery.



### Sea Scallops

While no longer overfished, controversial management measures for wild Sea Scallops inadequately address high fishing pressure. Bottom dredges and trawls used to catch Sea Scallops damage habitat, and there is unintended catch of endangered sea turtles, depleted Atlantic Cod, and other groundfish. One scallop fishery in Argentina is certified as sustainably managed by the Marine Stewardship Council.



### Atlantic Flounders and Soles

Long-term overfishing and high bycatch plague Atlantic groundfish fisheries. Naturally vulnerable to fishing pressure, most Atlantic flounders and soles remain depleted. Summer Flounder\*, an exception, is rebounding but high fishing pressure threatens its continued recovery.



### Rockfish, U.S. West Coast

Rockfish have a long lifespan, making them vulnerable to fishing pressure. Despite improved management, conservation goals have not been met and many rockfish populations remain overfished and depleted.



### Groupers

Generally long-lived, many groupers change sex with age and spawn together in the same places every year, making them vulnerable to overfishing. Most groupers sold in the U.S. come from the Gulf of Mexico, where management of grouper fisheries has historically been lacking. In U.S. waters, Snowy, Warsaw, Black, Goliath, and Nassau Groupers are depleted.



### Orange Roughy

Severely depleted, Orange Roughy don't mature until they're at least 20 years old and can live over 100 years. They live in deep waters where habitat-damaging trawls catch them when they gather in groups to feed or spawn. Fishing for Orange Roughy also catches and kills a number of threatened deep sea shark species.



### Chilean Sea Bass

Really named Patagonian Toothfish, high market demand for this naturally long-lived fish drives depletion and creates an incentive for continued illegal fishing. One very small Patagonian Toothfish fishery in the South Atlantic is being sustainably managed according to the Marine Stewardship Council.



### Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

Highly valued by sushi connoisseurs, Atlantic Bluefin Tuna have been exploited heavily since the 1970s and suffer extreme depletion. Since 1996, the World Conservation Union has listed the western population of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna as critically endangered and the eastern population as endangered.



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