Traceability

"Information is power. Information about the fish on our plates has the power to improve fisheries management, support equitable working conditions for seafood laborers, and help prevent mislabeled and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) products from entering the market." — Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability (SALT).

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What is traceability?

Traceability implies that a seafood product purchased at a restaurant or retailer may be traced through the supply chain, back to the point of harvest (vessel or farm), including hatchery and feed mill sources. Traceability is accomplished by documenting the product chain of custody, record keeping, and proper handling protocols during processing, shipping, and receiving to ensure that products are tracked accurately.

Key traceability terms:

- End-to-end: Traceability occurring from the point of harvest (including the harvest of fish for feed) to final consumer.
- Electronic traceability: Seafood production information relevant to traceability is recorded, stored, shared, and accessed via electronic means as opposed to a paper-based system.
- Interoperability: The ability of different information technology systems or software programs to communicate seamlessly for the purpose of exchanging and using data. For systems to be truly interoperable, they must have both semantic (common meaning) and syntactic (common format) interoperability.

Implementing traceability requires investment, cooperation, and transparency across seafood supply chains. However, when shared, traceability information about where seafood came from, who caught it, how it was caught, and how it was handled or processed may support efforts to [detect and deter](#), seafood fraud, labor abuse, overfishing, and support a range of other business functions. The ultimate

goal is to have [end-to-end](#), [electronic](#), [interoperable traceability](#) in place throughout global seafood supply chains.

Traceability Resources:

- FishWise: [Advancing Traceability in the Seafood Industry: Assessing Challenges and Opportunities.](#)
- Future of Fish: [Seafood Traceability Glossary: a guide to terms, technologies, and topics](#).

Traceable fisheries: Triple impact benefits

Creating and administering a program to collect useful data from fishing activities is a collaborative and valuable undertaking for governments and companies alike. Once collected, multiple stakeholders may use this data to achieve ecological, social, and economic goals. Building that triple-impact, or 'comprehensive', approach into the design and implementation of a country's electronic catch documentation and traceability (eCDT) program is one method to help meet all three goals.

The Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability (SALT)—a global community of governments, the seafood industry, and non-governmental organizations implemented by FishWise—advanced six principles for developing comprehensive or triple impact traceability programs.

- **Use data to inform decision-making:** Put the necessary information into the hands of the right people, so they may make data-driven decisions while designing, implementing, and improving the eCDT program.
- **Create a program that is electronic, interoperable, and data secure:** Increase alignment across the seafood sector by prioritizing the seamless exchange of digital data with existing traceability systems. Choose technologies that are cost-effective and meet the needs for data analysis and security.
- **Be inclusive and collaborative with stakeholders:** Collaborate early and often with the people that will use the eCDT program, people affected by it, and advocates of both groups to improve program uptake and create multi-stakeholder oversight.
- **Build a lasting and scalable program:** Generate and maintain support for the eCDT program—politically, financially, and with users—so that it can expand beyond the pilot phase.
- **Maximize ecological, social, and economic benefits:** Understand the ecological, social, and economic aspects of the eCDT program to maximize benefits using a comprehensive approach.
- **Address data and verification needs across fisheries and supply chains:** Data and verification needs will differ across stakeholders and nodes of the supply chain. Recognize these unique needs while also considering how to safely and equitably collect, store, and share that data without compromising workers' rights.

The [full principles](#) may be found on SALT's website. A [Pathway to the Principles](#), which provides detailed guidance for implementation, is also available.
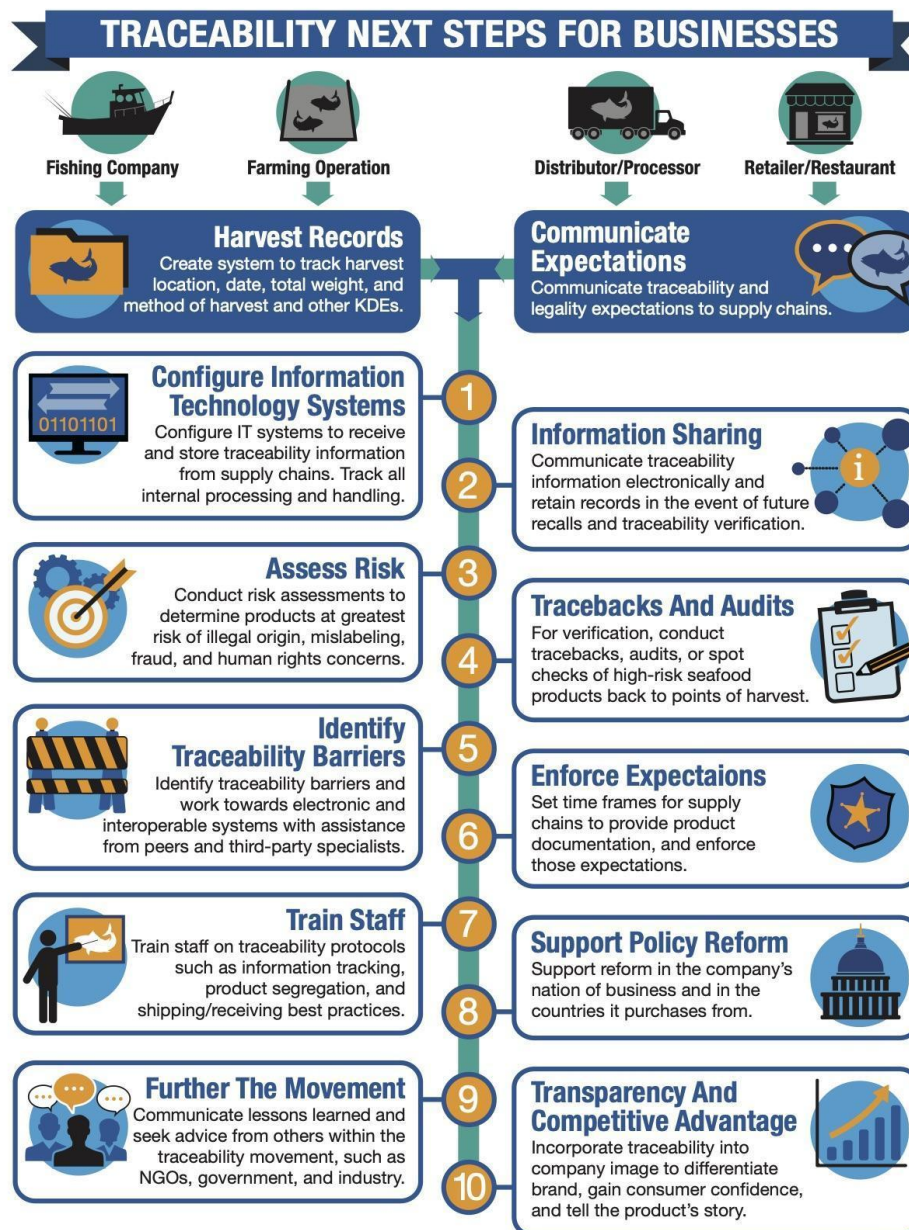
How to support traceability

"When it comes to conserving our oceans and ensuring the seafood we eat originates through ethical production, the seafood industry plays a large role. To confirm our seafood is caught, traded and sold properly requires the ability to effectively and reliably trace the path, from catch to point of sale." - David Schorr, Statement on GDST Standards for Interoperable Seafood Traceability Systems.

Several multi-stakeholder initiatives have arisen to support and expand traceability efforts within the seafood industry.

- The Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability is an international, business-to-business platform that has brought together seafood industry stakeholders to develop a list of essential key data elements to collect through traceability systems.
- The Seafood Task Force is a pre-competitive, industry-led group focusing on traceability and supply chain analysis, starting in Thailand.
- The Global Tuna Alliance is an independent group of retailers and tuna supply chain companies implementing the objectives laid out in the World Economic Forum Tuna 2020 Traceability Declaration, among other environmental and human rights goals.
- The International Pole and Line Foundation is an international NGO supporting responsible pole-and-line and handline tuna fisheries, and recently launched the Sourcing Transparency Platform and Fisheries Improvement Toolbox.

Read about more efforts in the RISE Community.

In addition to collaborative efforts, businesses may take steps within their own company and supply chain to improve traceability. The goal of the **Traceability Next Steps for Businesses** is to communicate traceability and legality expectations to supply chains and create systems to track harvest location, date, total weight, method of harvest and other KDEs:

TRACEABILITY NEXT STEPS FOR BUSINESSES

Fishing Company | **Farming Operation** | **Distributor/Processor** | **Retailer/Restaurant**

Harvest Records
Create system to track harvest location, date, total weight, and method of harvest and other KDEs.

Communicate Expectations
Communicate traceability and legality expectations to supply chains.

1. Configure Information Technology Systems
Configure IT systems to receive and store traceability information from supply chains. Track all internal processing and handling.

2. Information Sharing
Communicate traceability information electronically and retain records in the event of future recalls and traceability verification.

3. Assess Risk
Conduct risk assessments to determine products at greatest risk of illegal origin, mislabeling, fraud, and human rights concerns.

4. Tracebacks And Audits
For verification, conduct tracebacks, audits, or spot checks of high-risk seafood products back to points of harvest.

5. Identify Traceability Barriers
Identify traceability barriers and work towards electronic and interoperable systems with assistance from peers and third-party specialists.

6. Enforce Expectaions
Set time frames for supply chains to provide product documentation, and enforce those expectations.

7. Train Staff
Train staff on traceability protocols such as information tracking, product segregation, and shipping/receiving best practices.

8. Support Policy Reform
Support reform in the company's nation of business and in the countries it purchases from.

9. Further The Movement
Communicate lessons learned and seek advice from others within the traceability movement, such as NGOs, government, and industry.

10. Transparency And Competitive Advantage
Incorporate traceability into company image to differentiate brand, gain consumer confidence, and tell the product's story.

Resources:
- FishWise: Advancing Traceability in the Seafood Industry: Assessing Challenges and Opportunities.
- Global Tuna Alliance: Tuna 2020 Traceability Declaration Traceability Toolkit.