Responsible sourcing guide

Channel Fisheries

2025 | 2026

Channel
FISHERIES
Brixham's Finest Fish

Responsible sourcing guide

Channel Fisheries

We have been at the forefront of sustainable practices, and have been leading the field in sustainable seafood sourcing for the Food Service sector since 2007. We have worked with several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in both the wild and farmed seafood sectors. This work has led to us having an intimate understanding of the issues involved in the sustainable discussion, and the positive and negative impacts of implementing a sustainable programme.

The outcome of this has been the establishment of our guiding principles:

- We work with chefs to guide them away from less sustainable species. This allows for dialogue to continue, thus leading to a positive outcome.
- Wherever possible, we source from certified fisheries.
- We work with small fisheries to support local ecosystems.
- We engage with all NGOs to positively improve the fishing industry, and to improve fishing practices. This is fundamental to support sustainable fisheries for future generations.
- Certain species that are considered endangered (taking guidance from the Marine Conservation Society), we refuse to sell.
- We vet each of our suppliers to ensure that they align to the stringent welfare and modern slavery policies we have in place.

In addition to the search for sustainable sourcing solutions, we have also focused on ensuring that our solutions are ethical. To that extent, we have adopted the guidelines from the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). We have aimed to comply with the ETI base code and require all our suppliers to complete Ethical questionnaires and sign up to this base code prior to approval.

We aim to have a fully sustainable and ethical supply chain. However, we are aware that this is not a goal, but a process that needs constant attention. We are in that process for the long haul!

We acknowledge that there are many inherent difficulties in the seafood industry, both in wild caught and aquaculture, but also believe there is a growing awareness of the issues. As an organisation, we are convinced that a step-by-step approach to sustainable change is the most effective way of improving every aspect of our business.

The four key areas of focus are:

SOURCING: Good sourcing is the driving force of good supply.

As members of the Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC), we use the Environmentally Responsible Seafood Sourcing Guide as the basis for decision-making, when sourcing wild caught and farmed seafood.

Avoid the worst: We actively remove seafood that we believe is an unacceptable risk, both in terms of seafood sustainability and social ethics.

Encourage the best: We encourage the use of seafood that is fished or farmed to the highest standard of "best practice" wherever possible, seeking out fisheries with third party certification.

Improve the rest: We work hard with our fisheries, NGOs, and Fishing Organisations to seek out the most responsible fisheries for each specific species. We will only sell wild seafood that is traceable back to the vessel that caught it, with evidence that the catch is in quota, and that we believe has been sustainably caught.

ADVISOR: We believe that as a responsible supplier, one of our key roles is that of an advisor not educator.

We dedicate a considerable amount of resource to developing our employees' understanding of the complexity of the issues surrounding sustainability and socially responsible sourcing. Our teams are given quarterly updates via our Catch-Up report which features current issues affecting the industry. This ensures they are actively asking the necessary relevant questions of suppliers, and are able to give coherent, well understood, answers to our customers.

We are committed to helping our customers take the necessary steps towards a sustainable future by promoting the best and removing the worst. We do this with the help of literature, workshops, bespoke training, and advice.

COLLABORATION: We know that whatever our own beliefs and aspirations for sustainability are, the achievement of these aims is only possible by working with other like-minded people through collaboration. We actively work with other organisations including retailers, NGOs, trade associations, and government bodies, to better understand and further drive the sustainability message.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE: Our commitment to sustainability is hardwired into every aspect of the business. We have historically been involved in several long-term industry defining programs, like the MSC's Project UK.

In conclusion, we recognise that changing the structure of a supply chain is a long, difficult, and complex task.
Long - because changes can often take years to take effect. **Difficult -** because we are affecting people's livelihoods (often their only source of income). Shifting to sustainable methods often increases costs, which few in the supply chain are willing to bear. **Complex -** because there is often no consensus as to the sustainability of a fishery.

We recognise that the journey to sustainability is a long, difficult, and complex one. However, we are determined to lead the field in the foodservice sector, whilst actively encouraging our customers to join this challenging voyage to maintain our fishing stocks for years to come.

Managing Director, Bidfresh Limited.

Channel Fisheries is engaged with a number of NGOs and organisations.

Social Welfare

SEAA

The Seafood Ethics Action Alliance provides a platform for businesses to work together to share information on emerging issues and agree solutions.

The SEA Alliance has been established by seafood businesses. It provides a platform for industry to agree best practice solutions, to respond to ethical issues in the supply chain and to enable pre-competitive action. It does this via meetings, information sharing between members, and where needed, the creation of working groups to work together on the required actions.
This work reflects the PAS 1550:2017 Code of Practice on Exercising due diligence in establishing the legal origin of seafood products and marine ingredients. It also takes into account the BRC IUU Advisory Note (2015), together with meaningful implementation of the ILO 188 Work in Fishing Convention and other appropriate instruments.

The SEA Alliance has been awarded (May 2021) a grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to support their work to increase industry leadership and encourage positive change in human rights issues across the seafood supply chains of UK companies.

The key to driving ethical improvement in seafood supply chains is collaboration. The SEA Alliance is collaborating with a number of other organisations, platforms and initiatives that share common goals on social responsibility in seafood supply chains and Direct Seafoods are proud to be working alongside the major retailers to affect change on the water.

SEA Alliance activities build on the work of the **Seafood Ethics Common Language Group**

Advisory

Sustainable Seafood Coalition

The Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) is the first ever cross-industry group in the UK to tackle seafood sustainability using their influence as a seafood business. They are united in a vision for sustainable seafood and have pledged to work together to achieve this. This means that clients can trust that they are working hard to develop voluntary solutions to the seafood sustainability problems. This involves continuous re-assessment of supply chains to ensure all the fish and seafood supplied is responsible and sustainable.

We are an active member of this coalition representing the food service sector, and have been instrumental in drawing up the voluntary codes of practice that the SSC will abide by. The first two codes of practice have now been agreed by the members. The codes are 'Responsible and Sustainable Sourcing' and 'Responsible and Sustainable Labelling'. They cover both farmed and wild caught species.
This year the SSC changed secretariat and is going from strength to strength as more new members join. As a member of the steering group we will continue to influence the ongoing development of the codes and will continue to encourage its customers to join the coalition with the target that all UK seafood should be from a sustainable source.

This is the first such industry wide coalition of businesses in the world that commits its members to such codes and includes such major retailers as Marks & Spencer (M&S), Sainsbury's and Waitrose ,as well as a number of producers such as New England Seafood and Flatfish and some of our customers such as Harrods, Fullers and Compass.

Advisory

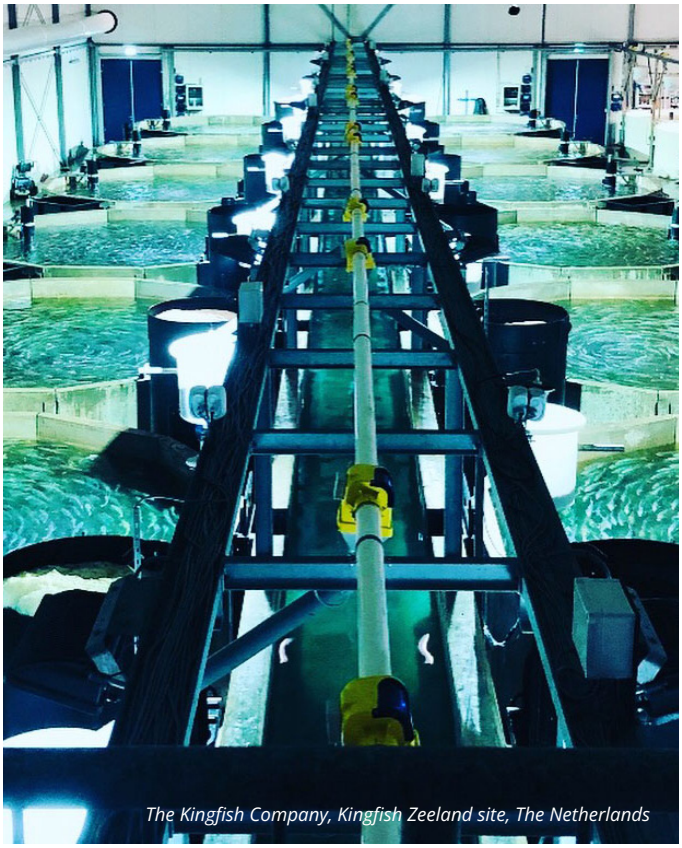
Marine Conservation Society

The Marine Conservation Society is the UK charity dedicated to caring for our seas, shores, and wildlife. The MCS campaigns for clean seas and beaches, sustainable fisheries, and protection for all marine life. The MCS aquaculture and fisheries program promotes sustainable seafood consumption through its consumer awareness program and by working directly with the seafood industry. The MCS encourages restaurants to buy sustainable seafood, and to use their skills to serve unusual, sustainable, seafood to customers in an attractive, tasty way, thus helping to relieve pressure on traditional, often over-fished species.

Recently, the MCS have relaunched their Good Fish Guide which uses a traffic light system to assess and rate the sustainability of both wild and farm caught fish. Using scientific data from numerous sources and specifically ICES (International Council Exploration of the Sea), the MCS updates their ratings twice a year on the **MCS website**. This easy to use web site, as well as the **Good Fish Guide app** which can be easily downloaded, is the perfect tool for chefs to use in ensuring they make the best choices in sustainable seafood when developing menus.

Over the years, we have been great supporters of the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), and also use their ratings as a guide to best sourcing practice. We are sourcing and promoting the use of the most sustainable species wherever possible, more than 76% of our total sale volumes are 1-3 MCS rated. We are keen on suggesting alternatives to those which are rated 4 and 5/red as fish to avoid. We believe that the MCS play a vital role in supporting our message to our customers that sustainability is vitally important to a productive and successful fishing industry that supports the food service sector.

The MCS has specialised in rating species that are commercially valuable to the UK. As such, when we are researching our supply chains we also use a number of other rating sites such as **Seafood Watch**, an American site set up by the Monterey Bay Aquarium that has a similar system for species more common in the United States. We also use the RASS **(Risk Assessment For Sourcing Seafood)** that was setup by Seafish to help UK processors, retail and food service gain the necessary information for the most sustainable supply chains.



The Kingfish Company, Kingfish Zeeland site, The Netherlands

Certifying the Certifiers

Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative

As seafood production increases to meet rising global demand, so have concerns of members of the seafood supply chain, consumers, and environmental NGOs over the impact that production is having on the environment. One way of providing assurances of more sustainable practices in both aquaculture production and wild capture fisheries is the use of seafood certification schemes. However, the increase in these types of certifications has led to confusion over how to recognise a credible seafood certification organisation scheme. This confusion is making decision-making more difficult, and seafood more costly.

The Global Sustainable Seafood initiative is a public-private partnership working together on a common purpose: Turn seafood into a driver for good to preserve oceans for future generations and drive forward more sustainable seafood.

Through its strong relationship with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), GSSI is uniquely positioned to support its Partners in accelerating the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is one of the largest precompetitive collaborations in the world aligning businesses, NGOs, governments, and international organizations representing the full seafood value chain.

Channel Fisheries along with some of its customers, is using the certifiers benchmarked by the GSSI scheme as the core schemes for sourcing seafood both wild and farmed. This helps enhance the powerful message we are trying to deliver.

International Wild Caught Certification

Marine Stewardship Council

The MSC meets best practice guidelines for eco-labelling and certification to ensure it offers the world's leading certification program for sustainable wild-capture seafood.

The MSC follows international, professional benchmarks to promote robust processes. The MSC upholds core values of independence, transparency, impartiality, and stakeholder consultation.

The MSC Chain of custody has provided a recognised certification scheme that helps our customers prove their commitment to sustainability, and enables them to demonstrate and educate young chefs on the importance of sourcing responsibly. We believe that the MSC can really help restaurants demonstrate best practice in wild seafood sourcing.

We have been a longtime supporter of the MSC and over the last few years have increased our sales of MSC certified products to over 1.3 Million kilos with in excess of 180 MSC certified lines available, from simple cod and haddock lines to top end luxury lines like King crab and Lobster.

Over the last 3 years we have won MSC Awards in the following categories:

MSC UK - Fresh Fish Foodservice Supplier of the Year 2021

MSC UK - Fresh Fish Foodservice Supplier of the Year 2022

MSC UK - Foodservice Wholesaler of the Year 2023 (with Bidfood)

Local UK Wild Caught Certification and Education

Project UK

We have been an active sponsor of Project UK - a partnership of retailers, suppliers, non-government organisations (NGOs), and the fishing industry. Together, the partnership is working towards an environmentally sustainable future for UK fisheries. The project, led by UK seafood authority Seafish, is using assessments based on the MSC standard for sustainable fishing to produce tailored sustainability reports for a significant number of fisheries in the UK. We keep a close eye on the Project UK development and are looking forward to its positive outcomes in the future.

Fisheries included in stage one of Project UK include:

- North Sea Plaice - demersal trawl, beam trawl & seine.
- North Sea Lemon Sole - demersal trawl, beam trawl & seine.
- Channel Scallops - dredge.
- Western & Channel Monkfish - demersal trawl, beam trawl, & gill net.
- Southern Crab - pots.
- Southwest Lobster - pots.

Fisheries included in stage two:

- King scallop – North Sea, West of Scotland, and Irish Sea, dredge.
- Nephrops – North Sea, West of Scotland and Irish Sea, demersal trawl and creel/pot

These reports are aiming to deliver a roadmap that highlights best practice, and which provides an independent evidence base to attract targeted investment in further scientific research. For some fisheries, this project may offer the opportunity to enter full assessment for MSC certification. For others, they will have a clear plan to enable them to work towards the benefits of third party certification offered by the MSC.

International Aquaculture Certification

Aquaculture Stewardship Council

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) operates a certification and labelling program based around scientifically robust and globally credible standards that assess whether fish farms are operating responsibly. The standards are helping aquaculture become more environmentally sustainable and socially responsible. We are actively involved in seeking out ASC certified products, as well as holding the ASC Chain of Custody.

Seafood products that carry the ASC logo are fully traceable to farms that have been independently certified to the ASC standard via Chain of Custody certification.

ASC certified farms have demonstrated that they are well managed and minimise any adverse environmental and social impacts.

As one of the three most important certification programs positively benchmarked by the GSSI, the ASC are rapidly growing the number of farms and species that they are working with, we work directly with a number of aquaculture suppliers that carry the certification, e.g. The Kingfish Company, and are always seeking to expand the range available for our customers.

International Seafood Certification

GSA

The GSA (Global Seafood Alliance) formerly known as the Global Aquaculture Alliance, has been developed to encompass the best standards for both wild caught and aquaculture seafood. The journey to the Global Seafood Alliance began in 2018 with the formation of the Global Seafood Assurances to address the gaps in wild caught fishery certification.

"**The Global Seafood Assurances** is an independent, not-for profit organization. The GSA vision is to provide high quality, end-to-end, fully traceable assurance for seafood, supporting the sustainable development of global production while protecting people and planet. GSA works with partners where standards already exist, and creates transparent and credible standards to fill gaps where needed. The Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard was developed by GSA, in partnership with Seafish, through a transparent and rigorous two-year process. It enables fishing operations to provide assurance of decent working conditions and operational best practice from catch to shore. GSA took ownership of the RFVS in May 2020."

In addition to all the good work the GSA are doing to improve wild caught seafood standards, they have also created the BAP (Best Aquaculture Practice) standards that have now been adopted by over two thousand farms worldwide in species ranging right across the seafood spectrum. As one of the GSSI recognised schemes, we have a long list of BAP certified products - specifically in prawns. By volume we sell nearly 5 times more BAP certified prawns than non-certified species.

International Aquaculture Certification

GLOBAL-G.A.P.

Global G.A.P are a global organisation with a crucial objective: safe, sustainable agriculture worldwide. They set voluntary standards for the certification of agricultural products around the globe–and more and more producers, suppliers and buyers are harmonising their certification standards to match. Globally connecting farmers and brand owners in the production and marketing of safe food to provide reassurance for consumers, they lay the foundation for the protection of scarce resources by the implementation of Good Agricultural Practices, with a promise for a sustainable future.

The GLOBAL-G.A.P. Aquaculture Standard sets criteria for legal compliance, food safety, worker occupational health and safety, animal welfare, and environmental and ecological care. It applies to a diversity of fish, crustaceans, and molluscs, and extends to all hatchery-based farmed species. It covers the entire production chain, from brood stock, seedlings and feed suppliers, to farming, harvesting and processing. Direct Seafoods actively support the GLOBAL GAP standard by using a number of Global GAP certified species. More than 450 Global GAP certified lines exist in our product range, including most of our farmed salmon, sea bass and sea bream and trout.

Statutory Authority

Seafish

As the authority on seafood, Seafish supports a very broad range of work. From the catching sector, through suppliers, and onto food service and retail. Seafish understands the influential role that the supply chain plays in maintaining the reputation of seafood and the industry, and works closely with this sector to support shared goals.

We sit on the importers and producers advisory board of Seafish representing the food service industries' views, and has helped with the development of **Seafish's 5 year corporate plan.**

The food service sector represents approximately half of the Seafood consumed in the UK, with a value of around £4 billion, and Seafish have been instrumental in leading the way towards a more and more responsible industry. Over the last 10 years, Seafish have been instrumental in developing a number of initiatives to help secure a sustainable and profitable future for the UK seafood industry.

They have produced tools like RASS (Risk Assessment for Sourcing Seafood) and TESS (Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing) that help companies ensure they have all the information they need to source seafood responsibly. They have developed the Responsible fishing vessel standard – now managed by the GSA – a fishing vessel-based program certifying high standards of vessels management and safety systems including crew rights, safety and wellbeing. It is the only vessel level certification program available on a global scale.

Seafish have set up and act as secretariat for the SEA Alliance which is helping the UK Seafood industry become the leading voice in Ethical seafood sourcing around the world.

Recently they have been leading the industry in developing a best practice standard for the handling of crustaceans and decapods, now that these creatures have been deemed as sentient creatures.

Risk Assessment For Sourcing Seafood

Seafish have developed a fisheries risk assessment tool (known as **RASS**) designed to help commercial buyers and processors in the UK to make an informed judgement on the risks they face when sourcing seafood. When assessing wild fisheries RASS methodology takes into account 4 main factors: stock status, stock management, bycatch impact, habitat impact.

RASS will not tell you which fisheries to source from or which to avoid. It will present up-to-date scientific information on the potential reputational risks of sourcing particular seafood in a clear and structured format.

We use RASS as one of the tools that informs our procurement policy as it highlights areas of high risk. Consequently, RASS keeps us ahead of the game when making critical decisions in sourcing.

Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing

Seafish developed the **TESS website** specifically to point seafood buyers to useful resources to help businesses address social responsibility challenges in seafood supply chains. Whilst TESS is not a risk assessment tool it does include details of the many risk assessment tools available. Using available materials from the hub, businesses can better understand geographies and the different methods of fishing where the biggest risks might appear. It also helps to guide towards what questions a seafood buyer should be asking to minimise the risk of poor sourcing.

This year, we aim is to continue our commitment to supply chain mapping. Our focus initially will be on issues related to forced labour and trans-shipment within the seafood industry.

We will work towards moving our suppliers to reporting via the SEDEX platform with an aim for all top 50% suppliers to be enrolled onto platform and reporting by the end of 2025.

We believe it is important that the government and industry continue to support the adoption of policies and actions that maximise the environmental and social benefits of fisheries and minimise the risks. It is pivotal for us that UK seafood remains legally and sustainably sourced, and fisheries operate in accordance with the existing regulations until such time as it is replaced by new fisheries legislation. This includes the continued implementation of the landing obligation which requires fishing vessels to land all catches of specified fish so that they count against quota (where quotas apply), and to be fully documented.

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Talk to us about sustainability

Call: 01803 858 126

www.channelfisheries.com

Channel Fisheries is part of Direct Seafoods (Bidfresh Limited)

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