

14 Organizations Promoting Sustainable Fishing Practices

October is National Seafood Month in the United States. It is a time to celebrate and honor America's fishing communities and fishworkers, and their contributions to the economy and diets of millions of people. Fisheries, including aquaculture, provide a vital source of food, employment, trade, and recreation for people throughout the world. According to the United Nations, marine fisheries directly or indirectly employ more than 200 million people worldwide, and the livelihoods of more than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity.

However, as much as 40 percent of the world's oceans are heavily affected by human activities, including pollution, overfishing, and coastal development. These activities may result in depleted fisheries and loss of coastal habitats, posing a major threat to marine biodiversity and the food supply of millions of people. Of the 600 marine fish stocks monitored by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), more than 70 percent of the world's fish species are fully exploited or depleted.

The contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to food security, nutrition, and livelihoods, both now and in the future, depends on many factors including economic, environmental, governance, policy, and social justice issues. Managing fish populations sustainably requires commitment and cooperation at all levels, including from individuals, local communities, governments, and institutions across the globe. Sustainable fishing practices ensure that fish populations remain healthy and productive, environmental impacts are minimized, and that those who depend on fishing can maintain their livelihoods.

To celebrate National Seafood Month, Food Tank is highlighting 12 fisheries and fisher groups working to establish and support a sustainable seafood system. These organizations are working across the entire fish supply chain, from subsistence fishers to large retail companies, from scientists and researchers to chefs and consumers.

1. Aquaculture Stewardship Council

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an international nonprofit organization recognizing and promoting responsible fish farming practices through their certification program. In collaboration with scientists, conservation groups, aquaculture producers, seafood processors, and retail companies, ASC has created a set of standards that address the key social and environmental impacts of fish farming. These include requirements for farm practices, feed ingredients, traceability, workers' rights, and the protection of surrounding local communities. ASC is currently developing new standards and maintains periodic reviews of existing standards to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness.

2. Fisheries Innovation Scotland

Fisheries Innovation Scotland (FIS) is an independent nonprofit organization working to bring the fish industry together with scientists and government representatives to undertake research, facilitate knowledge exchange, and encourage innovation in Scotland's marine fisheries. FIS's

projects focus on education and capacity building programs, the development of improved fisheries management models, and the assessment and development of new fishing gear and techniques. In 2017, FIS launched a Fisheries Innovation Award Competition, looking for innovative ideas and approaches that could inspire new research and development projects.

3. Institute for Fisheries Resources

The Institute for Fisheries Resources (IFR) in San Francisco, California, is a nonprofit organization working to carry out the fishery research and conservation needs of working fishermen and fisherwomen. IFR establishes alliances among fishworkers, government agencies, and concerned citizens, working to protect fish populations and restore aquatic habitats. IFR has received several accolades for their efforts to secure a sustainable fishing future in a number of areas, from Pacific Salmon restoration to fighting for toxins regulation and agricultural reform. IFR seeks to advance its advocacy work on common resource protection and conservation issues, informing policy debates at the regional, national, and international levels.

4. International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that works towards the establishment of socially equitable and environmentally sustainable fisheries. In collaboration with other civil society organizations, ICSF is working to seek greater recognition of the rights of small-scale fishing communities. This has included active participation in developing the first internationally agreed Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries, endorsed by the U.N. ICSF programs focus on advocating for policies that recognize the rights of small-scale and traditional fishing communities; the role of women in fishing and fishing communities; the impact of climate change on fisheries resources; and the impact of trade on food and livelihood security in fishing communities.

5. International Seafood Sustainability Foundation

In 2009, scientists, industry leaders, and environmental activists launched the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) based on shared concerns about the future of global tuna fisheries. ISSF advocates for the adoption and implementation of science-based management measures that facilitate long-term conservation and sustainable use of global tuna stocks, reducing bycatch and promoting tuna ecosystem health. ISSF cooperates with and supports Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) in achieving their objectives of tuna stock and ecosystem conservation. ISSF also works to reduce illegal, unreported, and unregulated tuna fishing by advocating for stronger RFMOs and strengthening Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) systems.

6. Marine Conservation Alliance

The Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA) is an organization comprised of coastal communities, harvesters, processors, and western Alaska Community Development Quota entities that collectively harvest the majority of the seafood caught in U.S. North Pacific federal waters. Working at international, national, state, and local levels, MCA actively monitors fishery issues to support sustainable fisheries which help feed the world. MCA does this by commenting on policy documents and proposed legislation and regulations, actively participating in regulatory processes such as the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and through outreach,

education, and research. Some current MCA initiatives include [Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management](#), deep sea coral and essential fish habitats studies, and strengthening risk management and catch limits policy. MCA also recently launched an interactive website on [sustainable fisheries](#) that outlines seven key principles of sustainability.

7. Marine Fish Conservation Network

The [Marine Fish Conservation Network](#) is a coalition of U.S. commercial and recreational fishing associations, regional and national conservation groups, aquaria, and marine science organizations working around a shared mission: conserving and revitalizing wild ocean fisheries. The network aims to preserve the science and conservation advancements that have already been secured in federal fisheries policy, specifically the [Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act](#). The network actively defends against rollbacks to the federal fisheries law and advocates for new policies that strengthen conservation and science-based measures in fisheries management. This includes promoting policies that improve opportunities for fishing communities, provide stronger protections for fish habitats, and secure more effective monitoring of fishing vessels.

8. Monterey Bay Aquarium

[Monterey Bay Aquarium's](#) program [Seafood Watch](#) provides science-based sustainable seafood recommendations to consumers, chefs, and businesses choose to inform their seafood purchasing decisions. Since 1999, the program has worked to raise public awareness, advance policy and management measures, educate chefs and culinary professionals, and create partnerships to address sustainable seafood issues. This includes distributing more than 57 million [consumer guides](#) worldwide, developing an educational program and [tools for restaurants and retailers](#), and providing a range of [international resources](#) that offer sustainable seafood ratings in other parts of the world.

9. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) is an American scientific agency within the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#) that provides coastal and marine environmental stewardship. In coordination with federal, state, local, tribal, and international authorities, NOAA regulates fisheries and marine sanctuaries as well as protects threatened and endangered marine species. NOAA's [FishWatch](#) program provides up-to-date information on the status of more than 100 U.S. farmed or wild caught fish species as well as factual information to help guide consumers towards sustainable seafood purchases. This information comes from NOAA's stock assessments, fishery surveys, fishery management plans, environmental analyses, and research to provide consumers with the most relevant, factual data on U.S. fisheries and sustainable seafood.

10. Natural Resources Defense Council

The [Natural Resources Defense Council's](#) [Smart Seafood Buying Guide](#) helps consumers diversify the types of seafood they eat, avoid species high in mercury, and support local, community-based fisheries. The guide provides five simple tips—think small, buy American, diversify, eat local, and be vigilant—with clear charts and links to tools to guide U.S. consumers to seafood choices that are both healthy and good for the environment. Their [wallet-card guide](#)

provides health and safety information for consumers to determine what amount of fish sold in grocery stores and restaurants is safe to eat based on their weight and the mercury levels found in fish species.

11. Oceana

Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization focused solely on ocean conservation. Oceana's offices, located in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America, work together to protect and restore the world's oceans through targeted policy campaigns. Oceana's Living Blue guide provides links to sustainable seafood guides in different countries, sustainable seafood recipes from world-renowned chefs, and a list of "lifestyle choice" suggestions that help protect the world's oceans. These range from signing petitions to tips on buying ocean-friendly products and reducing plastic waste.

12. Sailors for the Sea

Sailors for the Sea is headquartered in Newport, Rhode Island, and has three affiliates; Sailors for the Sea Japan, Sailors for the Sea Portugal, and Sailors for the Sea Chile. Sailors of the Sea has four key programs: Clean Regattas, the world's only sustainability certification for water-based activities; Green Boating Guide, a guide for boaters to reduce their environmental impact; Kids Environmental Lesson Plans (KELP), learning activities for students to better understand the ocean; and a series of monthly articles called Ocean Watch. In 2013, Sailors for the Sea Japan published Japan's first sustainable seafood guide which is promoted through an annual Blue Seafood Festival. Sailors for the Sea Portugal's KELP program is currently being used in 1,000 schools around the country. Sailors for the Sea Chile is working to be an ocean health leader in South America, with plans underway to engage commercial fisheries to promote sustainable seafood farming and fishing.

13. Sustainable Fisheries Partnership

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) is an international NGO established to improve commercial fishing and aquaculture practices by working with those in the private sector that support sustainable seafood. SFP's mission is to engage and catalyze global seafood supply chains in reducing the environmental impacts of fishing and fish farming and regenerating depleted fish stocks. SFP aims to fill a specific gap between industry and the marine conservation community, operating through two main principles: information and improvement. This involves providing up-to-date information on fisheries to major buyers and other fisheries stakeholders, and using that information to engage everyone along the supply chain in fisheries improvements that move toward sustainability.

14. World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers

The World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) is an international organization representing 41 national organizations of traditional small-scale fishing communities across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. It acts as a world body representing the concerns of traditional fishing communities whose livelihoods directly depend on the sustainable management of fisheries resources. WFF aims to empower small-scale fishers' organizations to influence both national and international policies that affect their rights of access, use and control, and sustainability of fisheries resources. WFF promotes the recognition and upholding of

small-scale and indigenous fishers' rights and the unique culture of fishing communities through advocacy and awareness campaigns.

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