

# Back to basics: fish sourcing guide

## What's the problem?

Put simply...we're in danger of running out of fish. We fish so much, some species can't breed fast enough to replace themselves.

## Why should we care?

The future of fisheries and marine wildlife is in our hands. If we don't do something now our children may not be able to choose fish off the menu... because a fish choice won't exist. If we choose fish now from sustainably-managed sources and caught or farmed in ways which minimise damage to the marine environment... we could be the generation that helps put guilt-free fish back on plates.

## What you can do

You can make the right sustainable choice when buying seafood.

Here are some top fish-buying tips from the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the UK Charity working to protect our seas, shores and wildlife:

- **Avoid buying fish from over-fished stocks** - See [www.fishonline.org](http://www.fishonline.org) for details of fish from sustainably harvested stocks. Avoid eating fish rated 5 or red.
- **Download Pocket Good Fish Guide** - Carry sustainable seafood advice wherever you go. Call 01989 566017 for a FREE copy of our **Pocket Good Fish Guide** or download our **Good Fish Guide phone app**.
- **Choose fish caught using methods with lower environmental impact** - These are the words you need to look out for - handline, diver, pot, trap-caught, hand-gathered etc. - it means unwanted marine species (by-catch) and damage to the seabed is avoided.
- **Avoid buying small, undersized fish that have not reproduced** - See our **Seasonality Table** for details of fish sizes and maturity.
- **Where possible avoid buying fish during their breeding season** - Frozen fish is ok. Definitely avoid 'berried' or egg-bearing lobster and crab. Our **Seasonality Table**, **Pocket guide to buying wild-caught seasonal, fresh and local fish** and **Fish of the Month** gives guidance on cooking seasonal fish.
- **Avoid buying endangered and vulnerable species** - Long-lived species have low-reproductive rates because they're slow to mature e.g. sharks, skates, rays and deep-water species such as orange roughy.
- **Look at the labelling** - When buying wild caught or farmed fish, look for the labels overleaf as evidence of responsibly produced seafood.

## Examples of Sustainable Seafood Labels



**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)**  
[www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)



**Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)**  
[www.asc-aqua.org](http://www.asc-aqua.org)



**Freedom Food**  
[www.freedomfood.co.uk](http://www.freedomfood.co.uk) (Higher welfare standards)



**Naturland**  
[www.naturland.de](http://www.naturland.de) (Organically farmed)



**Soil Association**  
[www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org) (Organically farmed)

- ➔ **Choose organic** - Organically farmed fish have lower stocking densities and are fed more sustainable feeds so choose fish with Soil Association labeling.
- ➔ **Diversify your choice** - Over 70% of the seafood consumed in the UK comes from only 5 types of fish: cod, haddock, tuna, prawns, and salmon. If you must buy from the Big 5 check out our buying tips but ideally try lesser known species e.g. dab, pouting, herring, red gurnard or saithe (coley). Dab and pouting are often taken as by-catch in mixed trawl fisheries and then thrown back dead - demand for them should help reduce this waste.

## Top tips for the Big 5

- ➔ **Tuna** - Only buy skipjack or yellowfin tuna caught using low impact methods such as trolling, pole and line or handline.
- ➔ **Prawns** - Avoid wild-caught tropical prawns. Only buy cold-water ones from fisheries where sorting grids are used to reduce by-catch. If buying farmed tropical prawns organically certified are the best choice.
- ➔ **Cod, Haddock** - Only choose fish from sustainable or well-managed fisheries and by choosing long line-caught fish only. See [www.fishonline.org](http://www.fishonline.org) for details.
- ➔ **Salmon** - Avoid eating wild-caught Atlantic salmon from rivers where stocks are below safe conservation limits. See **Environment Agency** ([www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)) or **Marine Scotland Science** ([www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)). Choose organically farmed salmon or wild-caught Pacific salmon from Alaska.

### Marine Conservation Society

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