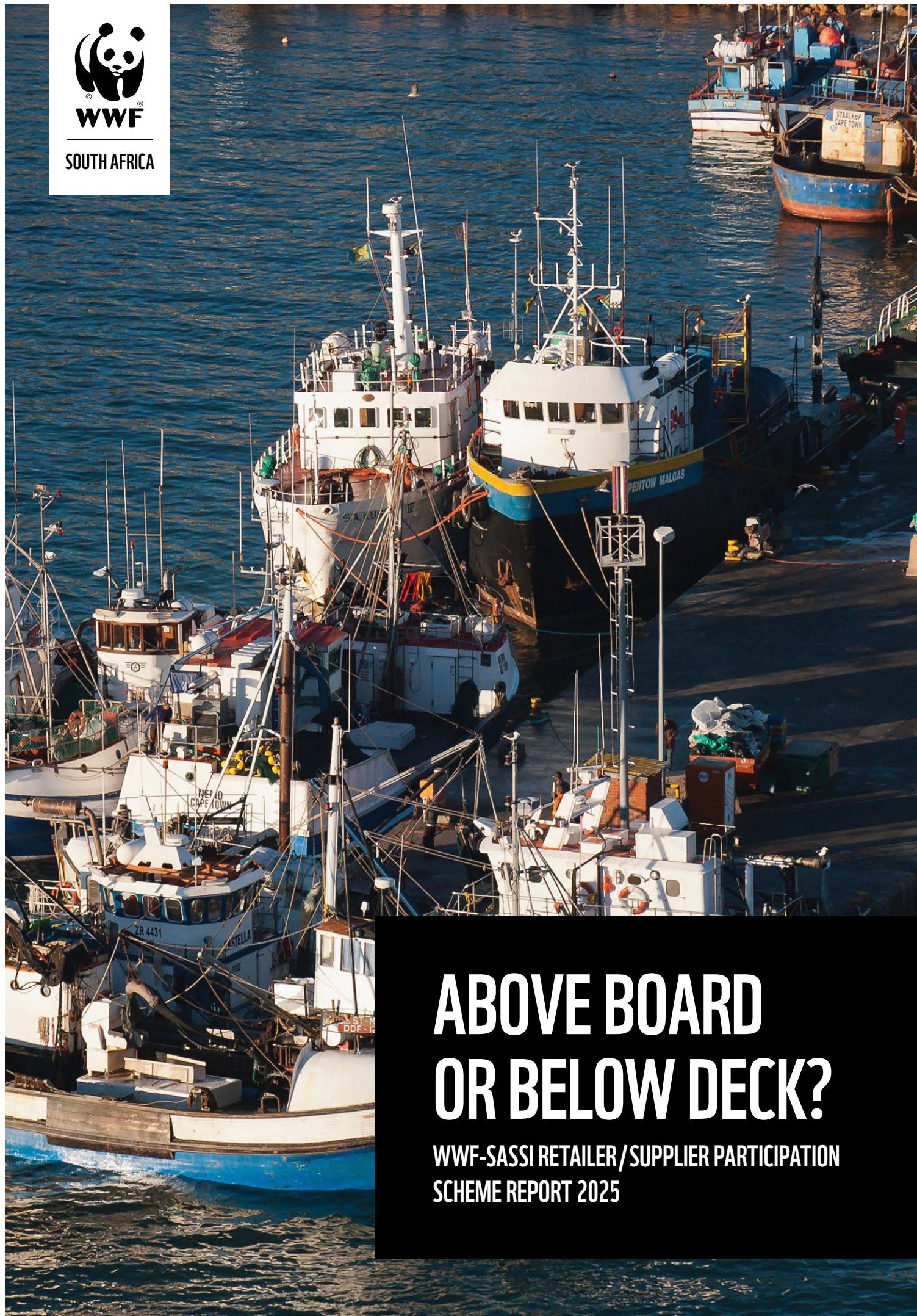




WWF®

SOUTH AFRICA



ABOVE BOARD OR BELOW DECK?

WWF-SASSI RETAILER/SUPPLIER PARTICIPATION
SCHEME REPORT 2025

About this report

This is the eleventh edition of the WWF-SASSI Retailer/Supplier Participation Scheme report. It features the importance of transparent information and how that is essential for the journey towards sustainable seafood. It also explores how various pressures can impact retailers and suppliers' sustainable seafood journeys, which are often met with wins and challenges in equal measure.

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Design: Design for development

Cover photo: Santiago Cabral / WWF

Printer: Rob Print

Printed on: GalerieArt Natural

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WWF is an independent global conservation organisation, formed in 1961 and committed to building a future where people and nature thrive. Our mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature by conserving biodiversity, ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, and promoting the reduction of wasteful consumption and pollution.

Active in more than 100 countries, WWF uses science to focus on innovative solutions for people and nature. We collaborate with businesses, governments, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and scientists, ensuring that priorities are shared and knowledge is integrated. Together, we can ensure conservation has a lasting impact

WWF South Africa is a national office in the global WWF network. Started in 1968, we are a local NGO with a vision to create a future in which people and nature thrive. Our aim is to secure and enhance millions of hectares of land and sea for the wellbeing of millions of people. Nature is our home.

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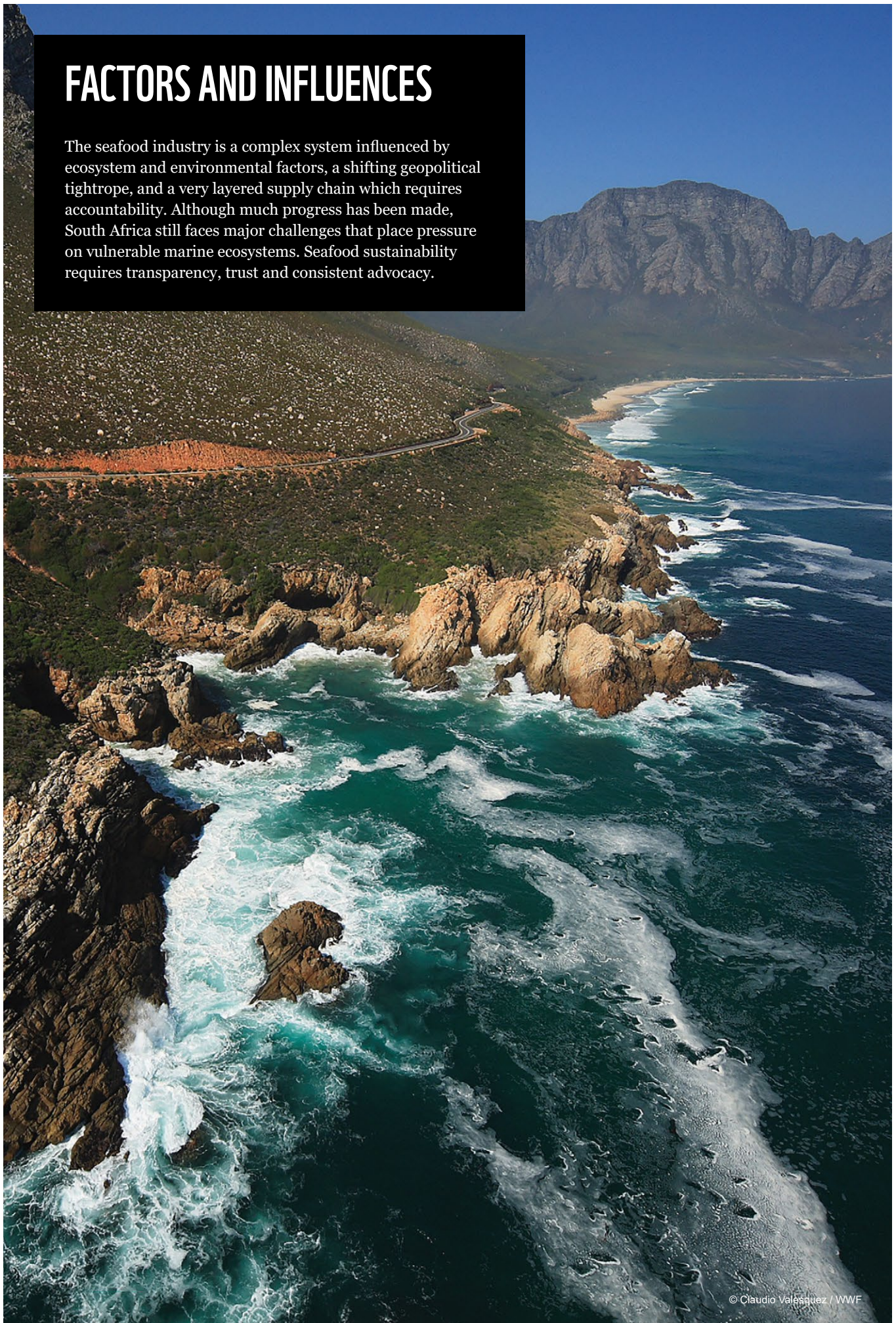


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FACTORS AND INFLUENCES

The seafood industry is a complex system influenced by ecosystem and environmental factors, a shifting geopolitical tightrope, and a very layered supply chain which requires accountability. Although much progress has been made, South Africa still faces major challenges that place pressure on vulnerable marine ecosystems. Seafood sustainability requires transparency, trust and consistent advocacy.



© Claudio Valdesquez / WWF

AT THE CROSSCURRENTS: GLOBAL CHALLENGES, LOCAL MARKETS

If one word could describe the seafood industry in 2025, it would be “volatility”. For South Africa and the world, the year was shaped by rising costs, disrupted trade routes and geopolitical tensions.

Amid the turbulence, demand for seafood has continued to grow as consumers increasingly seek affordable, nutritious protein sources. This is evidenced by an increase in seafood consumption by 13,9 million South Africans in 2022 to 16,7 million South Africans in 2025, according to the WWF-SASSI consumer survey. Globally, the seafood sector has had to navigate a perfect storm of challenges. Inflation, tariffs, fluctuating currencies and ongoing global conflicts have placed pressure on supply chains and increased operating costs. At the same time, the industry continues to grapple with environmental variability, declining fish stocks, sourcing challenges, and growing demands for transparency. Aquaculture producers have faced their own hurdles, including rising feed costs, fluctuating market prices and barriers to market access.

The wider food system is facing similar pressures. According to the *2025 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* report, food price inflation has remained a major concern since 2021. In Africa, the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet rose from 864 million to more than 1 billion during this period. In low-income countries, that figure increased from 464 million in 2019 to 545 million in 2024.

Over and above this, the *World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Risks* report warns that geopolitical volatility is likely to remain elevated for at least the next two years, with trade disputes, sanctions and tariffs now ranking among the world's most significant business risks. For seafood companies and retailers, this highlights the importance of building resilient and diversified supply chains.

Yet, while the industry faces mounting challenges, it is also benefiting from changing consumer preferences. Seafood consumption has grown as consumers increasingly prioritise health and wellness, a trend that has been further accelerated by the pandemic. Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins and minerals, seafood is increasingly recognised for its role in supporting heart health, brain function and overall wellbeing. The growing consensus is that this growth is likely due to consumers re-prioritising healthier, more nutritious food.

South Africa's access to both the Atlantic and Indian oceans, together with its diverse range of commercially valuable seafood species, supports an important seafood export trade

with over 51% of its production volumes exported to Europe, the United States and Asia. However, the sector remains vulnerable to global disruptions that can delay shipments, increase logistics costs and restrict access to key export markets. Trade tensions and shifting geopolitical alliances may also affect access to fishing equipment, investment and international buyers, creating challenges across the value chain and threatening the sector's long-term competitiveness.

On the management front, the picture is even more uncertain. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's *2025 Status of South African Marine Fishery Resources* report found that 31% of assessed marine fishery resources are depleted or heavily depleted. This is similar to global statistics and of further concern globally is that overfishing is still increasing by approximately 1% each year, according to the *2025 Review of the State of World Marine Fishery Resources* by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). Of further concern is the uncertainty of the impact of climate change on fish stock productivity and distributional shifts, which can exacerbate stock declines. Declining fish stocks are placing severe pressure on many regions where fisheries are critical for food security, livelihoods and poverty reduction.

As the FAO notes: “The next step is clear. Governments must scale up what works and act with urgency to ensure marine fisheries deliver for people and planet.”

Ultimately, seafood sustainability sits at the intersection of consumer choice, market incentives, regulation, management and ecosystem health and resilience. Improving it is not the result of a single intervention. It requires ongoing commitment from governments, businesses and consumers alike. In an era of economic uncertainty and mounting environmental pressures, building a seafood sector that is both resilient and sustainable has never been more important.

Pavitray Pillay

Head of Business Development and Marketing
WWF South Africa

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Senior Technical Specialist: Marine
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CLARITY FROM CATCH TO CONSUMER

Traceability and transparency should be more than just marketing or sustainability buzzwords. Traceability is about capturing information of “what, how and where”, while transparency is the practice of disclosing that information to a wider audience. Importantly, in the context of seafood, this means sharing information about and with the entire value chain.

A company can trace a product’s journey from ocean to boat to plate, but without access to details about the vessel, fishing methods or operating practices, it cannot make claims on how responsibly it was sourced. For traceability to have a lasting impact, it must underpin the full process.

Traceability is about data gathering, while transparency is what turns that data into accountability.

Behind all of this is a complex industry and any blind spot in transparency can lead to a plethora of problems. Firstly, low transparency, coupled with limited to no traceability, increases the risk of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which, on average, makes up 20% of total catch globally and can cost the global economy up to US\$23,5 billion each year. Worryingly, almost half of IUU fishing happens on Africa’s coastline.

While the Regional Fishery Management Organisations aid in the management of high seas, approximately 40% of those seas are still unmanaged. This adds to the many other challenges of protecting our marine resources: fish stocks often cross jurisdictional boundaries, stock assessments can be incomplete, and vessels may operate beyond the reach of authorities, creating opportunities for IUU.

A lack of traceability and transparency increases the risk of seafood fraud from species substitution and product alteration to false marketing, mislabelling, unsubstantiated claims and invalid certification. Many seafood products worldwide are intentionally mislabelled or otherwise fraudulent, and such practices pose not only environmental risks but also contribute to business, market and consumer health risks.

Finally, transparency plays an important role in protecting human rights. Around 60 million people worldwide work either as fishers or in aquaculture. Greater transparency can help identify and address hidden risks, including labour exploitation and unsafe working conditions. Additionally, IUU fishing has often been associated with labour abuse, slavery and inhumane working conditions.

It is a ripple effect, with all these interconnected factors causing larger waves.

So, what does traceability in the seafood supply chain look like in practice?

It includes information about:

- Which fishing fleets, vessels or aquaculture farms supply the seafood
- Where the seafood was caught, farmed, landed or processed
- What the seafood species is
- What catch methods were used to catch a species
- What bycatch was removed, and whether it was used or discarded
- Which companies are involved in harvesting, processing and distribution
- Whether the operators hold the permits and licences required to operate legally.

Transparency is sharing this information; it strengthens brand reputation and builds consumer trust. It helps identify risks and poor practices but relies heavily on accurate information. Without it, even the most sophisticated tracking systems have limited value. Most importantly, this information allows for better management of a species, which in turn has major implications for supply chain resilience and business longevity.

For businesses that are part of the WWF-SASSI Retailer/Supplier Participation Scheme (RSPS), the quality and accessibility of supply chain data directly influence their ability to demonstrate responsible sourcing. That is why working together is crucial to building a seafood industry that is accountable and responsible. As consumer awareness grows, so does the demand for greater openness and for having a traceability system in place to build trust and consumer loyalty.

Pavitray Pillay

Head of Business Development and Marketing
WWF South Africa

Kirtanya Maharaj

WWF-SASSI Outreach and Awareness Manager
WWF South Africa

HOW WWF-SASSI WORKS WITH SEAFOOD RETAILERS AND SUPPLIERS

WWF-SASSI RSPS helps seafood buyers and suppliers understand sustainability, assess their performance, identify risks and provide staff training.

WWF-SASSI uses an organisational retailer/supplier assessment tool which tracks progress of the participants in the following key focus areas:

1. Sustainable seafood policies and commitments
2. Procurement
3. Traceability
4. Transparency and labelling
5. Training
6. Supplier communication
7. Consumer awareness
8. Domestic fishery engagement
9. Other sustainable seafood initiatives

PROGRESS REPORT GRAPHS AND GRAPHICS

Each year, participants submit data on their seafood procurement, detailing how many species in their supply chain appear on the WWF-SASSI seafood sustainability database.

A progress chart also shows the volume or value of seafood sold that meets the participant's sustainability criteria for WWF-SASSI-assessed species.

In previous years, charts focused on the number of species, but now, charts reflect quantities sold. For example, a retailer may sell only three green-listed species, but if one accounts for most seafood sales by weight or value, it represents a significant contribution to sustainable seafood.

**118 660
TONNES** OF SEAFOOD PASSED THROUGH
WWF-SASSI RSPS PARTICIPANT
SUPPLY CHAINS IN 2025

Based on procurement data submitted

WHAT COUNTS TOWARDS THE RSPS PARTICIPANTS' SEAFOOD SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS?

- **Green-listed species** (Green-listed species in a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) and those with an eco-label will not count double towards commitments for a green-listed species)
- **Orange-listed species in a FIP**
- **Orange-listed species with a valid eco-label certification** (on a case-by-case basis)
- **Not assessed species with a valid eco-label** (Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)) certification (on a case-by-case basis).

WHAT DOES NOT COUNT TOWARDS RSPS PARTICIPANTS' SEAFOOD SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS

- **Red-listed species**
- **Red-listed species in a FIP** or with an eco-label certification (Red-listed species deemed "under improvement" are excluded, as granting market access too soon reduces the incentive for fisheries to achieve full sustainability. This ensures market access remains a driver of progress).
- **Orange-listed species** with no eco-label or FIP
- **Unassessed species** with no eco-label certification

WWF-SASSI does not endorse seafood-selling businesses but does instead support businesses through the structured WWF-SASSI scheme. WWF-SASSI enables participating businesses to make public, time-bound sustainable seafood commitments.

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD IS A JOURNEY

IT'S A JOURNEY THAT TAKES TWISTS AND TURNS, BUT REACHING THE DESTINATION IS IMPERATIVE

The delicious simplicity of a mouthful of seafood belies a complex system and supply chain. Every product from the many available has passed through several hands and has often travelled far before it ends up on a plate. Against this backdrop, WWF-SASSI RSPS participants operate across diverse business models and socioeconomic markets, and the supply of sustainable seafood can only be achieved with full traceability and transparency.

PRESSURES AND CHALLENGES RETAILERS/ SUPPLIERS FACE THAT IMPACT THEIR SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD JOURNEY

Global factors

For example, import and export regulations, climate impacts and geopolitical trade disruptions

Local factors

For example, fuel costs, fishing quotas and livelihood needs

Seafood market/supply chain factors

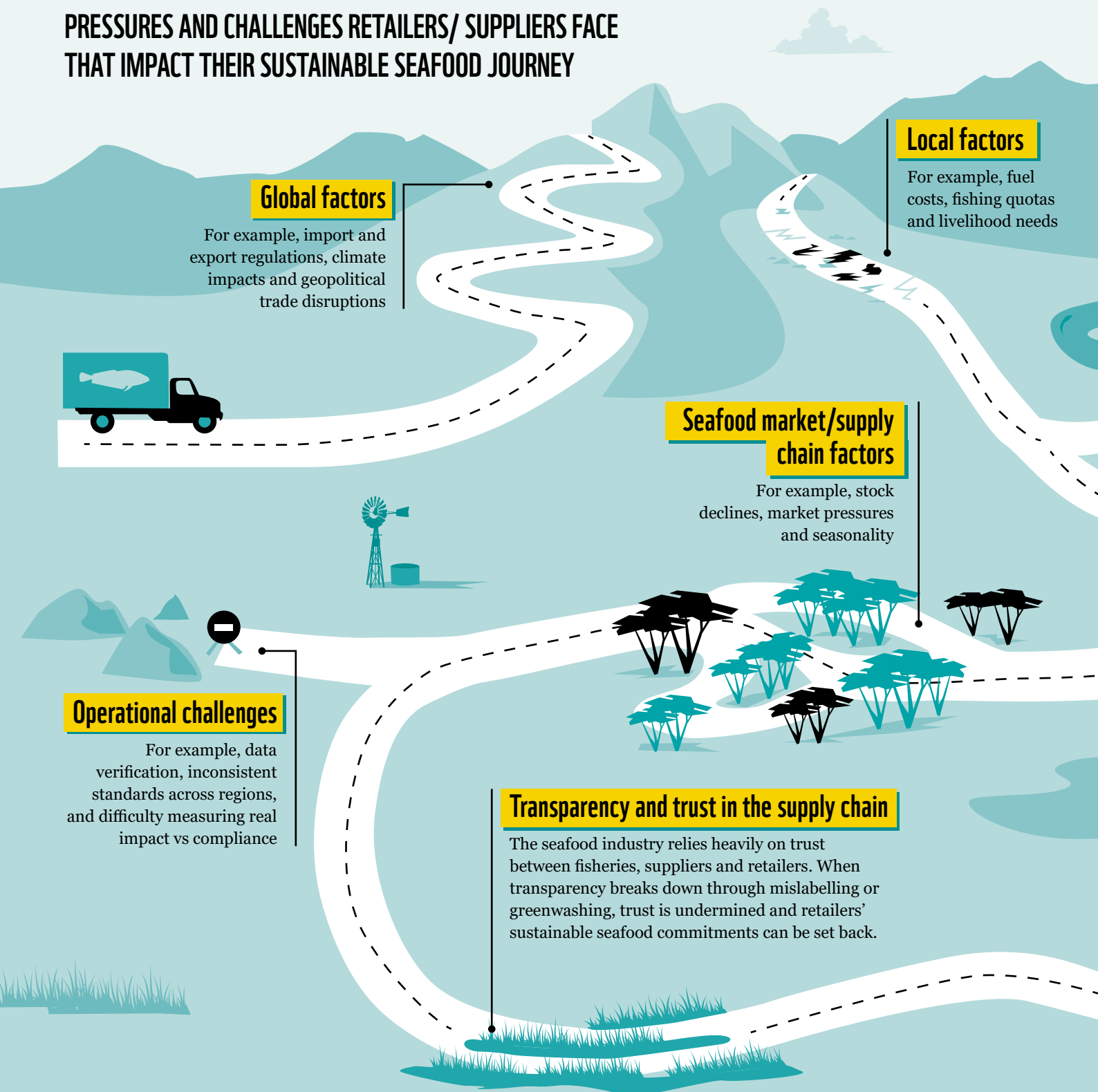
For example, stock declines, market pressures and seasonality

Operational challenges

For example, data verification, inconsistent standards across regions, and difficulty measuring real impact vs compliance

Transparency and trust in the supply chain

The seafood industry relies heavily on trust between fisheries, suppliers and retailers. When transparency breaks down through mislabelling or greenwashing, trust is undermined and retailers' sustainable seafood commitments can be set back.



Business model impact on seafood sustainability implications

Common types of business models	Key characteristics	Sustainability implications
Franchise	- Shared control (brand sets rules, franchisee operates store) - Variable implementation across locations - Lower capital risk for brand owner	- Policies often set at brand level, making enforcement more challenging - Implementation depends on franchisee willingness and local profitability - Can have inconsistent execution across stores
Corporate owned (company owned)	- Centralised decision-making, with standardised operations and branding - High consistency across stores - Higher capital investment by the company and no corporate support structures	- Easier rollout of sustainability standards, sourcing and traceability - Faster implementation at scale - Costs and risks absorbed by corporation
Private/independent retailers	- Full autonomy - Highly sensitive to cash flow	- Sustainability driven by owner values and local demand - Limited ability to absorb additional costs - Often excluded from higher standard requirements
Hybrid/multi-model	- Combination of ownership structures within one brand - Mix of corporate, franchise and independent partnerships	- Different sustainability standards within same brand - Suppliers face multiple compliance requirements - Increased complexity

Which business models WWF-SASSI RSPS fall into

WWF-SASSI RSPS participant	Business Model		Focus group
Atlantis Foods Group	Supplier		Retailers
SPAR	Decentralised business model with independent store owners and wholesaler	Sells private labels and proprietary brands	Low to upper-middle class and top end
Food Lover's Market	Independent retailer, family-owned group and franchise-led	Sells private labels and proprietary brands	Low to upper-middle class and top end
Woolworths	Corporate	Sells a large portion of private labels, but does hold proprietary brands	Top end
Shoprite Group	Publicly listed corporate-owned with flagship stores	Sells private labels and proprietary brands	Shoprite (working class and middle class) and Checkers (upper-middle class and top end)
Pick n Pay	Multi-format, public company and franchise	Sells private labels and proprietary brands	Working class and Middle class, along with the upper-middle class
John Dory's	Franchise-based business model	Procures directly from the supplier to sell to the consumer	Families and seafood lovers



Scan for
References



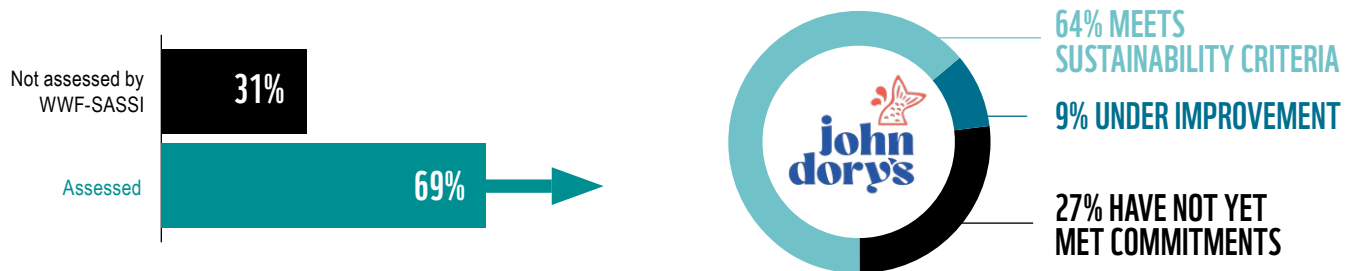
TRACKING PERFORMANCE

PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS

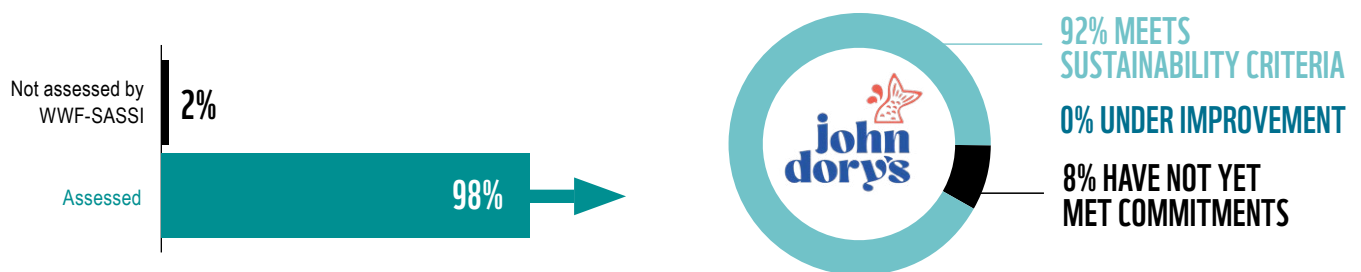
Each RSPS participant's progress towards its seafood sustainability commitments is presented in the following pages. The graphs illustrate the species and volumes purchased in 2025.

© WWF South Africa

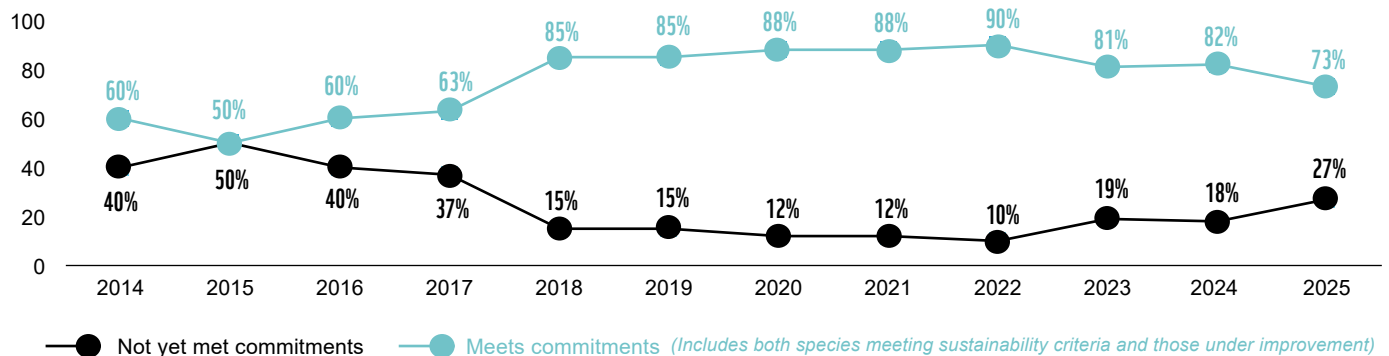
PROGRESS BY SPECIES



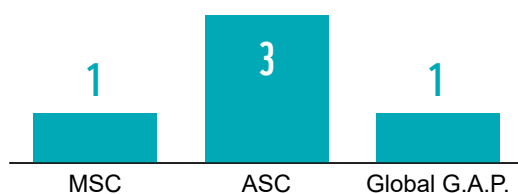
PROGRESS BY VOLUME



JOHN DORY'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD



"Despite ongoing supply chain and market pressures, Spur Corporation remains committed to sourcing seafood responsibly. Strong supplier partnerships, clear procurement standards, and alignment with WWF-SASSI guidance have enabled us to make meaningful progress while supporting the long-term health of marine ecosystems and sustainable fisheries."

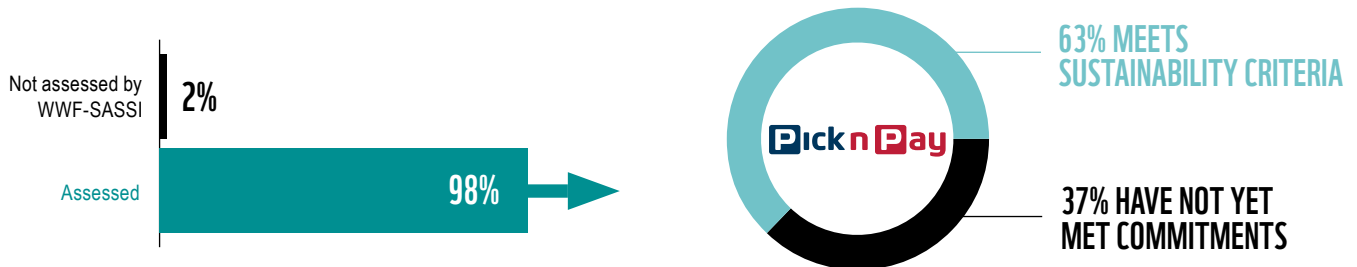
- Robin Charles, SPUR Corp (John Dory's)

PICK N PAY

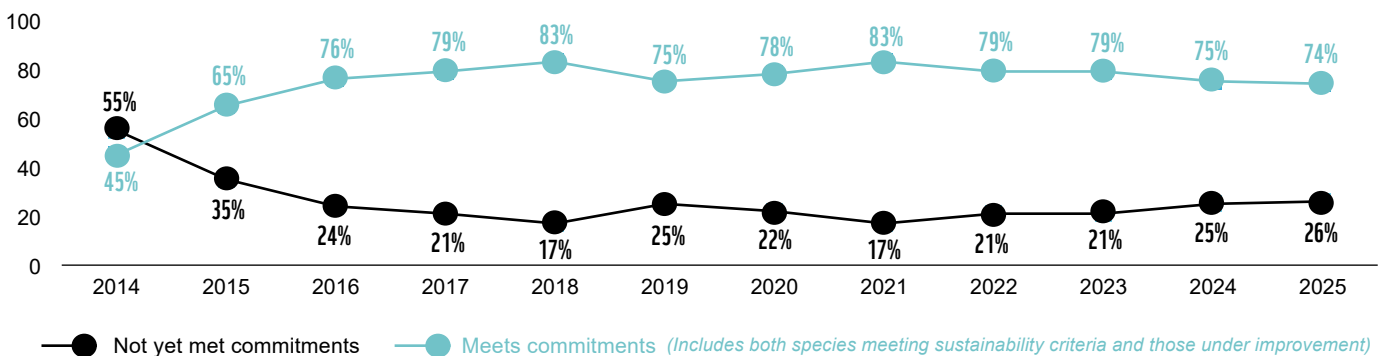
PROGRESS BY SPECIES



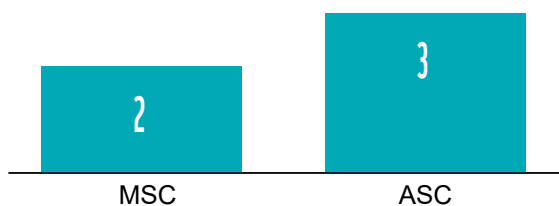
PROGRESS BY VOLUME



PICK N PAY'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD



"Pick n Pay's longstanding relationship with WWF-SASSI continues to strengthen through training and collaboration, improving sustainable seafood procurement and marine conservation awareness across our Sustainability and Commercial teams. Despite ongoing market and supply chain volatility, we remain committed to our sustainable seafood sourcing goals."

- Clayton Baron, Pick n Pay

FOOD LOVER'S MARKET

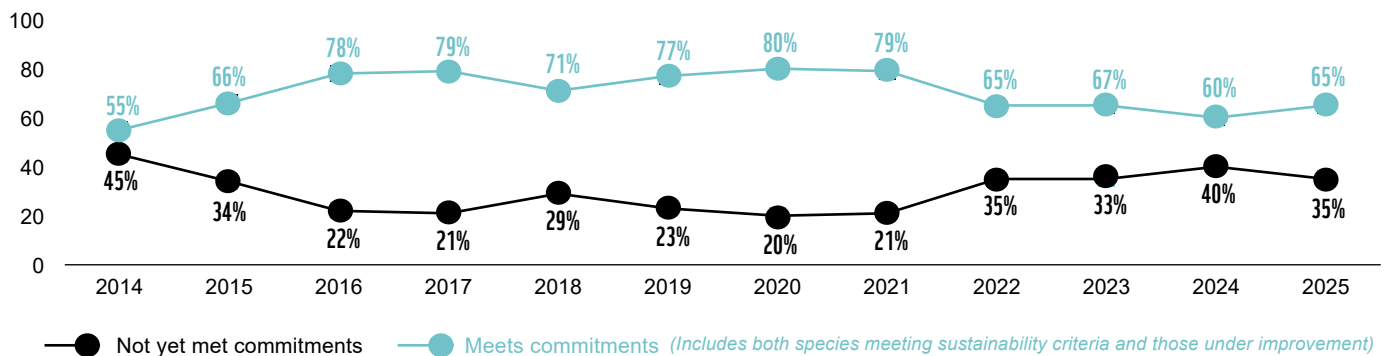
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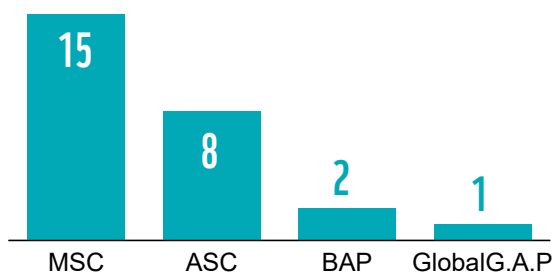
PROGRESS BY VOLUME*



FOOD LOVER'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD



"As a retailer, we recognise that sustainable seafood depends on strong partnerships, transparency, and informed sourcing decisions. Despite ongoing market pressures, our commitment to responsible procurement and consumer education continues to support meaningful progress toward a more sustainable seafood future."

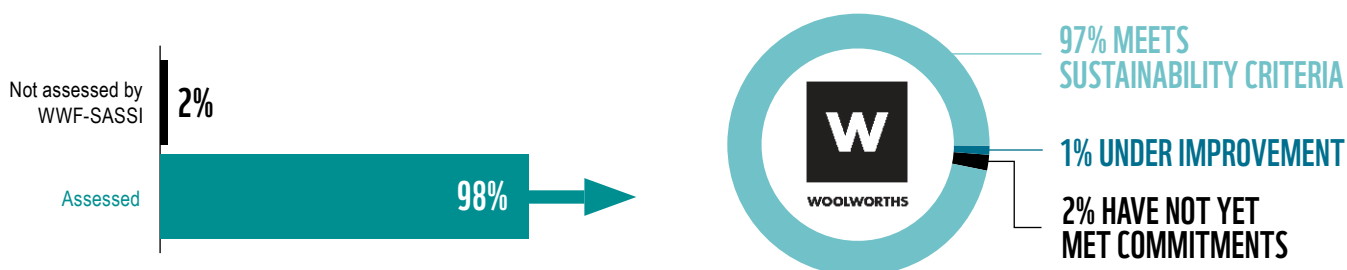
- Roberto Gastaldi, Food Lover's Market

* The species and volume data is incomplete as the information on procured species was not submitted by all suppliers

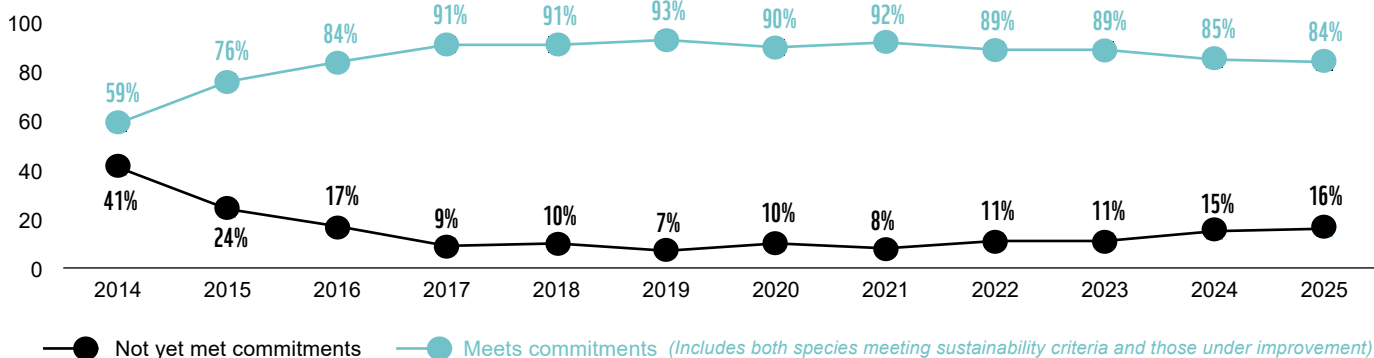
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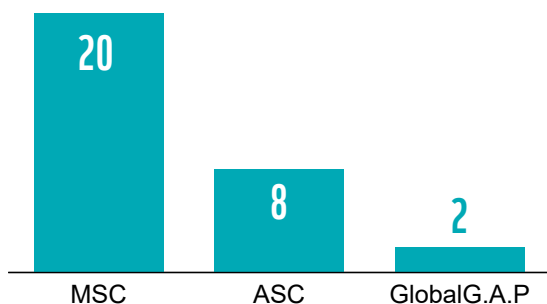
PROGRESS BY VOLUME



WOOLWORTHS' PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD

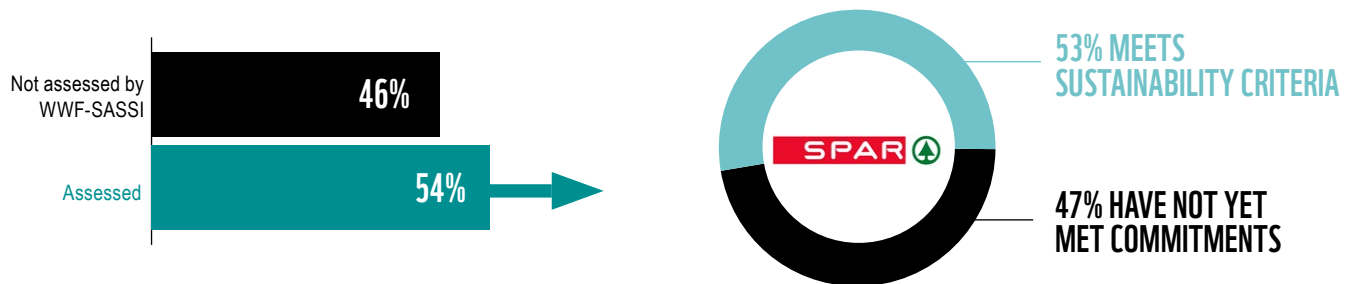


"Long-term supplier partnerships, responsible sourcing practices, and growing consumer demand have enabled us to maintain our commitment to sustainably sourced seafood despite market and supply chain challenges."

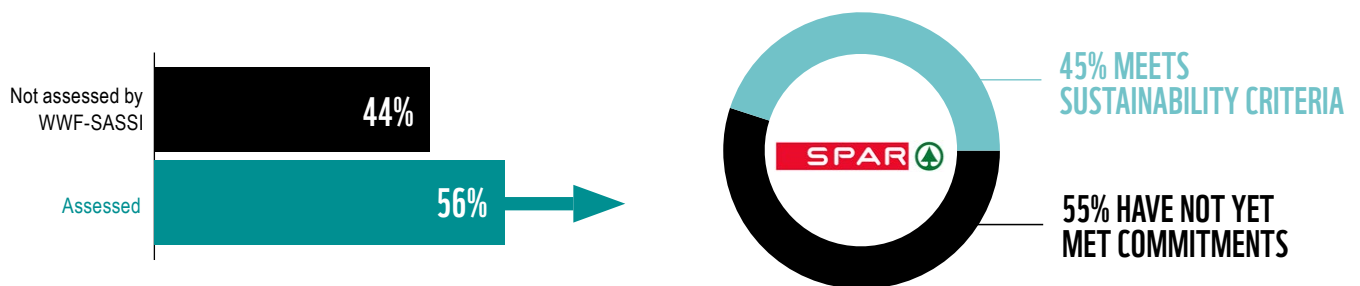
- Leena McEwan, Woolworths

THE SPAR GROUP LIMITED

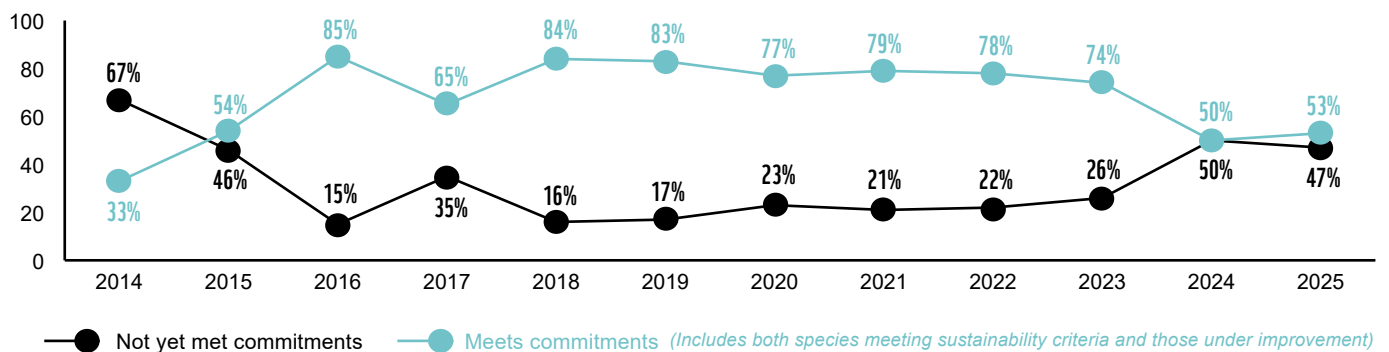
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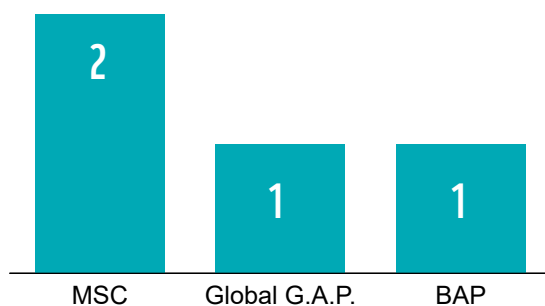
PROGRESS BY VOLUME



SPAR GROUP'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD



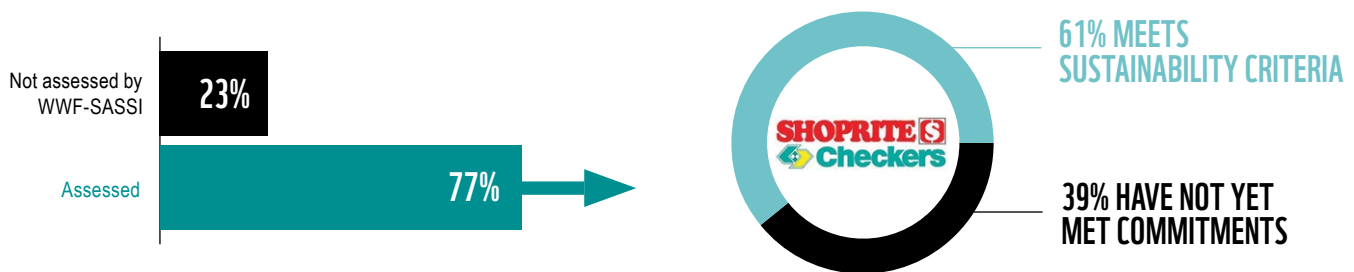
“Meaningful progress towards sustainable seafood is achieved through strong partnerships, credible sustainability standards, and transparency across the supply chain. WWF-SASSI guidance continues to support informed sourcing decisions, helping SPAR navigate market challenges while maintaining its commitment to responsible seafood procurement.”
- Lonwabo Manqana, SPAR

SHOPRITE HOLDINGS GROUP

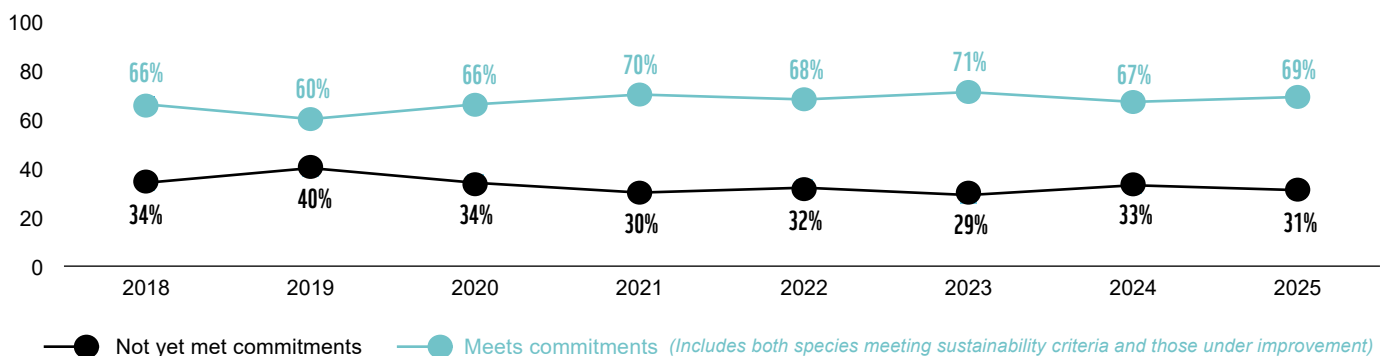
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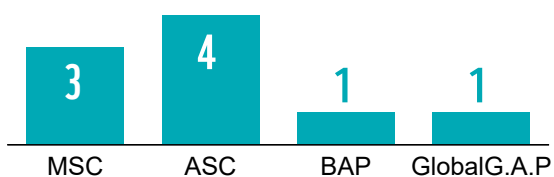
PROGRESS BY VOLUME



SHOPRITE HOLDINGS GROUP'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD



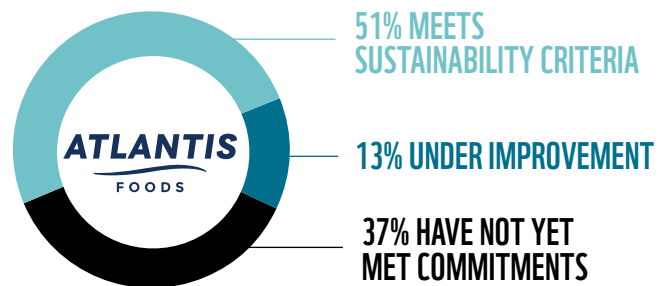
Shoprite South Africa shopritesa WeActForChange

"We demonstrate our commitment to sustainable seafood by collaborating with WWF-SASSI to implement responsible sourcing strategies. Despite changes to species classifications, we continue to target 100% sustainable seafood for all premium private label seafood. With the support of WWF, we train our SMME partners in sustainable fishing practices, support the Harders Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) in Velddrif, and strengthen seafood traceability across our supply chain to enhance transparency and responsible sourcing."

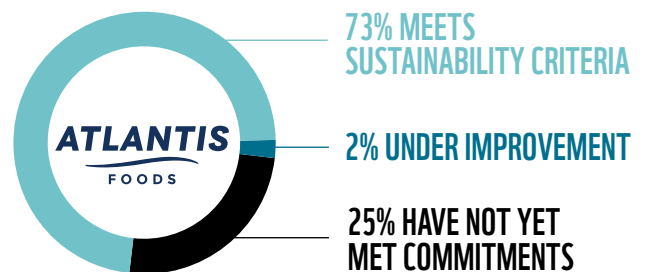
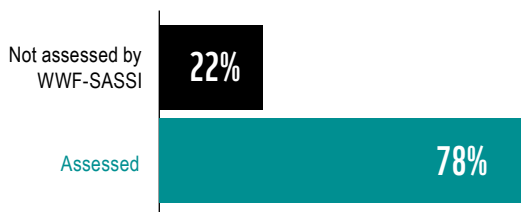
- Sanjeev Raghubir, Shoprite / Checkers

ATLANTIS FOODS GROUP

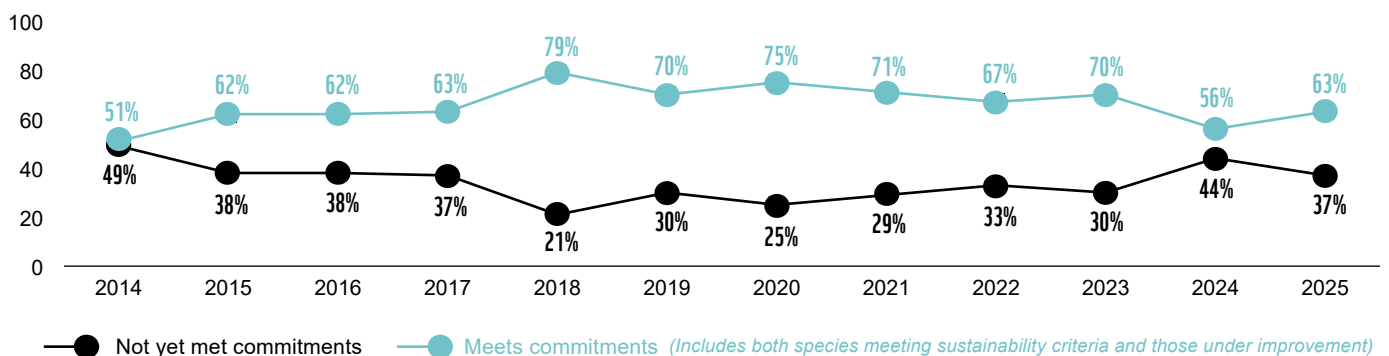
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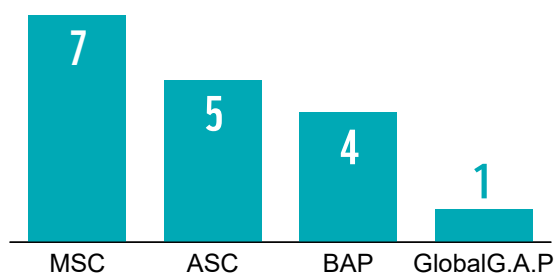
PROGRESS BY VOLUME



ATLANTIS FOODS GROUP'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE YEARS (SPECIES)



NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SPECIES SOLD



“Atlantis Foods is committed to building a more sustainable seafood future through responsible sourcing, protection of marine ecosystems, and transparent supply chains. Despite ongoing market challenges, we continue to work with partners across the value chain to safeguard seafood resources and ensure their availability for generations to come.”
- Atlantis Foods Group



TRANSFORMING THE MARKET

VOICES FOR CHANGE

“Sustainable seafood is about far more than simply choosing a species from a green list; it is about protecting the future of our oceans, supporting the livelihoods of fishing communities, and creating a transparent and responsible food system from ocean to plate.” – Chef Gregory Henderson

Seafood products have a complex supply chain, often having their “passports” stamped more than the average person will in their lifetime. As each product moves from boat to plate, trust along the supply chain is crucial. But trust is only built through access to information and full transparency, and without these, consumers will vote with their feet.

THE MENU IS THE MESSAGE

Surveys and industry initiatives are pointing to a growing movement among chefs worldwide to prioritise sustainably sourced seafood and push suppliers toward more responsible fishing and aquaculture practices. Local celebrity chefs who care for the ocean have joined this clarion call.

South African chefs have added their voice to this growing call among their international counterparts: the story behind your food matters just as much as the way it is presented, and that story should begin with genuine sustainability.

“I believe sustainable seafood has become one of the most important global conversations within the hospitality and food industries, but it is also one of the most complex,” says De Tafel’s highly acclaimed chef and forager Greg Henderson, “and around the world, chefs are facing growing challenges linked to overfishing, climate change, habitat destruction, illegal fishing, rising costs, declining fish populations and a lack of transparency within supply chains.”

He said that in South Africa, just as on the global scene, sustainability goes beyond “the ingredient itself” and should “include an understanding of where the product comes from, who caught it, how it was caught, the impact on marine ecosystems and the social benefit to coastal communities.”

He adds that it’s also about “ensuring that packaging and transportation methods align with environmentally responsible practices.”

Local celebrity chef Zana Alvarado (founder of MESTIZO) is all too aware of the growing crisis of seafood sustainability but also sees some positive change on the horizon.

“Globally, chefs face challenges around overfishing, climate change, traceability and supply chain transparency,” she says, “but where the industry is succeeding is in certification, innovation and growing demand for responsibly sourced seafood.”

Dan Barber, the chef behind world-famous restaurant Blue Hill in New York, has spoken extensively about sustainable seafood and regenerative food systems.

“The table should service the farm,” he famously wrote in *Vogue*, while arguing that chefs should build menus around what ecosystems can sustainably produce, rather than forcing producers to meet consumer demand.

Carla Hall, another international chef who advocates for this approach, on her website encourages consumers to be active in this regard: “Restaurants and fish retailers need to know that sustainable seafood is important, so be sure to ask if sustainable seafood is available and then let them know that it matters to you!”

Local chefs Anlou Erasmus (head chef at Terrarium) and Julie Carter (owner of Ocean Jewels Fresh Fish), who are both ambassadors for WWF-SASSI and appeared on local television show *Expresso* with delicious sustainable seafood recipes, have called on all chefs to take a stand.

Erasmus says that “sustainability and creativity can truly coexist at the highest level,” while Carter says, “Sustainable fishing practice is very important to me. I can’t with a clear conscience sell fish where the fishing method is destructive to the environment.”

This clarion call both locally and abroad is important because today, chefs are far more than just culinary experts. They are advocates, influencers, educators, innovators and trendsetters shaping the future of food. In other words, they now stand on the frontlines of change, helping drive conversations and action around sustainable seafood.

They, and the restaurants for which they prepare delicious meals, are a crucial link in a food chain that impacts the future of our oceans. By embracing a wider variety of responsibly sourced seafood and encouraging others to do so, they can reshape the fishing industry and protect marine resources for generations to come.



FOUR WAYS CHEFS CAN AID IN SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

1

Proper labelling and information

Seafood has deep cultural and culinary roots in South Africa, but it is important for chefs to ensure they are sourcing seafood that is properly labelled. For example:

- Linefish is not a type of fish but a catch method. It refers to fish caught using a line and hook. Not all linefish are equal, so consult the WWF-SASSI list to know which fish caught via linefishing are green listed.
- Salmon trout is not a fish species. The name was created by merging two species, namely Atlantic salmon and rainbow trout. As “salmon trout” does not exist, this is a case of mislabelling.
- Prawns are usually labelled king, queen or prince, which refers to size. However, there are many species of prawn on the South African market, only some of which are sustainable. Ask what it is, where it is from and how it was caught or farmed to know whether it is WWF-SASSI green listed.

2

Seasonal menus

Off-limit periods are vital for preserving breeding stock and ensuring future supply. When chefs adopt a seasonal approach, they have a great impact on the health of the marine environment. Planning their menus seasonally allows them to utilise species at their peak availability and encourages creativity and diversity in dishes.

3

Transparency and ethical sourcing

Chefs having transparency in their supply chains maintain ethical practices and build trust with their diners. Transparency allows consumers and restaurants alike to know where a product has come from, and chefs' engagement with seafood suppliers is thus integral to catalysing sustainable action from both businesses and consumers.

4

Consumer engagement

Chefs' engagement does not have to stop at what is on the plate but can reach consumers and diners through chef's tables, cooking classes or menu tales. Each interaction can be an opportunity to highlight the journey of sustainable seafood. True sustainability is all in the detail.



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WWF-SASSI and incredible chefs Anlou Erasmus (second from the left), Julie Carter (second from the right) and Eugenie Langeveldt (centre) alongside WWF's Head of Business Development and Marketing, Pavitray Pillay (first from the right), on the award-winning Expresso Show's Culinary Hotline in April 2025, showcasing green, Easter-inspired seafood dishes.



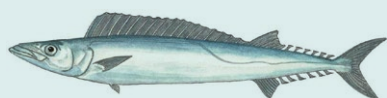
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SEASONALITY TOOLKIT FOR CHEFS

Commonly consumed local species and their seasonal availability:

South African Snoek

(*Thyrsites atun*)



Shoaling predator that typically inhabits waters at depths ranging from 20 to 150 metres; primarily found along the west and south coasts of South Africa, extending across the Agulhas Bank.

Catch availability peaks between May and July during the winter snoek run along the west coast, but summer runs also occur in certain areas; caught via line fishing and offshore demersal trawl (green listed).

Kingklip

(*Genypterus capensis*)

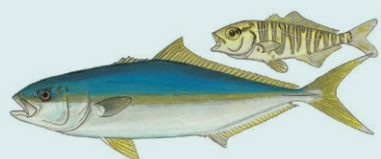


Slow-growing, long-lived fish found in rocky areas along the continental shelf and upper continental slopes; peak spawning occurs between June and September.

Closed season as gazetted in the permit conditions runs from September to November; caught via demersal longline (green listed), while offshore demersal trawl is orange listed with fisheries under improvement.

Yellowtail

(*Seriola lalandi*)



Large, schooling, fast-growing fish that undergo unpredictable seasonal migrations; have high fertility and reach sexual maturity after 2–3 years.

Spawning occurs between November and February from southern KwaZulu-Natal to Cape Point; peak fishing periods occur from August to October and from March to May, when large migratory shoals are most active and exhibit increased feeding behaviour, caught via linefishing (green listed).

Illustrations © SAIAB

SPOTTING GREEN CLAIMS THAT DON'T HOLD WATER

The ocean has sustained human life for millennia, providing one of the world's most important sources of nutrition and protein. Today, seafood supplies essential nutrients to between 10% and 12% of the global population, yet the true cost of the seafood on our plates extends far beyond the price paid at the checkout, and greenwashing has become all too rife.

As demand for both everyday and exotic seafood continues to grow, so too does consumer awareness of the need for sustainably sourced products. Unfortunately, this has created fertile ground for misleading environmental claims. Vague phrases such as “ocean friendly”, “environmentally friendly” and “sustainably sourced” are increasingly used to appeal to consumers who want to make responsible purchasing decisions. However, these catchphrases are sometimes not supported by any meaningful information about a product's actual environmental impact.

This practice is known as greenwashing – the act of misleading consumers about a company's environmental practices or the environmental benefits of a product or service. As sustainability becomes a key market differentiator, many businesses are eager to capitalise on growing

consumer demand for environmentally responsible products. Companies also face increasing pressure from investors, regulators and climate commitments, making green credentials an attractive marketing tool.

However, genuine sustainability is about far more than clever branding. Behind every environmental claim should be a real commitment to addressing critical challenges such as overexploited fish stocks and habitat degradation. Biodiversity loss is everyone's problem, and if these issues are not tackled, the long-term future of the seafood industry itself is at risk. Misleading consumers into believing products are environmentally responsible, while charging premium prices based on those claims, undermines both consumer trust and genuine sustainability efforts.

EUROPEAN UNION IS LEADING THE WAY IN CURBING GREENWASHING WITH DIRECTIVE 2024/825

The European Union (EU) is paving the way in cracking down on greenwashing, the practice of using misleading environmental claims to influence consumers. In early 2024, the European Union formally approved a new directive aimed at reducing deceptive green marketing tactics and protecting consumers from unsubstantiated environmental claims. The legislation targets commercial practices that misinform consumers by presenting products or services as environmentally friendly without credible evidence to support such claims.

The directive goes beyond setting new standards. EU member states were required to transpose Directive 2024/825 into national law by 27 March 2026, aligning domestic regulations with the new provisions. From 27 September 2026, these rules will become fully applicable, requiring businesses to comply with stricter requirements governing environmental communications and sustainability claims.

The directive forms part of the EU's broader effort to empower consumers in the transition to a greener economy. This is underpinned by strengthening protection against unfair commercial practices and ensuring access to more reliable and transparent information. While the EU Directive applies only to EU member states, it is an important regulation for South Africa and the global market to be aware of as global trends begin to shift.

The seafood sector is particularly vulnerable to greenwashing because of the complexity of its global supply chains. More than 200 million tonnes of seafood are caught or farmed each year before being processed, transported and sold across multiple countries and markets. This makes it difficult to trace products and independently verify every environmental claim made along the way.

There is nothing wrong with companies communicating their sustainability initiatives. In fact, transparency is essential. Problems arise when organisations use vague language and exaggerated claims to present a greener image than reality supports. Such “green polishing” can ultimately lead to reputational damage and loss of consumer and investor trust.

In recent years, a growing number of high-profile cases has exposed the gap between environmental marketing and environmental performance. As scrutiny increases, watchdog organisations and consumers are paying closer attention to unsupported sustainability claims. However, research suggests that a significant proportion of environmental claims made by companies are still misleading or lack evidence. To avoid falling victim to greenwashing, consumers should remain vigilant and seek out credible, independently verified certifications and sourcing information when evaluating seafood products.

SOME KEY PROHIBITIONS AND OBLIGATIONS:

- Prohibition of vague or inaccurate environmental claims
- Requirement to use recognised certifications or valid public labels to substantiate the sustainability features of a product or service
- Introduction of transparency and control obligations, including audits by independent third parties, to ensure the accuracy of environmental communications.



SIX WAYS CONSUMERS CAN SPOT GREENWASHING IN THE SEAFOOD SECTOR

1

Fluffy language

Words or terms with no clear meaning, for example “eco-friendly” or selective disclosure (the hidden trade-off) where corporations highlight one small aspect of their operations that might be sustainable while hiding the rest

2

Jargon

Information that only a scientist could check or understand

3

Suggestive imagery and evocative language

Green images that indicate an unjustified green impact with phrases that mirror this same idealism

4

Imaginary friend / irrelevant claims

A “label” that looks like a third-party endorsement but does not actually exist

5

No proof

A claim that can be neither proven nor disproven as there is simply no evidence

6

Mislabelling

When the type of fish being sold is a different species from what is stated on the label or menu, or when the information about its origin, method of capture or production is incorrectly represented.

HOW THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY CAN IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION

1. Be honest and transparent about the entire supply chain
2. Ensure that sustainability claims are supported by verifiable evidence
3. Use clear and simple language to make and back claims
4. Educate and engage the audience
5. Focus on reliable third-party certifications.

WHY YOU WILL NOT SEE A WWF-SASSI LOGO ON A SEAFOOD PRODUCT

 WHAT IS WWF-SASSI?	 WHAT IS NOT WWF-SASSI?
Eco action initiative for seafood: WWF-SASSI empowers consumers to drive change by supporting sustainable seafood, which is caught or farmed from well-managed fisheries and farms.	An eco-label: WWF-SASSI is not a certification that can be placed on a label. What you can do is place a QR code on the fish packaging, linked to the SASSI species listing so the consumer can know what the status is.
A sustainable seafood guide: The easy-to-use ‘traffic light’ system tells you which seafood can be eaten with a clear conscience (on the green list), which seafood you should think twice about (on the orange list) and which seafood should be avoided altogether because it is considered unsustainable or illegal to sell in South Africa (on the red list).	A sustainability certificate: WWF-SASSI cannot certify products as sustainable – it is a guide that can be used for consumers and businesses to make informed decisions.
A Retailer/Supplier Participation Scheme: Enables its participants to make public, time-bound sustainable seafood commitments. Only their participants are allowed to use the RSPS badges (with pre-approval) on their marketing materials.	A stamp of approval: Restaurants and non-affiliated businesses cannot use the WWF-SASSI logo. What they can say is ‘Found on the WWF-SASSI green/red/orange list’ and can advise their customers to use the tools such as app, website poster or pocket card.
Voluntary compliance programme: WWF-SASSI does not audit its participants stores or locations – we rely on the information submitted to us by the participants.	An auditor: We rely on our participants to provide us with accurate and reliable information.
Science-based guide: WWF-SASSI uses best available science and international best practice to assess species popular on the South African market to make sustainability recommendations.	Government mandate: WWF-SASSI does not prosecute for illegal sales, but does partner with law enforcement and relies on responsible retailers and consumers to whistle-blow to raise concern for illegal sales of species.
Correct word-use: Consult the WWF-SASSI list/app to see which fish are green listed. You have a choice. Make it green. This gives way for a variety of seafood that is not necessarily all green listed but shows commitment to moving in the right direction. It is honest and transparent.	Incorrect word-use: SASSI approved, SASSI endorsed, SASSI compliant, SASSI friendly, SASSI Policy, cannot be used on menus, product labelling, signage and in media. These terms do not exist, are inaccurate, or there is no way of measuring this; they could pose as greenwashing or misleading.

WHAT'S REALLY ON OUR PLATES?

Fraud in the fishing industry is a challenge across the globe, and comes in many forms.

Seafood mislabelling fraud is a growing global concern. Modern seafood supply chains are highly complex, with many products crossing multiple borders before reaching store shelves as global demand continues to rise. This complexity has made seafood particularly vulnerable to deception and manipulation. In 2025, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported that empirical studies suggest up to 20% of the seafood trade is affected by some form of fraud.

The most reported forms of such fraud are species substitution and misbranding. Species substitution involves replacing a high-value species with a cheaper alternative for economic gain, or disguising illegally caught seafood as a similar species to bypass quotas and regulations. Misbranding involves falsifying product information such as expiry dates, origin or production methods. An example would be selling farmed fish while claiming it's wild-caught. These forms of fraud, however, are not the only ones. See fact box.

WHY RSPS PARTICIPANTS SHOULD MAKE USE OF SANS1647

Labelling is more than just the ingredients that are listed on the back of a product. Accurate and detailed labelling is essential for transparent communication and gaining consumers' trust as it relays important information about the product. It protects consumers from the risk of potential allergens, and it highlights traceability so that the consumer can track the seafood's journey from source to plate. It also gives information on regulatory compliance and market differentiation. As the FAO asserts, "Proper food labelling is important for legal, health and environmental reasons."

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In 2012, the WWF South Africa, in collaboration with partners, the South African Bureau of Standards, and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (then DAFF), began developing the South African National Seafood Standard. The process involved extensive consultation with small-scale and commercial fishers, importers, exporters, retailers, restaurants, the Department of Health, and the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications. After six years of collaboration, the voluntary standard was published in June 2018, called the Approved Market Names for South African and Related Seafood Species (SANS 1647).

SANS 1647 was developed to standardise seafood naming by reducing the number of market names used for more than 700 locally traded species. Covering fresh, frozen and canned seafood, the standard aims to reduce consumer confusion and misleading marketing across the seafood supply chain. It also supports the sustainable use and management of marine resources and coastal ecosystems.

The standard strengthens consumer protection by helping ensure seafood products are accurately labelled, giving consumers greater confidence that products match their packaging. It also improves awareness among consumers, retailers and suppliers of unsustainable or illegal seafood species, making misrepresentation more difficult.



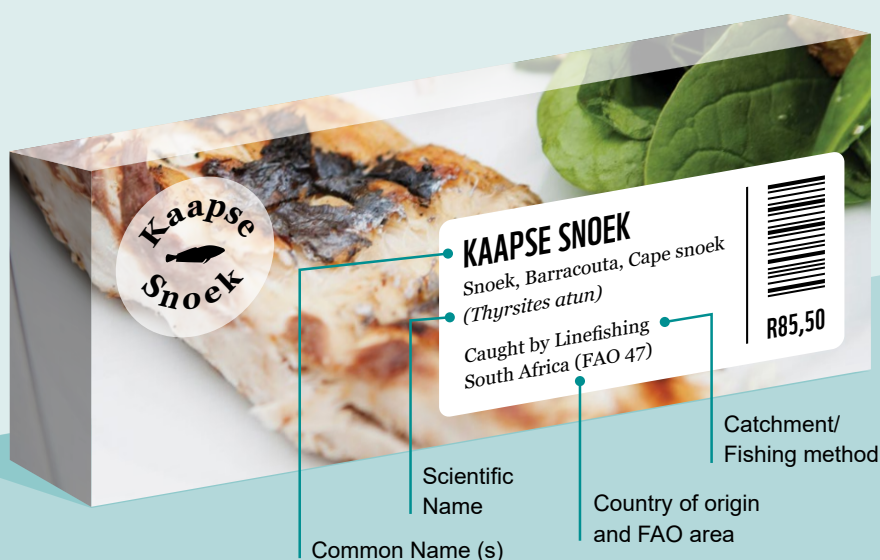
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TYPE OF FOOD FRAUD IN THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY:

- Counterfeit (fake documentation or packaging that mimics legitimate sources)
- Adulteration (adding colouring to make fish look fresher)
- Simulation (a product is artificially created to imitate a more valuable seafood product)
- Diversion (distributing legitimate products outside of their intended markets)
- Misbranding (incorrect claims about sustainability)
- Overrun (involving overfishing)
- Species substitution (example: selling tilapia as red snapper)
- Tampering and mislabelling (e.g. origins and expiry dates)
- Theft (along any point in the supply chain).

THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS THAT ALWAYS NEED ASKING

- 1 **What species is it?**
(common name and scientific name)
- 2 **Where is it from?**
(country of origin and
FAO Major Fishing Area)
- 3 **How was it caught or farmed?**
(type of fishing gear
used or type of farm
production method)



SOME LABELLING REQUIREMENTS ACCORDING TO SANS 1647

- Fish and/or fishery products (including value-added products) labelling shall contain a scientific name and a common name
- The name of the product (including the value-added product) or the list of ingredients shall bear a clear distinction of whether the product(s) is “wild-caught” or “farmed/cultivated/aqua-cultured”
- All imported species that are of the same genus and/or species as any local species shall include the country of capture in the common name (for example South African Snoek vs New Zealand Barracouta)
- For some species, such as (*Argyrosomus japonicus*, Dusky kob – Daga kob), a fish or fishery product shall include a descriptor followed by the common or alternative name of the fish.

FISHING AND FARMING METHODS:

Method name	Mechanism	Common target species
Otter trawling as demersal trawling (used in offshore, inshore or midwater fishing vessels)	Cone-shaped net dragged behind vessel, kept open by otter boards (double doors) on either side of net; foot rope dragged on bottom, with fishing gear in contact with seafloor	Cod, haddock, shrimp, mackerel, hake, sole, deep-sea species, squid
Offshore demersal trawling / offshore bottom trawling	Nets dragged along seabed using heavy gear and tickler chains; offshore occurs in waters >100m deep; typically targets species associated with the bottom of the ocean	Flatfish, cod, halibut, shrimp, hake and kingklip
Inshore demersal trawling / inshore bottom trawling	Nets dragged along seabed using heavy gear and tickler chains; fishing typically occurs between 80-110m deep	Hake, cod, sole species, blue whiting
Midwater trawling	Larger nets than bottom trawling nets, towed through water column above seafloor with fishing gear kept off seabed; targets fish swimming in water column above seafloor	Horse mackerel, herring, blue whiting
Purse seining	Large surface curtain net encircles school of fish and is drawn closed at bottom	Sardines, anchovies, skipjack tuna
Fish-aggregating device (FAD)-associated purse seine	Similar to purse seine, with the addition of using a fish-aggregating devices to attract and concentrate school fish making seining easier by reducing fuel use and time spent looking for schools of fish	Skipjack tuna

Non-FAD-associated purse seine	Large net encircles a school of fish and is drawn closed at the bottom, without FAD	Skipjack tuna, yellowfin tuna
Gillnetting	Wide and long vertical nets that rely on passive fishing; fish swim into the net and are trapped around their gills; mesh size determines which species caught based on size of gills	Schooling pelagic species, lumpfish, and bottom-dwelling species
Pelagic longline	Used in water column of open ocean; longlines are set near surface or between depths of 50 to 300 m with floats or buoys interspaced along length of line to maintain its depth; lines can be 50 to 100 km long with many hundreds, or even thousands, of baited hooks attached to shorter lines (called gangions) hung at intervals along main line; length and distance between ganglia depend on target species	Bluefin, yellowfin, albacore and swordfish
Demersal longline	Longline with hooks with the line weighted to sink to the seabed to target bottom-dwelling species; demersal longlines can be set anywhere from shallow coastal waters to over 1000 m depth	Bottom-dwelling species such as halibut, cod and hake
Pole-and-line	Handheld (wooden or fibreglass) pole is attached to fishing line with unbaited hooks catching one fish at a time	Tuna species (skipjack or albacore)
Trolling	One or more baited lines or artificial lures are dragged behind a moving boat at a slow, consistent speed	Tuna species, yellowtail
Trap fishing and pot fishing	Trap fishing includes baited cages or traps placed on seabed. Pot fishing is where no bait is used and typically with no doors. As pots are commonly set on a longline.	Traps: lobster and crabs Pots: octopus
Handline	Fishing with single line and hook used with bait or lures. With lures, the fisher creates a jerking movement to entice a strike by predatory fish	Reef and gamefish
Jigging	Handline and jig (a coloured plastic lure with barbs covering the bottom) create a jerking movement (bait appears to be moving)	Squid species

AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION METHODS

Method name	Mechanism	Common target species
Pond culture	Aquatic species raised in man-made or natural ponds	Tilapia, carp, catfish
Cage culture	Fish kept in floating cages in open water	Salmon, sea bass
Raceway systems	Flow-through channels with continuous water circulation	Trout, salmon
Recirculating aquaculture systems (ras)	Closed systems that filter and reuse water	Barramundi, abalone
Rope / suspended culture	Ropes are suspended in the water column to form a substrate for algae and shellfish to attach to	Mussels
Bag culture	Shellfish seeds placed in mesh bags mounted on trestles or near seabed	Oysters and clams
Bottom culture	Clams planted directly in intertidal seabed areas and protected with nets or screens	Clams

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