

Dear Ministers Duclos, Murray and Bibeau and Dr. Mithani,

As seafood industry leaders, researchers and non-profit organizations, we're committed to protecting our oceans and ensuring that all seafood sold in Canada is honestly labelled, legally caught and fully traceable from the point of final sale back to the point of harvest.

We thank you for your commitment to developing a boat-to-plate traceability program for Canada. We are, however, concerned that no timeline or plan is in place for implementation of that commitment, two years since it was made. Market research conducted by Abacus Data for Oceana Canada in spring 2021 found that 86 per cent of Canadians agree. Your mandate committed to supporting Canadian fishers and the seafood industry with strong traceability, and we have yet to see that support turned into action.

Seafood follows a highly complex path from a fishing vessel to people's plates, with a risk of fraud and mislabelling at every step along the way. In Canada, seafood supply chains lack transparency, which poses health risks, results in millions of dollars lost from the legitimate economy and perpetuates unsustainable production, human rights abuses and destructive illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. With jurisdictions worldwide increasingly requiring electronic data to follow seafood products through the supply chain to safeguard their true identity and point of origin and to ensure legality, Canada is being left behind on seafood traceability.

We believe robust traceability standards are needed for all seafood sold in Canada, domestic and imported. People need to know where a fish came from, how it was caught, that the fish is labelled as the correct species and that it is not harmful to human health or the health of ocean ecosystems. With about 1,700 different seafood species from all over the world now available, it is unrealistic to expect chefs, restaurant owners, retailers and consumers to independently determine that the fish they're getting is actually the one they paid for.

We call on you to commit to an ambitious timeline and plan to fulfil your mandate to implement boat-to-plate traceability for seafood. This should include requirements that seafood be fully traceable from the point of final sale back to the point of harvest, and incorporate key information about the who, what, where, when and how of fishing or farming, processing and distribution.

Stronger traceability standards would be a major step forward for the sustainability, responsibility and long-term viability of Canada's seafood supply chains.

Signed,

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