

# **PRIVATE SECTOR PERSPECTIVES ON SIMP IMPLEMENTATION**

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2019-2020



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) oversees four main trade programs – the newest of which, established in 2018, is the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP). This program establishes reporting and recordkeeping requirements for 13 seafood species groups vulnerable to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. SIMP relies heavily on U.S. seafood importers working within their global supply chains to support compliant and legal practices and maintain traceability data for documenting those practices.

FishWise undertook a two-year outreach project in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and with support from the Walton Family Foundation. This work aimed to solicit feedback on the seafood industry's experiences with SIMP and recommend ways to make SIMP more effective at combating IUU fishing. FishWise contacted over 100 companies across seven countries which represent the entire supply chain and all SIMP species groups. FishWise utilized a robust social science methodology, coding common themes or categories from survey and interview responses.

FishWise found that the majority of respondents indicated general support for the mission of SIMP to detect and deter IUU products from entering the U.S. Still, on a more nuanced level, there were clear trends and patterns that the seafood industry highlighted. The most significant takeaways include:

- Desire for increased government transparency around communicating SIMP's efficacy and increased proactive capacity building efforts – domestically and internationally
- Confusion and need for clarity around the audit process and verification of SIMP-required data
- Data reporting challenges often stemming from increased amounts of paperwork needed for compliance and/or inconsistency in data reporting formats
- Lack of interoperability across various data systems, increasing costs of compliance
- Cost of SIMP compliance being felt unequally across businesses
- Mixed support for expanding SIMP to all species, with many opponents recognizing that inclusion of more species would add value to addressing traceability and combating IUU fishing

The U.S. imports up to 80% of its seafood products, presenting a unique opportunity to leverage its purchasing power and support strong counter-IUU fishing regulations. FishWise's research shows that there is alignment on common challenges and opportunities with SIMP implementation. FishWise hopes that NOAA and other appropriate U.S. government agencies will incorporate the feedback outlined in this report for future policymaking and take this opportunity to address the array of feedback heard from the seafood industry.

# **2019-2020 PROJECT**

FishWise, in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and with support from the Walton Family Foundation, solicited feedback on the United States' Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) from businesses that import and export products into the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of collecting this feedback was threefold:

1. Identify what is working well with SIMP;
2. Identify where there may be challenges in collecting or inputting data required by SIMP, and;
3. Recommend ways to make SIMP more effective at combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud.

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<sup>1</sup> This was an independent project and was not conducted on behalf of NOAA, although NOAA and other offices charged with supporting SIMP are intended audiences of future advocacy efforts.



# METHODOLOGY

Feedback was collected using an [online survey](#) and through semi-structured interviews conducted either in person or by phone.<sup>2</sup> FishWise attended multiple industry conferences to conduct outreach and recruit participants across the supply chain, including fishers, processors, exporters, importers, distributors, brokers, and national and international government representatives (Appendix A). With the help of industry referrals, cold emails, and events, FishWise contacted over 100 unique companies, culminating in 33 surveys and 12 interviews. There were often numerous respondents per company.

U.S. importers comprised the bulk of the feedback, with smaller representation from Mexico, Peru, Iceland, Indonesia, Spain, and Vietnam. Feedback is representative of all SIMP species, although in varying volumes (Appendix B).

FishWise was deliberate with its methodological and analytical approaches to prevent response and coding bias. Although potential bias is a limitation to qualitative studies, FishWise took measures to address this by using a non-exclusive data collection method (i.e., both surveys and interviews), targeting a diverse audience to participate in the project, and conducting intercoder reliability checks during analysis.

Similar to the survey data, interview responses were individually coded using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software.<sup>3</sup> FishWise highlighted common themes across the interviews generated from the interview questions and organized those themes into parent codes (Appendix C). Additional themes surfaced directly from participant responses using an inductive approach to account for variation in responses outside the semi-structured format. A second round of coding and intercoder reliability checks allowed for the refining of themes and greater confidence in the final set of codes, definitions, and the number of times each code was referenced. This iterative coding process identified general trends and patterns of feedback received.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Interviews were not recorded or transcribed verbatim, thus FishWise made best efforts to represent respondent's feedback.

<sup>3</sup> Project team members coded a subset of interviews to verify repeating ideas and validate resulting themes.

<sup>4</sup> Responses had the ability to be coded to more than one theme (e.g. when a company is talking about SIMP expansion, the same text can also refer to a need for capacity building).



# FINDINGS

The findings of this report should be considered in light of the below challenges:

- Language barriers (the team attended international conferences and administered interviews with global companies where English was not the respondent's primary language)
- Number of respondents who participated (~33% response rate)
- Difficulty in reaching out to customs brokers despite multiple attempts
- Inability to ground truth findings with companies due to the postponement of the 2020 Seafood Expo North America

## COMPANY INVESTMENTS

Traceability systems can be costly to implement and often require increased capacity, which can include training staff and updating current databases or partnering with an external third-party technology provider.

Respondent feedback highlighted a range of these company investments as a result of SIMP implementation, including:

- Needing to train overseas companies and staff to appropriately report data back to the importer of record
- Creation of new documents that are SIMP-compliant to minimize the number of forms being used by the supply chain (e.g., company-specific chain of custody forms)

- Investments in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems
- Implementing a third-party traceability technology provider
- Upgrading existing systems to be faster and thus better able to respond to audits

From the survey results, it was found that 33% of companies invested in traceability technology or developed new procedures for tracing products as a result of SIMP requirements.

Alternatively, 67% of companies did not invest in traceability technology or develop new procedures for tracing products as a result of SIMP requirements. Of the companies whose majority of products are SIMP species (75% or more), there was an almost even split across companies who made investments and companies who decided not to make any investments, citing reasons such as:

*"Inferior documentation is being accepted by the government, and our company is providing a higher level of documentation where possible."*

*"Our [traceability] efforts go back several years; thus, SIMP did not drive those efforts. We were already up-to-speed with [our traceability systems] (e.g., current systems sufficient)."*

*"SIMP was simple to comply with, and [our company] already had vessel registration and origin documentation."*



Given the feedback above, the volume of SIMP products imported or exported did not correlate to direct investments made to comply with SIMP. Whether a company sold less than 10% or 100% SIMP species, there were no significant trends or patterns in company investments.

## COST OF SIMP

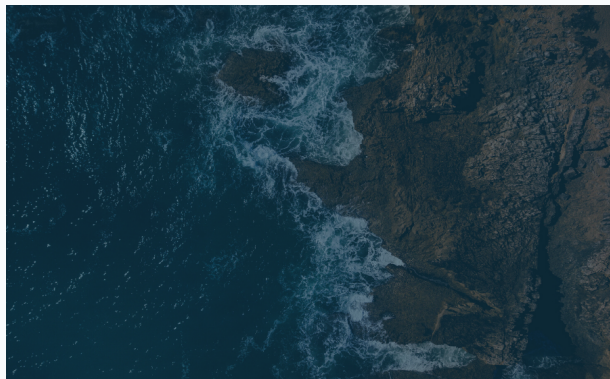
Throughout NOAA's public comment period for SIMP and the program's implementation, several companies and industry groups have been vocal about the added cost businesses are incurring as a result of the program. Conversations with brokers and supply chain companies mentioned:

*"An entry that once took 15 minutes now takes 1.5 hours. We're working on how to expense this and pass the cost on to the importer."*

*"Shrimp is taking too long [to import data]. Had to increase [the] cost."*

*"No benefit to small producers, no evidence that anything has changed, but there is a tremendous cost."*

Concerns around cost are ongoing, especially as knowledge grows about how SIMP affects businesses financially (i.e., the true cost of the program). Thus, it was proportional that 50% of



interviewees mentioned cost in their feedback about the program.

## EXPERIENCES WITH SUPPLY CHAIN DATA

The importer's ability to comply with SIMP is dependent on the company practices within their supply chains to track, maintain, and report product chain of custody (CoC) information. Tracking of supply chain data is the responsibility of importers, however, they are reliant on companies upstream collecting and transferring CoC data from the point of harvest. The majority of respondents mentioned overseas supplier challenges associated with collecting SIMP-required data. One of the challenges mentioned was the reluctance of suppliers to provide the requested documentation.

*"Harvest record and shipment information are perceived as proprietary information from a competitor; thus, companies don't want to give that info."*

*"We have had huge resistance to doing it and we still get huge resistance. We'll ask our foreign suppliers to give us information and it's like we're the first ones to ask."*

Another challenge highlighted was the lack of supplier training and the need for significant back and forth communication to obtain complete documentation.

*"NOAA can't legally train or force requirements on [overseas] suppliers, which is why they're forcing it on the importer, and the importer is forced to teach suppliers. Unfortunately, most importers don't have knowledge on this."*

*"We spend a vast majority of time tracking down those docs and trying to convince them that this info is required."*

*"A lot of it unfortunately still relies on harassment. They don't have fast, quick access to information, so we still have to hassle our suppliers."*

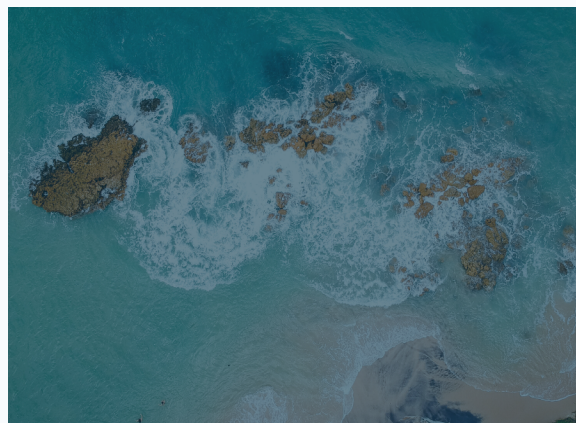
Other companies spoke to data collection challenges that were region-specific, mentioning countries that need additional training or development at the fishery level.

*"More difficult for tuna, but I see constant supply from Indonesia. It seems to be better developed than Thailand and Vietnam. Indonesia has really really good info coming from there. They are doing similar work to the SIMP, you don't just get SIMP documents, but catch certificates too."*

*"It's much more challenging for small-scale fisheries...a lot of aggregate data and much of the ease of data collection relies on the sophistication of the system on the boats and in the fisheries."*

In order to address challenges associated with data collection, companies have had to invest in training their suppliers, and have recommended government-to-government intervention to aid compliance prior to import.

*"There needed to be more outreach to roll it out to foreign suppliers. Working fed to fed so they know this has to be done. The ones who are helping a lot are the importers. They tell [us] what they need."*



Though 83% of respondents mentioned challenges associated with collecting SIMP data, there were a few companies that experienced no issues obtaining data from their overseas suppliers.

*"Our collection from our supply chains has gone fairly smoothly. Some need to coordinate in advance, but no headaches apart from working under a new program."*

*"We're not really getting too much kick-back. If we want the product, we have to have our ducks in a row. I don't think we've had any kick-backs...maybe one or two kick-backs early on because people were getting used to the system."*

After importers collect chain of custody data, they are responsible for maintaining and submitting that data to the U.S. government. 75% of respondents considered this process to be burdensome and resulted in increased demand on resources for the company, largely due to the amount of resulting paperwork and time spent collecting and reporting SIMP data.

*"Cumbersome process. No one was ready for the amount of information that would be required."*



*"3-inch thick binder for a single shipment. You can imagine the work that went into it. It took me a week to gather what was needed for one shipment."*

*"Another job is created. More time is used to ensure the document set being provided per load is adequate."*

When asked about the SIMP reporting process, including experiences using the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) Portal, 75% of companies highlighted grievances with data reporting. Some of those challenges are related to specific species groups (e.g., shrimp). Data reporting challenges were often a result of increased paperwork and a lack of consistency with data reporting formats.

*"The problem is, tuna and swordfish are easy because they're big animals. Shrimp – there are hundreds of thousands in a farm."*

*"We've never been able to use [traceability system] for SIMP, and they don't have the ability to interface."*

*"The NOAA 370 form and the SIMP model catch certificate are really redundant for things like species codes; [NOAA] didn't do a good job of integrating the forms."*

Due to the use of customs brokers for data entry, the majority of respondents were unable to provide specific comments regarding the use of the ACE portal and instead described the process of working with their customs brokers.



*"Yes, all the brokers have different forms. [There is] the same information inside the forms, but it makes it difficult to report it."*

*"I started having my assistant double-check all of the entries before we sign off on them. It isn't sustainable, and we can't keep doing that forever."*

*"There is a challenge relating to brokers entering the data by lines (shipment line entries), so there may be multiple lines of shipments going in and out. It is hard to interact with the broker. I think NOAA thinks that we can see what the broker sees, but we can't. It's proprietary, so they won't show us, so we don't go around them. The broker has probably 7-8 sheets of information they answer for the shipments, and the brokers have all created unique software solutions."*

One customs broker was interviewed, providing an additional perspective related to SIMP reporting:

*“Each agency recommunicates data back to brokers differently. If that information isn’t there, nothing gets submitted. Even if you have this interface, you have to manually put it in due to the entry of tariff codes. The solution for this is to transmit everything and submit it to the government agencies using the same imaging we receive. Require documents with each container specifically. It’s the way ACE is built that is the problem.”*

*“Biggest challenge is that data is received by importers and brokers. Brokers are required to follow up on everything. Importers have blamed brokers for audit issues/inconsistencies in data reporting.”*

To address issues around data reporting, the majority of respondents offered solutions or requested action to simplify the reporting process to combat some of the challenges mentioned above. 75% of respondents specifically requested more prescriptive forms to standardize the reporting process. Over 30% of respondents would like to see interoperability between existing traceability systems and the ACE portal to more efficiently report SIMP data.

*“If NOAA wants complete documentation, they have to roll out the specific documentation they want, and they didn’t do that. Since there isn’t one, you have to create your own. So one supplier might get 8-10 versions of these forms.”*

*“It’s very overwhelming to have a bunch of portals that aren’t streamlined. It would be great to have had the SIMP extension work out for [traceability system]. The broker’s IT team said they couldn’t receive the data as an XML file, and it stopped there.”*

*“Talked with [NOAA employee] – confusing as to what they want as supporting documents. [NOAA] admitted they spent too much effort on the data part and not on supporting catch documentation. ‘I don’t know what I want, but I’ll know when I see it.’ Don’t want the openness of the list of documents that can be sent to be abused by the auditor due to the vagueness.”*

## DATA VERIFICATION

Regardless of how robust data collection is, without verification of that data, there is no way to know whether a product comes from legal sources. In light of this, responses mentioning data verification and/or SIMP’s audit process were found to be one of the most referenced themes of the project, mentioned across over 90% of interviews. Lack of data verification is leading to concern over the accuracy of SIMP-required data, which in turn introduces uncertainty around the effectiveness of SIMP to combat IUU fishing.

*“It’s unclear how data is actually being used once collected.”*

*“What’s missing is good and verifiable catch documentation globally.”*

Given the volumes of data that come into the ACE Portal, companies have referenced concerns and skepticism such as:



*“The government is receiving all this information but [we] don’t know what’s being done with it. How do they verify sources? Is there enough human capacity to comb through all this data?”*

*“Companies are doing the bare minimum of what is needed to fulfill the portal, and the data isn’t accurate. It’s not intentionally inaccurate, but they don’t have the systems in place.”*

Although not every company has had challenges collecting or reporting data, some still suggest additional clarification or suggestions around how SIMP data is being verified.

*“It would still be nice to know what happens with the data...to get some feedback on all that information.”*

## **DATA CONFIDENCE**

Although the importance of supply chain transparency is well known; many supply chains remain opaque. The lack of transparency can lead to distrust and a lack of confidence in the product information shared across companies. FishWise found that importers have been penalized for suppliers providing inadequate information while other companies lack confidence in the data their importers are inputting into the ACE portal.

While importers are responsible for SIMP compliance, they rely on the upstream companies in their supply chains to provide accurate and up-to-date information. This reliance can cause concern that documentation may be intentionally falsified or inaccurate. Companies responded that they have seen the same catch certificates being used for multiple events. This makes it difficult to know if

their suppliers are filling out the catch documentation correctly and not re-using the same documents or intentionally misrepresenting the origin of the catch by re-using documents.

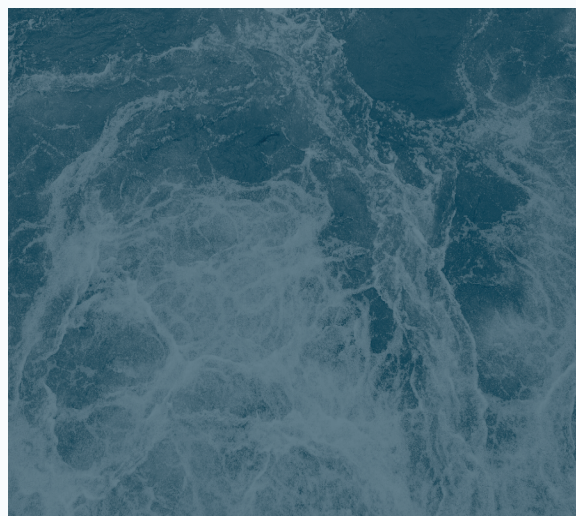
*“Nothing protects us from receiving a catch certificate from one event [or] another.”*

It is important to note that the above responses represent a subset of company feedback gathered in this project, but not all. FishWise also heard from companies that do have confidence in the data it receives from its trusted suppliers.

*“We vet our suppliers very well, so we know who to trust, and we steer clear of others. We work with suppliers to find out where they’re sourcing, [and] try and build trust.”*

Ultimately, without data verification and assurance that supply chain documentation and product information is accurate, one company pointed out:

*“At some point, you’re going by the honesty of the people involved.”*



## AUDIT UNCERTAINTY

Despite industry concerns over the lack of data verification, NOAA's [Final Rule](#) on SIMP mandates audits. SIMP audits are conducted to verify the harvest and landing information and require CoC records that document the movement of products from harvest to the point of entry into the U.S. Almost 60% of participating companies had been audited before providing feedback between March 2019 and March 2020. One of the overarching concerns voiced by the industry was the lack of transparency around the audit process, leading to unanswered questions about how companies are chosen for audits and the lack of document prescriptiveness. Participants also critiqued the overall audit methodology as too lightweight to act as a deterrent for illegal products.

Although NOAA's [Guide to Audit Requirements](#) (updated December 2020) outlines that company audits can be targeted or random, many companies lack clarity on how audits are conducted and how companies are chosen for audits. One company – audited four to five times – has only been audited for their Indonesian containers when they also sell Vietnamese products. They are concerned about why those Indonesian products were audited instead of the Vietnamese imports since, at the time of this report, Vietnam holds a [yellow card](#) issued by the EU for failing to meet requirements for the prevention of IUU fishing.

Other companies have experienced varying asks and documentation requirements that change based on the auditor, leading some to believe auditing is a subjective process.

*“For the last three audits, we needed fishing permits, but in the previous 4-5 audits, we didn’t have to do that.”*

Concerning lack of document prescriptiveness and vague requirements that change based on the auditor, one company responded:

*“The openness of the list of documents that can be sent to the auditor can be abused by the auditor due to the vagueness.”*

Although NOAA does not ask for specific documents, FishWise heard from industry that what is acceptable to one auditor might be unacceptable to another, causing frustration and uncertainty around what's expected to comply. When asked to describe the audit process, companies mentioned:

*“We’ve been through 3 audits so far, and each time it is an emergency to capture all of the CoC information. It would be a full-time job to capture all of the CoC information.”*

*“Larger companies don’t have as many issues with the audit process, but it’s the medium-size importers who are flying by the seat of their pants.”*

Alternatively, FishWise did hear from companies involved in the audit process who have had fewer issues collecting supply chain documents once their suppliers understood the importance of the request. Those companies have mentioned:

*“We have had no real issues and that data collection was smooth. NOAA has been responsive when asked for clarification.”*

*"Our company has gone through audits in both shrimp and tuna, and they've both gone well. The process wasn't overly burdensome."*

Ultimately, transparency around the audit process (e.g., pass/fail rates, the volume of illegal or misrepresented products found, information on products or companies audited) would help address industry questions, such as:

- What happens to the data that SIMP requires?
- What happens if a product comes from dishonest companies or illegal harvesting events?
- Are there follow-up conversations, tracebacks, or enforcement actions taken when products are found to be out of compliance?
- What happens to products if they are rejected?
- Does SIMP change anything? (i.e., how effective is the program?)



## **SIMP'S EFFECTIVENESS AT COMBATING IUU FISHING**

SIMP's ability to combat IUU fishing and misrepresented seafood from entering U.S. commerce was considered adequate by 42% of companies.

*"SIMP is helping to close a market to illegal and poorly documented fish."*

*"I'm a strong advocate of these kinds of regulations because I feel like it levels the playing field. SIMP helps counteract unfair competition on price."*

Beyond general support for SIMP and confidence in the program's effectiveness, companies also mentioned an increase in supply chain transparency due to SIMP's data collection and record-keeping requirements. Supply chain transparency is rooted in access to and sharing of reliable information. In support of this, companies stated:

*"What I do love about SIMP is that it's requiring electronic data for chain of custody records."*

*"Pretty much everyone knows what everyone is doing. There is some proprietary information, but lots of information can be shared and is shared. This information actually adds value to the product. Consumers would not only be surprised to hear but gain more confidence in general about the products they're buying."*



*"It is important to have information about the products. We can show that we have the information, and the SIMP program adds value to us as a company because it gives assurances that our products are what we say they are. But having the traceability information doesn't add more value to us beyond that."*

## **SIMP'S INEFFECTIVENESS AT COMBATING IUU FISHING**

Given the industry feedback around SIMP implementation, transparency around enforcement, and the aforementioned concerns with data verification, 67% of companies believe that the program has not been effective at curbing illegal fishing or misrepresented products from entering the U.S. As one company responded:

*"We have a high level of frustration with the program; it's set up to fail. It wasn't rolled out in the manner intended to (i.e., combat IUU fishing)."*

In addition to concerns or disagreement over the general rollout of SIMP, more specific criticisms of the program's ineffectiveness are outlined below.

### **Targeting the Wrong Group**

As NOAA's [Final Rule](#) on SIMP states, the importer of record is responsible for providing and reporting critical data to the U.S. government and maintaining records regarding the chain of custody for products imported into the U.S. However, not all companies agree that the importer should be responsible for SIMP compliance, especially given the reliance on upstream companies for accurate and timely data.

*"The importer is the gatekeeper, but foreign companies house the information. The IFTP importer will recognize the liability they've assumed and won't be happy about it."*

*"We should model after health certificate audits; each party should be responsible for its own pieces of the pie and be responsible for its own documents to retain confidentiality/proprietary information. It's not reasonable for a single party to have insight into best practices, traceability, and information for best practices across companies globally. I don't know how a single party would have the expertise to provide all of that information."*

### **Lacks Enforcement**

One of the more frequently referenced criticisms of SIMP was that the U.S. government does not have the enforcement capacity to adequately deter unscrupulous actors and illegal products from entering the U.S.

*"I'm not seeing how this is going to help IUU. It's great for traceability; I love the beauty of traceability. But if it's for IUU, where are the controls (enforcement)?"*

Similarly, another company mentioned taking on responsibilities that they believe belong to the government:

*"You shouldn't have to prove that every step of the way you're following the law; the government should be enforcing those regulations rather than making companies do all the work..."*

### **Lacks Capacity**

The third frequently mentioned area of feedback related to SIMP's

ineffectiveness was that NOAA lacks the capacity and resources to handle the sheer volume of data coming into ACE adequately. As one company responded:

*“If we’re submitting all of this information and there’s no capacity to read this information to help IUU, where is the staff and budget to enforce this stuff? We’re inputting this information. It’s just paperwork, but not benefiting anybody.”*

Overlapping with previous feedback highlighting the need for program transparency and increased communications from the government back to the industry, another company stated:

*“NOAA doesn’t have the staffing or capacity to do this. Although they’re saying they [do], so we hear that. It would be helpful to have some sense that there are departments doing something meaningful with this information.”*

Some companies have suggested that building more infrastructure would help address the large number of program inquiries.



## EXPANSION OF SIMP

During the survey phase of the project, FishWise asked companies to note their stance on SIMP expansion using a Likert scale. FishWise then asked companies to elaborate on their response during the interview process to capture additional feedback about why they thought NOAA should or should not expand the program to include other species.

42% of participants were against SIMP expansion citing the following reasons:

- SIMP has not been appropriately implemented
- High program costs with no evidence supporting program effectiveness
- Preference to focus only on high-risk species
- Need to improve current program prior to expansion

33% of participants supported SIMP expansion to deter additional illegal fishing, increase supply chain transparency, and meet consumer expectations citing the following explanations:

- Recognition that the U.S. is a major seafood importer and can leverage its market power
- Traceability can act as an effective tool in the effort to combat IUU fishing
- Ability to identify fraudulent actors and activities
- Selecting one SIMP species over another adds extra regulatory burden to the U.S. government and gives selective advantage to non-SIMP species

- Regulations can ensure that companies and industries are accountable and abiding by the rules

The remaining 25% of participants did not have a clear stance for or against expansion. These neutral participants provided feedback about the need for improved program implementation and a more logical sequence of events to achieve program objectives.

*“As a company, we’re open about commitment to IUU – why not include all species. That doesn’t mean we’re advocating for including other species until the program has been figured out, but it wouldn’t be a burden.”*

*“The distributor side of me says that it is going to be a nightmare to do more paperwork. We need to think of better ways to gather that information and verify it before any expansion. Share the data, use scientific resources, and enforcement.”*

## TRANSPARENCY

Much of what FishWise heard from the seafood industry was rooted in the desire for increased transparency from the U.S. government, whether it touched on data verification, increased enforcement, or additional industry-aimed communications.

## NOAA Responsiveness

From the survey responses, 61% of respondents said NOAA has been responsive to technical assistance questions, and only one found NOAA not responsive.<sup>5</sup> The remaining 35% replied either not applicable or unsure

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<sup>5</sup> Survey results are highlighted here since feedback around NOAA and/or CBP’s responsiveness to technical assistance questions was not directly addressed in the interviews.

– noting that their broker handles these inquiries or they have never had to ask for help. However, the interviews revealed that responsiveness does not always equate to helpfulness. Some companies mentioned that NOAA staff simply pointed them to a website (which may or may not have addressed their request) or took a long time to respond.

*“Kind people, quite responsive.”*

*“Not getting answers and thus not getting support.”*

*“I remember there was a time I was doing a lot more mock-SIMP audits and received no response to questions. They were waiting to package responses formally.”*

## Communicating Back to the Industry

Almost 85% of respondents cited a general need for increased transparency and communication from the U.S. government (i.e., NOAA) back to the regulated industry, as seen in the below responses:

*“I’d love more clarity on how the program is working.”*

*“I would like there to be meetings to give feedback to industry and whether companies are having similar issues, maybe every two years.”*

*“Yes, there has to be a perceived value in order for there to be a demand for [documentation]. Most people in the industry understand the need for SIMP, but there needs to be some benefits communicated to fisheries or places. There are questions related to transparency.”*



*"[It is] less about sharing specific KDEs coming into NOAA, but NOAA doing a better job communicating lessons learned and trends and the direction industry is going. Give feedback to industry on where to buy/where not to buy based on previous data and audits."*

Several more specific themes related to the need for government transparency emerged as well, including questions about audit procedures.

*"All arbitrary, random checks, but our volume causes random selection to occur more often. SIMP is still in its infancy – they haven't figured it out yet."*

*Once they get into a greater level of granularity, it's important to give industry a heads up. I'd love more clarity as to why we're getting audited, the consequences for messing up."*

*"In the beginning, it was very vague. Now it is clearer. So through time, they have been refining what they need for different supply chains. So, now it is better, but if they could clarify that for us now, that would be a helpful follow-up. Some auditors do; one woman came back to us with a 10-point list of what she wanted to see. I've only had her once, and others don't do that. She was formal and curt. This auditor had clarified further what she was looking for beyond the list that is available on the NOAA website."*

*"Is there any change in the number of audits based on previous pass/fail rates?"*

Some respondents sought transparency regarding what NOAA is doing to make the program effective.



*"The more meaningful thing to get feedback on is if NOAA thinks this is preventing IUU from entering the country."*

*"I don't know how NOAA deals with transshipped products and the risks there. You can't audit in hindsight where a product was...you'd need to track where a product is, and that isn't realistic right now."*

*"There is no feedback. None of this is worth anything until they [NOAA] can get down to the CoC because cheating this would be easy."*

There were also questions for the U.S. government about what happens when IUU products are suspected, or products are flagged.

*"I have no idea what the consequences for different things are. My broker has other customers in the fishing industry, and they also don't know why products are picked."*

*"You also don't want to seem like you're getting things wrong. Normally with health certificates, NOAA is on your side and trying to help you, but with SIMP, there is a lack of transparency. You don't reach out to the auditors themselves; it's other people within NOAA."*

*"Going back to the IUU, if they ID countries what do they do with that information? When they do find information about IUU, nobody is alerting us not to buy from that source."*

### Transparency Around Data Collection

All but one interviewee mentioned the importance of data verification (which supports data verification being one of the most highly referenced themes throughout this study). Seven of those raised the topic of government transparency around collected data.

*"Unclear how data is actually being used once collected. Transparency is an issue. You've proposed a burden on the whole world; are you going to use it in a meaningful way?"*

*"Either they are under the mindset of educate before you regulate, or there really aren't any problems with the data being submitted."*

*"We already have declarations; why weren't they good enough? What does SIMP add? What can NOAA tell me that they're using them for that's actually better information? What do you know more today than you knew based off the import/export declarations?"*

### Capacity Building

The third major ask of NOAA was the need for capacity building support, including training.

*"SIMP needs to take better account of small-scale fisheries and needs more capacity building for those fisheries they're trying to enforce, but not teaching them how to meet those regulations."*

*"Asia is where capacity is really needed; shrimp is most difficult."*

Many of the comments specifically called on NOAA to help them convey SIMP asks and processes to supply chains (government-to-business).

*"NOAA can't legally train or force requirements on suppliers, which is why they're forcing it on the importer, and the importer is forced to teach suppliers. Unfortunately, most importers don't have knowledge on this."*

*"There has not been as much mahi-mahi going to the U.S. since the FDA refusals three years prior, but we would welcome training by NOAA on SIMP."*

Other respondents commented that the U.S. could assist other countries (government-to-government) to close gaps in capacity, knowledge, and traceability.

*"NOAA should get best practices implemented with other governments if they're not planning on standardizing documentation/forms."*

*“The USG should approach the Peruvian government (Ministry of Production – Produce). We also need to do more to get formalization going. With pressure from the U.S., that’s going to help it happen.”*

*“There needed to be more outreach to roll it out to foreign suppliers. Working fed to fed so they know this has to be done.”*

One form of capacity building or collaboration that respondents did not mention was the need for inter-agency work within the U.S. government. No respondents pointed to the need for greater coordination or training from NOAA to CBP (U.S. Customs and Border Protection) or other SIMP implementing agencies.





# KEY LEARNINGS

## INDUSTRY WILLINGNESS TO GIVE FEEDBACK

As FishWise launched this project, SIMP entered its second year and had just added shrimp and abalone to the list of species covered under the program. Despite SIMP's nascent status, companies were still able to speak to the challenges and opportunities in strengthening the program. Those insights allowed FishWise to ground its key learnings in firsthand industry experience. The feedback that 35% of respondents supported the program's expansion, 42% disagreed with expansion, and 23% remained neutral highlighted how diverse experiences have been interacting with SIMP.

FishWise had about a 33% response rate with this project. It was clear from the complex nature of feedback that those who had overly positive or overly negative experiences were more willing to give comprehensive feedback. Those who claim to have been less impacted, or have had minimal issues with the program, tended to provide brief answers with little detail. In addition, FishWise did not find a strong relationship between companies having challenges in SIMP-required data collection and their approval or disapproval of the program. Although not every company has had an easy time complying with SIMP, many still see the benefit and strength of SIMP in combating IUU fishing and often have recommendations and suggestions for improvements.

Similarly, companies who are largely supportive of the program or have not had negative experiences still have suggestions for streamlining processes or making the program more effective. There is value in continuing conversations with the seafood industry to understand their experiences and solicit feedback from the companies who interface with SIMP daily.

## OPINIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Like the responses about program satisfaction or dissatisfaction and program expansion described above, the overarching opinions about SIMP were also diverse. One of the more unexpected findings was the lack of extreme responses – meaning a significant number of companies were neutral in their opinions about the program.

Some of the main conditions that affected a company's opinions about SIMP included:

- Whether or not the company was already implementing electronic traceability within their supply chains (i.e., how invested a company is in robust, often electronic, traceability)
- The number of SIMP species the company traded, and the species make up (e.g., farmed shrimp being more challenging to collect data for than swordfish)

- The company's existing (or nonexistent) relationships with their supply chains
- The complexity of source country data collecting or reporting requirements
- The number of times NOAA had audited the company
- The difficulty or ease of the U.S. government answering the company's questions about SIMP compliance or the audit process when reached out to for help

When asked whether SIMP was effective or ineffective at combating IUU fishing, FishWise heard more detailed, comprehensive responses from those who believed the program was ineffective. Tackling the industry-wide challenge of lack of transparency is one of the most promising and powerful ways SIMP can increase its efficacy in combating IUU fishing. This, in turn, increases supply chain transparency and adds increased assurance of a product's legal origin.

Unsurprisingly, reasons cited for opinions that SIMP is ineffective in combating IUU fishing were grounded in unease over how NOAA initially implemented the program and a lack of understanding of what aspects of the program are working to curb IUU fishing. Opinions that there is a lack of data verification, a need for increased NOAA capacity and resources, and more substantial intra-agency infrastructure are also top reasons for unhappiness about the program. Encouragingly, these same companies were the ones to suggest what could be improved or strengthened.

It's important to note that not all companies that disagree with the program disagree entirely. Instead, they

(and FishWise) suggest a more sequential, phased program approach to tackling implementation challenges.

Company experiences (and feedback) would most likely be different if asked five or even ten years into the program. Data collection for shrimp and abalone only came into effect a few months before the start of this research, and SIMP as a whole is only now entering its third year. Many companies are still trying to figure out how best to comply with SIMP, understand how it's working to combat IUU fishing, and share data collection responsibilities with their supply chains.

## COST

Cost, profit, and margins often drive business practices. SIMP supply chains have had to incur costs and constraints on resources to adapt to a new system of recordkeeping and data reporting. About 35% of companies made some sort of investment as a result of SIMP (e.g., supplier training, updating existing software systems, hiring new staff, partnering with a third-party traceability provider). While FishWise was only able to explore this theme thoroughly during the interviews, it was clear that the range of responses reflected companies' unique definitions of 'cost' or 'investment' which depended on their role within the supply chain.<sup>6</sup>

There was a wide distribution of responses when asked whether a

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<sup>6</sup> There were variations across the surveys and interviews in how FishWise addressed investment and cost. The survey asked what investments companies have made as a result of SIMP, but did not define the term investments. Interviews allowed for better-defining the term and exploring this theme more thoroughly.

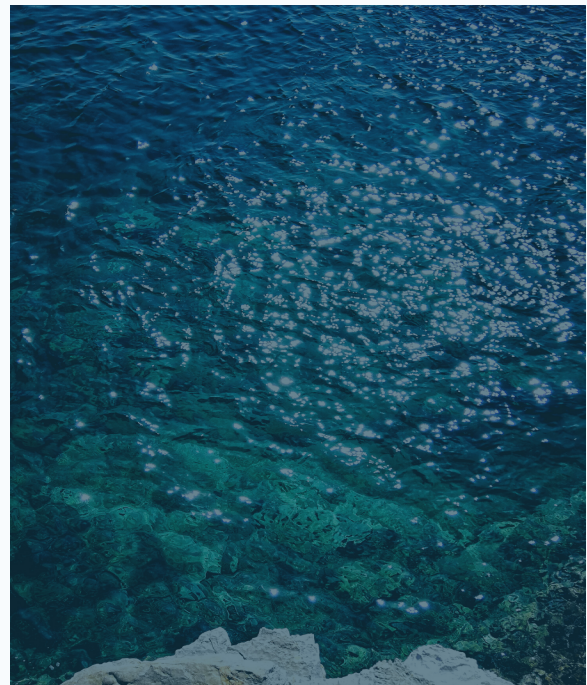
company had made investments and, if so, the kinds of investments. The disparity in responses counters some industry members' thoughts that SIMP would be a financial burden for the entire seafood industry and drive seafood prices up.

Traceability is fast becoming the cost of doing business. As heard from many companies, SIMP simply sped up the process of adopting more robust traceability practices, reflected that a company's current data collection systems were sufficient enough for SIMP compliance, or supported efforts that were already underway to address traceability. In addition, some companies had already been working on strengthening relationships within their supply chains to educate and share the data reporting responsibilities, which also aided in an easier and less costly onboarding process to the program.

Opposite that were companies that did make, and are continuing to make, investments for SIMP compliance. Generally speaking, an importer might expend more resources to address the volume of data being received and sent and audit requests. For example, hiring new staff, training existing staff, or shifting staff off day-to-day business tasks to address an audit by a specific due date are all investments. For an exporter who does not handle audit requests directly, their investments might include time and money spent educating and training overseas suppliers in SIMP-data requirements and properly reporting data, creating specific SIMP-compliant forms, or implementing a new electronic traceability system to better capture supply chain data. Thus, it is critical that in order to better uncover the true cost

of the program, all sections of a supply chain be consulted, and their specific definition of cost or investments be defined.

The largest financial burden has been placed on the importer of record because they are ultimately responsible for SIMP compliance. Many importers have also hired brokers to send supply chain data to the U.S. government. The more product a company sells, the more information must be sent, adding additional costs for the importer. Given this, there can be disproportionate financial impacts on small versus large companies.<sup>7</sup> As heard from one broker, some are working on addressing those increases in cost and passing the burden back to the importer. Seafood is a 'penny per pound' industry, and cost is a subject that supply chains continue to disagree on who should shoulder the financial burden.



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<sup>7</sup> This disproportionate impact was only mentioned during interviews, not surveys.



## DATA COLLECTION

A large component of this project was understanding how companies track, maintain, record, and report product information throughout the supply chain and to the U.S. government. As no two supply chains are the same, neither are their reporting processes. Ease of data collection was found to be independent of the volume of SIMP products sold (just over 50% of respondents shared they had challenges in tracking, maintaining, and recording data). Instead, challenges in data collection and sometimes the cost of SIMP compliance were more related to specific species being tracked. Tuna and shrimp – extremely lucrative products – were found to be the most challenging or cumbersome in collecting and sharing information both across supply chains as well as to the U.S. government and, due to the aggregated nature of their supply chains, often the costliest.

Tuna is already a heavily regulated industry, with many Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and foreign governments outlining their own reporting processes and documents needed to import these species. For some, it might be easier to collect SIMP-required data due to familiarity with existing forms (i.e., NOAA 370), and the tuna industry traditionally having a longer track record of implementing strong traceability practices. But others find that inputting the same data multiple times can strain company resources, especially if that company has more rudimentary traceability or data collection practices.

Redundant data collection and reporting would benefit from

integrating these forms, reporting processes, and systems.

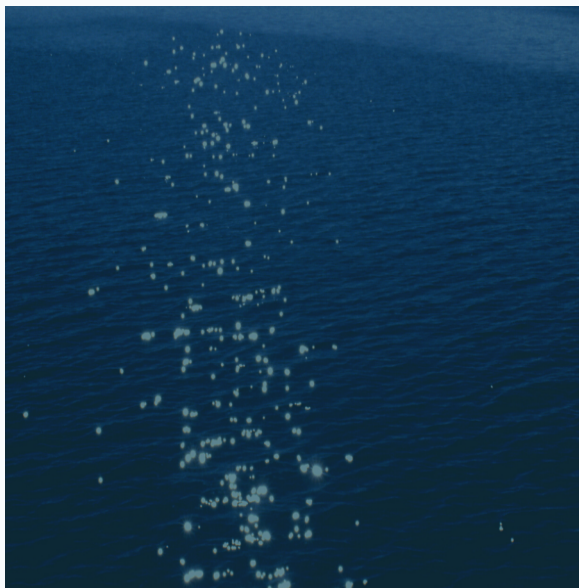
Alternatively, shrimp (wild and farmed) - one of the newest species added to SIMP - has proven one of the most challenging in terms of data collection and reporting. There can be upwards of hundreds of thousands of shrimp coming from a single farm or tens of thousands of shrimp making up a single shipment. Similarly, one container of shrimp can be sourced from over ten farms with multiple harvest dates and various sizes. As SIMP reporting mandates that shrimp be reported by size, it introduces frustration and burden to the broker or importer required to report the data, as they must input the same information multiple times. Shrimp has also proven to be one of the costliest species when it comes to data reporting, as brokers charge for each individual line item being reported.

On average, vertically integrated companies have had fewer challenges in collecting and sharing data. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for most of the seafood industry, and transparency is still lacking in much of the sector. Similarly, companies that had already invested in electronic traceability systems prior to SIMP implementation found themselves better equipped to handle data collection and audit requests. These challenges were also echoed across artisanal fisheries, where ease of data collection strongly relied on both the sophistication of traceability systems within a fleet of vessels or fishery and government support. Most artisanal fisheries lack access to robust traceability systems, making compliance with SIMP-related data collection regulations increasingly

difficult due to rudimentary record-keeping practices, lack of verifiable vessel registrations, and the aggregated nature of artisanal fisheries.

A final challenge in collecting data was the reliance on overseas suppliers for harvest-level information. International governments have their own data collection and reporting regulations, traceability systems, and data terminology. These varying regulations and language barriers make translating requests from U.S.-based companies difficult. To further complicate translation issues, harvest and vessel-level information can be seen as proprietary making it difficult to convince overseas companies that data should be shared for compliance purposes.

Although the U.S. government is not legally responsible for training foreign companies, nor can they enforce SIMP overseas, increased outreach and communications to foreign governments and suppliers would enable a better understanding of SIMP and lead to faster fulfillment of data requests.



## DATA REPORTING

Challenges don't stop at just collecting supply chain data. Reporting data back to the U.S. government – often using a customs broker – poses its own unique set of challenges, stemming from increased amounts of paperwork needed for SIMP compliance and a lack of consistency in data reporting formats. It was discovered that even if a company were to use a broker for their SIMP data entry, not all brokers use the ACE portal and many brokers use their own unique forms or systems that directly connect to CBP servers.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the largest barrier in understanding data reporting came down to respondents not being able to speak to their experiences due to their reliance on brokers. Many importers are not seeing final data submissions to the U.S. government and are trusting their brokers to submit data accurately. This has led to importers being flagged for noncompliance due to errors in data entry. These mistakes can potentially trigger an audit, straining company resources as those companies now have to shift from day-to-day business in order to quickly address an audit. Some companies have also taken it upon themselves to double-check all data and entries before sending them to the broker, which is a process that is redundant and unsustainable.

Therefore, brokers, not just importers, should be a key audience for any of

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<sup>8</sup> As heard from respondent feedback, most brokers use the Automated Broker Interface (ABI), a component of the Automated Commercial System (ACS) which CBP uses to track, control, and process all commercial goods imported into the U.S. The ABI is an integral part of ACS that permits qualified participants to file import data electronically with CBP. Over 96% of all entries are filed through ABI.

NOAA's future outreach or communication efforts.

## **DATA VERIFICATION**

Data verification is arguably one of the most important pieces of traceability. Without verification, there is little to no assurance that the information being collected and shared across seafood supply chains is accurate. Given the volume of data collected for SIMP and the lack of understanding of how that data is being handled, it came as no surprise that this theme was one of the most frequently mentioned by participants.

Although some companies rely on trust and self-proclaimed 'strong relationships' with their suppliers, this antiquated way of operating is no longer sufficient in order to combat illegal fishing on a national scale, let alone a global scale. Data misreporting, whether consciously or by mistake, leads to a systemic lack of confidence in that data. This is especially apparent when the importer of record – who is legally responsible for SIMP compliance – gets penalized for upstream supply chain information. In turn, this can lead to a lack of confidence in SIMP, a program built on and rooted in data collection.

Although SIMP is a U.S. government program, responsibility also falls on the seafood industry to take proactive measures to ensure their own supply chains are following company and government rules and regulations. Companies should not rely on the U.S. government as the final safeguard to ensure the legality of their products. Exporters, suppliers, processors, producers, harvesters, and farmers all have a responsibility to implement their own measures (e.g., verification

exercises, unannounced audits, internal procedures, and protocols) to play their part in combating IUU products from entering supply chains.

## **NEED FOR NOAA SUPPORT**

Many companies FishWise spoke to made direct requests for action by the U.S. government (NOAA specifically) to address the challenges they faced with the program's implementation or their own challenges within supply chains. Even those companies not naming NOAA directly suggested changes that, if implemented, would fall within NOAA's scope of authority. The feedback relating to the theme 'need for NOAA support' can be broadly categorized into three main asks:

1. Changes in terms of how NOAA handles verification of SIMP data
2. Desire for increased transparency and communication from NOAA about SIMP
3. Desire for capacity-building assistance

### **Changes to How NOAA Handles Verification of SIMP Data**

Although the seafood industry is fast realizing the benefits of traceability, collecting data alone does not ensure product legality. The same is said for the U.S. government – no matter how much data is being collected, without verification of that information, the risk remains that illegal and misrepresented products still enter U.S. supply chains. NOAA must ensure verification of the data received in order to claim that SIMP is successful at combating IUU fishing.

While audits add teeth to the program, there are still many unanswered questions and a lack of transparency



around this process. Echoing much of the seafood industry's desire for increased transparency and communications from the government back to the industry, periodic communications about how the audit process unfolds and how audits have been helping combat IUU fishing would go a long way in garnering support for and increased compliance with SIMP.

### **Desire for Increased Transparency and Communication from NOAA About SIMP**

The feedback FishWise received in the interviews and surveys pointed to a desire for greater transparency about the requirements and impact of SIMP. Regardless of whether respondents identified themselves as in favor of or opposed to SIMP expansion, increased transparency was frequently requested. Feedback from companies wanting to have clearer understanding of basic program functions like data collection, auditing, and program impact point to several tasks NOAA could undertake that could improve the industry's willingness or ability to comply with SIMP.

The first step is to produce reports or other avenues to publicly share information on industry and government progress after having implemented SIMP for almost 30 months. The frequency of requests for transparency about aspects of SIMP's implementation and effectiveness underscores the general sense that though NOAA is responsive to stakeholder inquiries, questions remain. At the time of this report, NOAA has not shared a major update on their management activities or success. Companies would like to know how the program is progressing and

how their challenges and experiences with SIMP compare to that of others. Further, sharing information about the effectiveness of SIMP could increase the perceived threat that illegal products are actively being identified and thereby increase the deterrent effect of the program. Below outlines items that NOAA should regularly be reporting on:

#### *1. Compliance audit procedure*

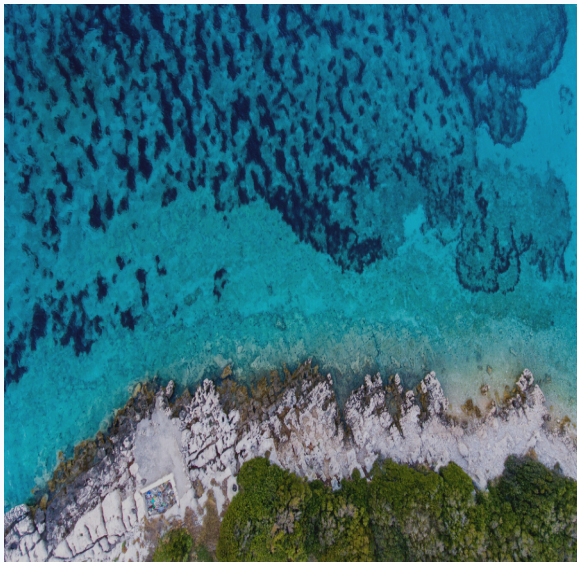
- What are the audit procedures? (e.g., modes of data collection, specific pieces of information required to meet auditor asks, etc.)
- What are the consequences for those who fail to comply (e.g., failed audit)?

#### *2. Learnings from SIMP implementation*

- How many audits were conducted in the last 12 months?
- What was the average duration of an audit (in days)?
- How many non-compliant products were identified monthly, annually, etc.?
- Which species types/tariff codes were found to be most out of compliance?
- What have the main SIMP learnings been regarding IUU fishing and mislabeling?
- How successful has the program been overall?

The second area where additional transparency is requested amounts to a desire to have an honest conversation about the systemic barriers and constraints to SIMP. Some industry participants were aware of the limitations to NOAA's powers to regulate, impose sanctions, or

exchange data with anyone other than U.S. companies. However, many were not. Either way, respondents appeared to desire a frank conversation about what traceability in this form could reasonably be expected to achieve. If bad data goes in, would anyone know? How big of an impact can a program like this hope to have? One individual thought it might even be helpful for NOAA to openly state that this program isn't stopping all illegal products from entering the U.S., but it might be deterring 10%, which in that respondent's opinion, would be significant enough to matter.



### Desire for Capacity Building Assistance

The final major ask for NOAA was for capacity building on a number of fronts. Government representatives and the private sector alike pointed to opportunities for SIMP implementation to be improved via government-to-government communication, training, and coordination. These suggestions mirror those developed as part of the original [Action Plan of the Presidential Task Force on Combating IUU Fishing and](#)

[Seafood Fraud](#) from which SIMP was created.

Companies also suggested that they would welcome training for their staff and their suppliers, greater assistance developing appropriate traceability documentation, help navigating government processes, and more. Several companies pointed to efforts by NOAA in the development and early implementation phases of SIMP to host webinars, speak at events that seafood companies attend (e.g., Seafood Expo North America), and conduct international outreach. However, the general feeling was that these efforts were not as impactful as they could have been because:

- Events were not widely enough advertised, so people missed the opportunity to attend and participate
- The seafood company staff that attend industry events (like the Seafood Expo North America) are usually sales focused and not responsible for traceability or compliance
- Foreign government/industry outreach occurred too soon after SIMP launched, so attendees didn't understand the program well enough to predict their needs

By leveraging inter-agency and international relationships, NOAA can increase its ability to provide information and support to both the seafood industry and exporting nations. Among several others identified in Recommendation 6 of the Presidential Task Force's action plan, cooperation and information sharing with the U.S. State Department, USAID (United States Agency for International

Development), and CBP should be prioritized. An updated analysis of IUU fishing and seafood fraud risks based on the best available scientific and enforcement data would be helpful for prioritizing the SIMP species and nations that are in greatest need of capacity support.

## SEQUENCING

Survey and interview respondents also shared opinions about the sequence of actions that should be taken. Many respondents said it would make sense to wait until some of the implementation challenges on both the industry and government sides had been improved before adding the additional complexity of more species. This suggestion was echoed by the Peruvian government personnel that FishWise spoke to for the simple reason that their current system is not capable of scaling up to support the data collection, sharing, and storage requirements of SIMP if it continues to grow in scope.

While the suggestion to wait to expand until everything is perceived to be running smoothly is unrealistic and could be viewed as a stalling mechanism used by critics of SIMP, FishWise believes there is merit to pausing for some well-informed reflection prior to expansion. Suppose the agencies of exporting nations are unable to keep pace with the traceability demands of market states due to the sheer volume of records required; they will have to choose to invest additional funds into traceability technologies or sell their products elsewhere.

A gradual increase in species subject to SIMP, based on updated risk and enforcement data, would allow supply

chains and governments the time to make adjustments without shifting trade routes or severely hindering the flow of products or daily business transactions.



## 2019-2020 CONCLUSION

Given NOAA's leading role in defining and executing the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, there is a tremendous opportunity for them and other appropriate U.S. government agencies to address the above feedback heard from the seafood industry. FishWise's SIMP survey analysis, interview findings, and subsequent comprehensive implications and key learnings offer NOAA and its partner agencies suggestions on how to better engage stakeholders internationally, strengthen business/government partnerships, and enhance efforts to combat IUU and/or misrepresented products from entering the U.S.

This report detailed the first phase of a multi-year project to gather industry feedback on SIMP. The next step will be focused on gathering the perspectives of U.S. importers and customs brokers. The goal of this work is to make future policy changes on SIMP more actionable and effective at detecting and deterring IUU products.



# PROJECT TIMELINE



# APPENDICES

## A. OUTREACH EVENTS

Below outlines key industry events attended to support data collection for this report:

- 2019 Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Supplier Roundtable Forum – Miami, USA
- 2019 SALT PartnerLab – Bangkok, Thailand
- 2019 Seafood Expo North America – Boston, USA
- 2019 Urner Barry Seafood Import Workshop – Las Vegas, USA
- 2019 Seafood Expo Global – Brussels, Belgium
- 2019 Expo Pesca & AcquiPeru – Lima, Peru
- 2019 SeaWeb Seafood Summit - Bangkok, Thailand
- 2019 Korean Maritime Institute Exporter Summit – Seoul, South Korea
- 2020 Santa Monica Seafood Supplier Summit – California, USA
- 2020 Seafood Expo North America (canceled due to COVID-19)



## B. SPECIES AND VOLUME REPRESENTATION

Figure 1. Percentage of SIMP Products Represented

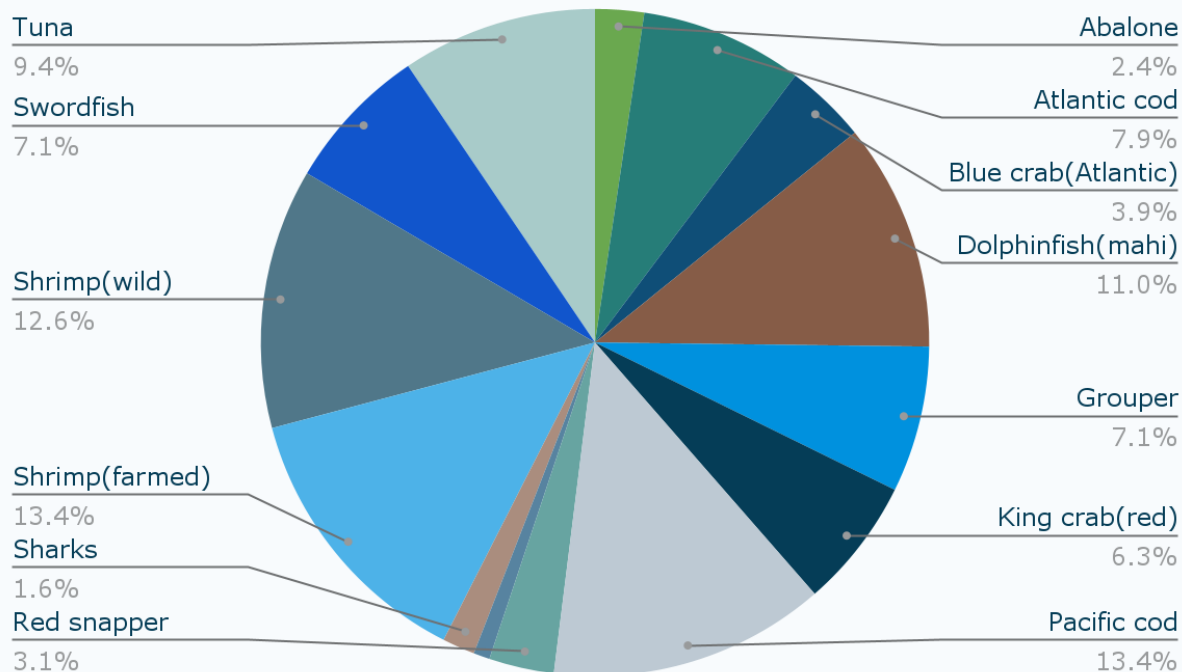
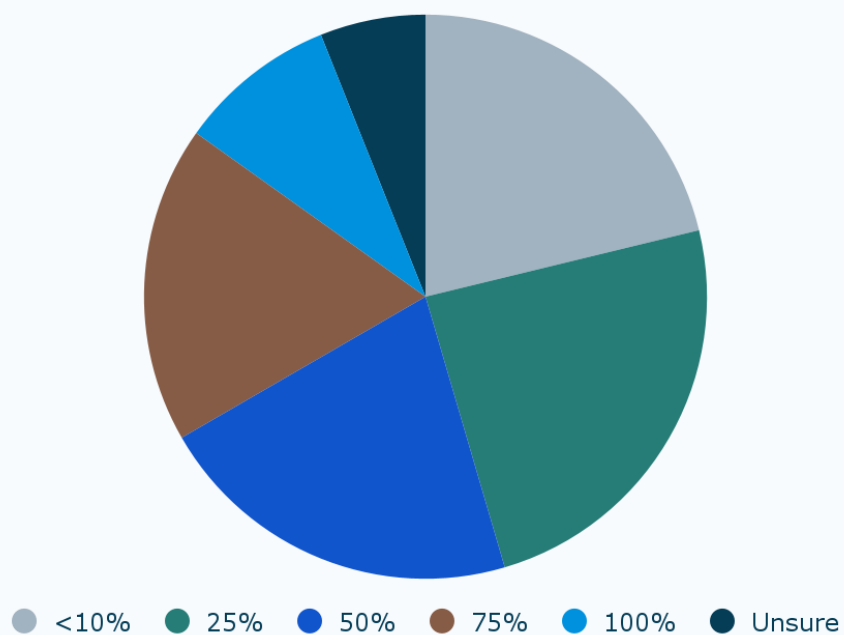


Figure 2. Survey Respondents' Proportional SIMP Product Volume





## C. 2019-2020 SURVEY AND INTERVIEW CODEBOOKS

Codes:

**Bold** = tier 1 (parent code)

*Italics* = tier 2 (child node)

Underline = tier 3 (child node)

Name	Description	Files	References
<b>Country-Specific Feedback</b>	Feedback that is specific to overseas suppliers, governments, and/or geographies (e.g., mentioning countries that are more challenging than others for collecting SIMP-required data)	2	5
<b>Data reporting challenges vary by species</b>	Differences in SIMP data reporting related to either specific species group (e.g., tuna) and/or farmed vs. wild products	2	2
<b>Data verification: audits</b>	Audits and other forms of data verification needed to support effectiveness of SIMP, including feedback around data verification needs to ensure accuracy of documentation submitted	17	21
<b>Does not support SIMP expansion</b>	Specific mention of apprehensiveness to SIMP expanding to additional species.	17	17
<b>Effective at combating IUU fishing</b>	General mention of SIMP's effectiveness at combating IUU fishing (more specific comments are coded under child nodes below)	2	2
<i>Increased enforcement</i>	Enforcement (including audits) leads to increased effectiveness at combating IUU fishing	2	2
<i>Increased harvest data capture</i>	Additional harvest level KDEs are a driver of SIMP's success and effectiveness	10	10
<i>Increased supply chain transparency</i>	Transparent data reporting practices and increase in supply chain documentation leads to increased effectiveness at combating IUU fishing	13	18
<b>Investment in traceability technology</b>	Parent code and child nodes (below) are specific to the following survey questions: Did you invest in traceability technology or develop new procedures for tracing products as a result of SIMP requirements? Why or why not? If your company has invested in traceability technology, what investments have you made or actions have you taken? If not, does your company have plans to invest in traceability technology or develop new procedures for tracing products as a result of SIMP requirements in the future?	0	0

<i>Investment made</i>		0	0
<u>Aid compliance</u>	Traceability investments were made to comply with SIMP requirements	6	6
<u>Document Development</u>	Traceability investments focused on increased document creation, use, and/or collection	2	2
<u>KDE terminology misaligned</u>	Traceability investments were made to align current (industry) KDEs with SIMP requirements	1	1
<u>Program asks for more KDEs</u>	Traceability investments (technology and/or procedures) were made to account for additional data requirements mandated by SIMP	5	5
<u>SIMP sped up investment</u>	Traceability investments were already in progress, but SIMP helped speed up implementation timeframes	1	1
<u>Third-party provider</u>	Traceability investments included the use of a third party provider to assist with traceability improvements and SIMP compliance	1	1
<u>Tool development</u>	Traceability investments included the creation, purchase, and/or use of other tools beyond system requirements and paperwork logistics (e.g., scannable codes, custom programming, etc.)	4	4
<u>Training of suppliers</u>	Traceability investments were focused on training staff within companies as well as up the supply chain	4	5
<u>Updated procedure, not technology</u>	Although no investment in traceability technology made, changes made to protocols and/or reporting procedures	5	5
<i>No investment</i>		1	1
<u>Current system sufficient</u>	No traceability investment made due to the existing system(s) being sufficient for SIMP data requirements	14	16
<u>Rapidly changing technology</u>	No traceability investment been made due to quickly evolving technology	1	1
<b>Lack of external engagement</b>	Program lacks engagement with external parties (e.g., traceability technology companies) to create an effective technology-driven program	1	1
<b>Not effective at combating IUU fishing</b>	General mention of SIMP not being effective at combating IUU fishing (more specific comments are coded under child nodes below)	8	13
<i>Targeting wrong group</i>	SIMP is ineffective at combating IUU fishing because it targets the wrong stakeholder group/part of supply chain	6	6

<b>Supplier Engagement</b>	Any mention of engaging with suppliers on SIMP reporting and accountability, exclusive of supplier training (see 'Training of suppliers' or 'NOAA supplier training')	3	5
<b>Support SIMP expansion</b>	Clear support for and/or recommendation that SIMP expand to all species	12	14
<b>Tracking, maintaining, and or reporting SIMP data</b>	General mention of companies' experiences in tracking, storing, and/or reporting SIMP-required data either within its own supply chains or into ACE database (more specific comments are coded under child nodes below)	0	0
<i>A lot of work</i>	Child nodes below use companies' specific quotes to best define "a lot of work"	0	0
<u>Burdensome</u>	Additional workload related to SIMP data collection and/or audits cause increased demand on resources to company and/or individuals involved in SIMP reporting	5	5
<u>High paperwork</u>	Challenges centered around increased amounts of paperwork	5	5
<u>Human capacity increase</u>	Challenges centered around instances where a company needed to hire additional staff or incurred time constraints on current staff	4	4
<u>Implement trusted trader program</u>	Specific request to implement Trusted Trader program to ease company-specific requirements	1	1
<u>Redundant</u>	Challenges associated with repetitive data entry or data entry redundant with existing regulatory requirements and required paperwork	4	4
<u>Time consuming</u>	Challenges associated with the amount of time spent collecting, reporting, or training staff on SIMP data requirements	2	2
<i>Broker</i>	Any mention of broker responsibility or tasks (some survey participants unable to answer specific data reporting questions [i.e., ACE-specific] as it is the broker's responsibility to enter collected data into the government database)	14	17
<u>Occasional ACE challenge</u>	Specific challenges associated with data entry into government's ACE portal	3	3
<i>Difficult to collect data</i>	Child nodes below used to best define node "difficult to collect data"	2	2
<u>Collect subsets of data</u>	Data collection challenges associated with aggregated SIMP forms.	1	1
<u>KDE Confusion</u>	Data collection challenges associated with lack of continuity, alignment, and/or definition across	2	2



	government and industry KDEs		
<u>Overseas supplier challenges</u>	Data collection challenges associated with specific overseas suppliers and their responsibility to collect harvest-level and processing (or other mid-supply chain) data	7	7
<u>Suppliers push back</u>	Data collection challenges associated with inability to collect data from suppliers or lack of responsiveness to program and required supply chain information	4	5
<i>Difficult to report data</i>	Data reporting challenges a result of high paperwork, misunderstanding of what data or species codes to provide to SIMP, and inconsistency in data reporting formats	2	2
<u>Lack of confidence in data</u>	Participants lack confidence in data due to trust issues, lack of verification, and/or language barriers	5	7
<i>Inadequate traceability system</i>	Tracking SIMP data ineffective due to lack of traceability implementation overall in fishing industry	2	2
<i>Increase in cost</i>	Challenges associated with data collection and reporting are specific to company and government costs incurred in order to comply with SIMP	4	4
<i>Need for NOAA support</i>	Request for NOAA support (e.g., training) and help in clarifying program requirements, feedback on effectiveness of data, and general trends or findings to date	3	3
<u>Foreign government capacity building</u>	NOAA support specific to foreign government engagement or training to help suppliers collect and provide required import/export data	3	4
<u>NOAA supplier training</u>	Mention of training needs from government specific to overseas suppliers.	6	10
<u>Provide feedback to industry</u>	Comments focused around want for clarification around program progress, data analytics, audit clarifications, etc.	6	10
<i>No issues</i>	Positive or neutral response to SIMP data collection and reporting requirements	18	21
<i>Remove species from program</i>	Specific recommendations to remove species from the program	3	3
<i>Satisfied with current program</i>	Positive responses to program implementation and effectiveness	6	7
<i>Simplify reporting process</i>	Requests and/or recommendations to simplify and standardize reporting requirements	11	13
<u>Create standardized</u>	Similar to parent code, "Simplify reporting process," participants request more prescriptive forms or	7	8

forms (be more prescriptive)

guidelines for reporting purposes

Integrate with existing data collection systems

Requests and/or recommendations to enable existing traceability systems to interact with ACE portal in order to more quickly send and receive SIMP-required data

3

4

## 2019-2020 INTERVIEW CODEBOOK

Codes:

**Bold** = tier 1 (parent code)

*Italics* = tier 2 (child node)

Underline = tier 3 (child node)

Name	Description	Files	References
<b>Data verification needs</b>	Data verification needed to support the effectiveness of SIMP, including government feedback around data verification needs in order to ensure the accuracy of the documentation submitted	11	51
<i>Audit uncertainty</i>	Lack of clarity and/or transparency around the audit process	10	22
<i>Lack of confidence in data</i>	Participants lack confidence in data due to trust issues, lack of verification, and/or language barriers	5	10
<b>Disproportionate impact on small vs. large companies</b>	Disparity across experiences with SIMP due to company size	6	10
<b>Does not support SIMP expansion</b>	Specific mention of apprehensiveness to SIMP expanding to additional species	5	5
<b>Effective at combating IUU fishing</b>	General mention of SIMP's effectiveness at combating IUU fishing (more specific comments are coded under child nodes below)	5	10
<i>Increased supply chain transparency</i>	Transparent data reporting practices and an increase in supply chain documentation leads to increased effectiveness at combating IUU fishing	4	6
<b>Increase in cost</b>	Challenges associated with data collection and reporting are specific to company and government costs incurred in order to comply with SIMP	6	8
<b>Industry lacks uptake of</b>	Tracking SIMP data is ineffective due to the lack of traceability implementation overall in the seafood	5	7

<b>traceability</b>	industry		
<b>Investment in traceability systems</b>	Traceability investments made as a result of SIMP implementation (e.g., use of third-party technology, document and tool development, training of suppliers)	4	11
<b>Need for NOAA support</b>	Request for NOAA support (e.g., training) and help clarify program requirements and provide feedback on both the program effectiveness and general trends or findings to date	12	44
<i>Capacity building</i>	Request for NOAA to support foreign government engagement (e.g., training) and help suppliers and import companies collect and provide required import/export data	7	10
<i>Communicating back to the industry</i>	Government communication back to the industry including lessons learned, the effectiveness of the program, instances of IUU findings, etc.	10	23
<i>Transparency around collected data</i>	Request for insight into what is being done with data collected and how it is being handled	7	9
<b>No investment made in traceability technology</b>	Companies did not invest in traceability as a result of SIMP implementation	7	10
<i>Current system sufficient</i>	No traceability investment was made due to the existing system(s) being sufficient for SIMP data requirements	7	9
<b>NOAA responsiveness</b>	NOAA's support in answering industry questions regarding SIMP	4	4
<b>Not effective at combating IUU fishing</b>	General mention of SIMP not being effective at combating IUU fishing	8	23
<i>Lacks enforcement</i>	Program lacks effectiveness due to adequate enforcement	4	8
<i>NOAA lacks capacity</i>	Strain on human resources and budget equate to lowered program effectiveness	4	8
<i>Targeting the wrong group</i>	SIMP is ineffective at combating IUU fishing because it targets the wrong stakeholder group/part of the supply chain	3	4
<b>Sequencing</b>	'First, then' responses referring to suggested sequencing of events for SIMP implementation and/or expansion	7	10
<b>Support SIMP expansion</b>	Clear support for and/or recommendation that SIMP expand to additional and/or all species	4	4



<b>Tracking, maintaining, and or reporting SIMP data</b>	General mention of companies' experiences in tracking, storing, and/or reporting SIMP-required data either within its own supply chains or into the ACE database	12	168
<i>Brokers enter supply chain data</i>	Any mention of broker responsibility or tasks (some survey participants unable to answer specific data reporting questions [i.e., ACE-specific] as it is the broker's responsibility to enter collected data into the government database)	10	32
<i>Burdensome</i>	Additional workload as a result of SIMP data collection and/or audits causes increased demand on resources to the company and/or individuals involved in SIMP reporting	9	36
<u>High paperwork</u>	Challenges centered around increased amounts of paperwork	7	10
<u>Human capacity increase</u>	Challenges centered around instances where a company needed to hire additional staff or incurred time constraints on current staff	5	8
<u>Redundant</u>	Challenges associated with repetitive data entry or data entry redundant with existing regulatory requirements and required paperwork	4	6
<u>Time-consuming</u>	Challenges associated with the amount of time spent collecting, reporting, or training staff on SIMP data requirements	4	7
<i>Difficult to collect data</i>	Mention of challenges associated with collecting SIMP-required data from supply chain companies	10	36
<u>KDE terminology misaligned</u>	Inconsistencies in KDE reporting requirements	4	6
<u>Overseas supplier challenges</u>	Data collection challenges associated with specific overseas suppliers and their responsibility to collect harvest-level, processing, and/or other mid-supply chain data	8	29
<u>Country-specific feedback</u>	Feedback specific to overseas suppliers, governments, and/or geographies (e.g., mentioning countries that are more challenging than others for collecting SIMP-required data)	5	7
<u>Supplier engagement</u>	Any mention of engaging with suppliers on SIMP reporting and accountability, exclusive of supplier training	5	6
<i>Difficult to report data</i>	Data reporting challenges are a result of increased paperwork, misunderstanding of what data or species codes to provide, and inconsistency in data reporting formats	9	23

<u>Data reporting challenges vary by species or fisheries</u>	Differences in SIMP data reporting related to either specific species group (e.g., tuna) and/or farmed vs. wild products	9	15
<i>No issues</i>	Positive or neutral response to SIMP data collection and reporting requirements	6	11
<i>Simplify the reporting process</i>	Requests and/or recommendations to simplify and standardize reporting requirements	9	23
<u>Create standardized forms (be more prescriptive)</u>	Participants request more prescriptive forms or guidelines for reporting purposes (similar to parent code, “simplify the reporting process”)	9	15
<u>Integrate with existing data collection systems</u>	Requests and/or recommendations to enable existing traceability systems to interact with the ACE portal in order to more quickly send and receive SIMP-required data	4	4
<u>Trusted Trader</u>	Mention of implementation of the Trusted Trader program	3	3
<i>Supplier trust</i>	Need for supplier trust in absence of on-site data verification	4	6



FISH  
WISE

