



The Verification Platform

A new approach to assurance in the farmed shrimp sector

About the Monterey Bay Aquarium

To protect ocean health while meeting the growing global demand for seafood, Monterey Bay Aquarium focuses on improving the sustainability of aquaculture around the world. Our Seafood Watch program assesses the environmental impacts of aquaculture species that are important to the U.S. market and assigns green, yellow, and red ratings to highlight areas of environmental risk. Our Global Ocean Conservation team then works collaboratively with local industry members, scientists, governments, and other stakeholders to tackle the intertwined environmental, social, and economic issues needed to improve the sustainability of the product.

The Challenge

Small-scale aquaculture plays an important role in meeting the increasing demand for environmentally sustainable seafood products. Until recently, small-scale farmers trying to access the global sustainable seafood market had no way to verify their approaches or identify areas for improvement. Seafood Watch ratings focus on the cumulative environmental impacts of aquaculture in an entire region – not farm-level performance. Most small-scale farmers cannot pursue eco-certification because of cost and complexity. There is a clear need for a new form of assurance at a regional scale that allows groups of shrimp farmers to be rewarded for their practices and access more lucrative export markets.

Verification: A New Approach

Our innovative app – the [Verification Platform](#) – has the potential to drive improvements in environmental performance and open the global sustainable seafood market to hundreds of thousands of small-scale shrimp farmers, increasing buying options and cost savings for the entire supply chain. Powered by a tablet or smartphone, the platform instantly determines a farm’s performance against the Seafood Watch Aquaculture Standard and identifies what areas of production – such as water quality, health management, or feed use – may require improvements. The app uses evidence-based sampling strategies to represent the performance of all farms in a group or area. This allows producers and suppliers to offer buyers a **strong level of assurance** of performance – communicated through Seafood Watch’s familiar green, yellow, and red ratings – **without the high cost** of certification. The fit-for-purpose approach can be scaled to verify thousands of farms throughout a region.

With this revolutionary tool, we can determine the sustainability of an entire region – something that hasn’t been done to date by ratings or certification programs. This is truly a game-changer in terms of increasing access to sustainable product while enabling more small-scale farmers to enter the global market of sustainable seafood. — Dominique Gautier, director of sustainability, Seafresh Group

Benefits

Monterey Bay Aquarium is dedicated to championing sustainable seafood practices globally. These are just some of the benefits farmers and processors gain when they collaborate with us:

- **Access to U.S. markets.** Aligning with Seafood Watch’s sustainability standards opens up lucrative opportunities in the U.S. market. Many U.S. companies, including retailers and restaurants, rely on Seafood Watch ratings to fulfill their sustainability commitments. Achieving a “Best Choice” or “Good Alternative” rating can significantly boost your product’s appeal. Partners can highlight the project on their brand packaging.
- **Global exposure:** Our partners often join premier seafood industry events under the Seafood Watch banner. Conferences in Boston, Barcelona, and the Global Shrimp Forum in Utrecht are just a few of the opportunities to showcase your commitment to sustainability and network with industry leaders. Our annual business roundtable in Monterey, California, offers yet another opportunity to engage directly with other business partners, share insights, and present your achievements.
- **Product visibility and storytelling:** We feature our partners and collaborators on the Seafood Watch section of our website and through our active social media channels. By sharing your story, we help amplify your brand’s message and sustainability efforts to a wider audience.
- **Community benefits:** As a partner, you’ll have an opportunity to contribute to the socio-economic development of local communities through Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Community Development Fund. Designed to create a more inclusive and sustainable industry, the Fund awards grants to community development projects in participating farming regions.
- **Access to a team of global seafood sustainability experts:** Our partners can tap into the expertise of our global fellows who are working on the ground with local communities to tackle the most challenging sustainability issues. This includes: farm health management, climate vulnerability and resilience, improved shrimp survivorship, improved governance structures, efficient data collection techniques, socio-economic and supply chain equity, and more.

Customers trust Wegmans to bring them the freshest seafood, responsibly sourced. With this verification approach, we can offer responsibly harvested shrimp that meets our stringent sourcing policies while also meeting the needs of smaller farms. Innovative thinking like this enables benefit sharing from the small-scale farmer all the way up the supply chain. — Steve Philips, seafood group manager, Wegmans

Verification in Action: Vietnam

The world’s largest producer of giant tiger prawns (*Penaeus monodon*), [Vietnam](#) accounts for more than a third of global production and is a top exporter of shrimp and prawns to the U.S. However, the vast majority of giant tiger prawns farmed in Vietnam are rated Avoid. As U.S. demand for farmed shrimp grows – increasing nearly 5 percent each year – supporting sustainable aquaculture practices in Vietnam is critical to ensuring the availability of Best Choice and Good Alternative products for U.S. buyers. We’re working with partners on the ambitious goal of ushering 20,000 giant tiger prawn farms in Cà Mau province toward a Best Choice rating by 2025.

Want more information?

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