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Future feasts
A guide to traceability in the hospitality industry

In the global discussion surrounding the health of our oceans, fishing companies often take centre stage due to their direct involvement in harvesting fish. However, seafood buyers, including the hospitality sector, also have significant power to drive positive change throughout the supply chain.

Why do we need traceability in the hospitality sector?
Consider a premium seafood restaurant in a Michelin-starred hotel. The menu promises wild-caught sea bass from Brittany, but the supplier delivers farmed sea bass from the Canary Islands. While the quality of the farmed fish is not in question, the distinction is critical. You've been paying a premium for wild-caught fish and charging your guests accordingly. This mislabelling undermines the authenticity of your offerings and erodes customer trust.

We can't save what we can't see

The hospitality industry plays a crucial role in driving higher standards throughout the seafood supply chain. By demanding traceability, they ensure compliance, quality, and ethical practices. This transparency justifies premium pricing as it helps meet the expectations of discerning customers.

A critical tool for hospitality businesses in justifying this premium is the traceability audit. These audits provide deep insights into supply chains, ensuring seafood is sustainable and accurately labelled, setting businesses apart in a competitive market.

What does a traceability audit entail?

A traceability audit is a comprehensive review process designed to ensure that seafood products are sourced, handled, and delivered in a transparent and responsible manner. Through these audits, hospitality businesses can verify the origins and supply chain of the seafood they serve, ensuring compliance with sustainability standards and reducing the risk of mislabelling or illegal sourcing.

The audit process typically involves:

Step 1: Hospitality establishment onboarding

The first step is for the hospitality group to compile a comprehensive list of their products and suppliers (importers, distributors, processors). This foundational step allows for collaboration between the hospitality business and its suppliers, and prepares the groundwork for the audit process.

Step 2: Supplier onboarding and initial assessment

Suppliers undergo an onboarding process where their documentation—such as catch certificates, health certificates, and origin declarations—is collected and assessed. This initial assessment sets a baseline for traceability and helps verify that suppliers meet the required standards from the start. Additionally, suppliers may receive guidance on how to improve their traceability practices, if needed.

Step 3: Document verification

A thorough review of all relevant documents is conducted to verify the legitimacy and sourcing of seafood products. This includes checking catch certificates, health documents, packing lists, and bills of lading. The verification process traces multiple orders, examines patterns, and flags any inconsistencies to ensure that the sourcing data remains accurate and reliable.

### Step 4: Traceability report and dashboard preparation

The results of the audit are compiled into a detailed traceability report, which can be integrated into a tailored traceability dashboard that provides clear insights into the business's traceability performance and highlights areas for improvement. Key features often include data on sourcing decisions, operational optimization, and progress tracking.

Step 5: Random checks and on-demand audits

Random checks and audits help verify specific deliveries or products, ensuring that compliance is maintained, and irregularities are promptly addressed. This step also facilitates ongoing communication between the hospitality group and their suppliers, ensuring continuous traceability throughout the supply chain.

Case Study: SFS Trace

One example of a traceability audit tool is SFS Trace, a digital solution aligned with the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST) standards. SFS Trace ensures seafood products are fully traceable, from capture to plate, by collecting and verifying key data elements (KDEs) and critical tracking events (CTEs). The platform also supports compliance with international regulations, such as those set by the USA FDA and EU CATCH, and helps businesses avoid seafood sourced from Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing vessels.
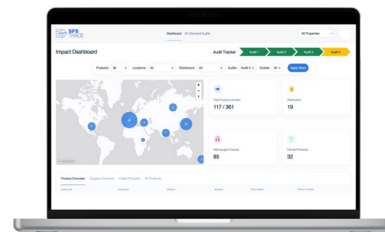
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Data is power: Actionable insights

Collecting data is only the starting point for implementing a traceability system. In order to create impact, data needs to be translated into clear and actionable insights. The findings from the traceability audit are used to design individualized dashboards to drive change and empower decision making across the organization.

Armed with the knowledge and learnings from the dashboard:

Procurement teams can: Use traceability to guide decisions, ensuring products meet high standards of quality and sustainability. This supports ethical practices and aligns with modern consumer values.

Chefs can: Leverage detailed traceability data to be creative and responsible. They can experiment with new species with confidence, crafting menus that highlight sustainability and attracting discerning guests.

Logistics teams can: Ensure accurate labelling and tracking of shipments, reducing errors and maintaining supply chain integrity. This helps prevent mislabelling and unauthorized products.

Management can: Use traceability data to uphold sustainability standards and manage reputation. It provides evidence of compliance with environmental goals and identifies areas for improvement, enhancing the dining experience and customer loyalty. Top hospitality chains can engage customers by integrating technology like QR codes into the dining experience which inform customers about the journey of their seafood meal.

Case study: SFS trace QR codes

As an example of how traceability can engage guests, SFS Trace offers QR codes for chefs to include on their menus. By scanning the QR code, diners can trace the journey of their seafood from the source to their plate. This transparency allows guests to explore where their seafood was caught, how it was processed, and what sustainability measures were followed, making their dining experience both informative and engaging.

SFS trace QR codes

Embedded marketing and media collateral to promote brand awareness.

Product details and the location it was harvested from.

Journey tracking including harvest date, arrival date and flight details/ container tracking information for frozen.
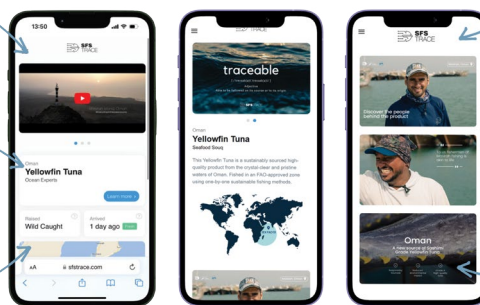
Showcase your brand, highlight your processes, and quality of the seafood you supply.

Promote certifications to support credible sustainable sources.

Conclusion: A future of transparent and sustainable dining

By recognizing the gaps in current systems and taking proactive steps to address them, the hospitality industry can leverage its power to drive traceability and sustainability. The future of our oceans depends on these actions, making it essential for the hospitality industry to lead the way in sustainable seafood procurement.

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