

# Steps to More Sustainable Seafood

## Introduction

For hotels, offering sustainable seafood can easily feel daunting. Some challenges you encounter could include:

- **Confusion over what sustainable seafood is, and whether you can really make an impact.**
- **Suppliers that are not able to answer your questions or offer sustainable options at the volumes you need at reasonable price points.**

This case study describes how Chef Lucas Glanville and his team at [Grand Hyatt Singapore](#) worked to become leaders in the sustainable seafood space by focusing on key steps, including:

1. **Creating a culture of awareness**
2. **Defining procurement criteria**
3. **Evaluating seafood purchases**
4. **Working with suppliers and managing overall costs**
5. **Avoiding endangered species**
6. **Improving the traceability of the seafood supply**



## The Issue and the Opportunity

Billions of people across the globe enjoy seafood. Yet our ocean resources are limited. Collectively, we are taking more from the oceans than can be replaced. This has serious impacts. Populations of marine species have more than halved in the last 50 years, and 90 percent of global fish stocks are overfished or fished to their ecological limit. And as the global population and the demand for seafood grows, it will only become more difficult for communities around the world to have access to seafood.

What we put on our plate matters – tremendously. By changing the way we purchase seafood, we can help shift fishing and farming practices and avoid the depletion of these important resources.

Chef Lucas Glanville, Director of Culinary Operations, Grand Hyatt Singapore and South East Asia, had an urge to be part of the solution and saw that as his obligation: “We have large restaurant operations and purchase about 200 tons of seafood annually. So people listen when we make decisions and we don’t take that responsibility lightly.”

Protecting our oceans is a collective effort. Regardless of the size of your hotel or restaurant, each team has access to numerous guests and colleagues, and can play an important role in making an impact in the following areas:

- **Serving sustainable choices to lower impact on the oceans.**
- **Creating awareness among your guests and colleagues to influence how they think about seafood outside of your hotel.**
- **Influencing your suppliers to increase sustainable options by demonstrating that there is demand from hotel chefs and customers.**

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## 1. Create a Culture of Awareness

At Grand Hyatt Singapore, where sustainable seafood efforts helped steward Hyatt's company-wide commitment, Chef Glanville saw the need for his colleagues to get first-hand, scientifically credible information on the topic. Marine scientists visited the hotel to present information and engage not only culinary and food and beverage staff, but the entire team hotel-wide. "We had people from our finance team and from our laundry team," Chef Glanville reported. "I mean, we really opened this up to the whole hotel, and I suppose we created this groundswell where it became very topical and people started talking about it. It became something that people were passionate about and really interested in."

When Hyatt's global seafood goal was deployed as part of its 2020 Environmental Sustainability Vision, creating a culture of awareness was also the primary emphasis. At Hyatt, the purchasing of seafood is decentralized, which means the company relies on hundreds of chefs and purchasing teams to determine how to work with their menus and suppliers to advance sustainable seafood. Understanding your market, training your staff, engaging experts, and getting your hotel and your guests on board are critical to the program's success.

For this reason, global training materials were developed as a first step, and continue to evolve to address regional needs.

## 2. Define Procurement Criteria

There are a lot of sustainability claims in the market, and a lot of easily accessible and conflicting information on the subject. For this reason, it is important to have clear definitions of goals for both communicating clearly to colleagues and guests and for clearly articulating what you are looking for to suppliers.

At the Grand Hyatt Singapore, Chef Glanville set a goal to remove endangered species from his menus and to buy product that was third-party certified with an independent eco-label. He concluded that MSC and ASC eco-labels are the highest accreditation for sustainable seafood in the industry and made that a focus area as part of these goals.

Globally, Hyatt developed seafood goals with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to take a step-wise approach to achieving more sustainable, responsible, and traceable seafood procurement. To do so, existing global supply chains were engaged to begin eliminating the procurement of endangered species and to transition at least 50 percent of Hyatt's global seafood procurement volume to the following by the end of 2018:

1. **Seafood from Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified fisheries and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certified farms.** These standards are considered the most credible and comprehensive for fisheries and farms, respectively, because they are independent, third-party certified, transparent, provide supply chain traceability, and drive measurable, continuous improvement.
2. **Seafood from fisheries and farms that are comprehensively and measurably transitioning to meet the MSC or ASC standards.** This includes seafood from fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and aquaculture improvement projects (AIPs). By supporting these sources in their transition, Hyatt is assisting in increasing both demand for and supply of more sustainable and responsible seafood.
3. **In cases where access to and awareness of more sustainable options is limited, seafood listed as "green" on WWF seafood guides, as well as some organic farm certifications, can be considered.**

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## 3. Evaluate Seafood Purchases

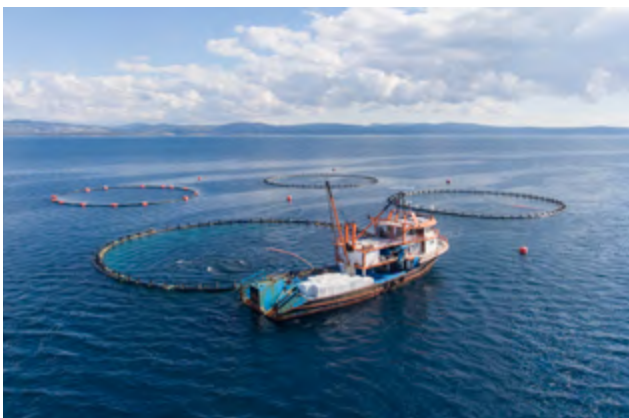
The next critical step is understanding how all of the seafood being purchased fits into menu development. Before shifting toward more sustainable products, it is necessary to fully understand what is currently being purchased and what is essential for restaurant menus.

When Chef Glanville first started with this process, he looked at the seafood that was purchased over the course of a year and realized that over 600 seafood items were being procured – a large number even for a hotel the size of Grand Hyatt Singapore.

A lot of the items were duplicates – e.g., the same product from five different suppliers at five different prices. A lot of them were unnecessary for the integrity and quality of the menu – e.g., different sized cuts of the same kind of fish.

Chef Glanville reviewed the variety of products needed for the menus at Grand Hyatt Singapore, determining what met his criteria of ethical and sustainable sources where possible, with the goal to streamline the hotel's purchasing while maintaining quality.

After multiple iterations, the team has now been able to reduce the list to fewer than 100 seafood items by removing unnecessary and redundant items. While this step may sound simple, it took the team at Grand Hyatt Singapore several years to reach this result.



"It's a lot easier to manage a hundred items than to manage 600 items," said Chef Glanville. "A hundred items on a daily basis, a weekly basis or a monthly basis I can manage. I can talk to suppliers, I can look at samples. I can eat at our restaurants. I can see our product and talk to our chefs. That is scalable and manageable."

## 4. Work with Suppliers and Manage Overall Costs

The support from Grand Hyatt Singapore's suppliers has been key to the hotel's success. These relationships are one of the main reasons why its restaurants are even more profitable today than they were five years ago.

The seafood that used to come from over 50 suppliers is now coming from fewer than 20. This allows for a higher consolidation of fewer products through fewer suppliers, providing opportunity to negotiate costs down. This also helps hotels increase business with suppliers that are able and willing to take this journey together.

Having a smaller number of suppliers facilitates improved communication with those select suppliers around the hotel's sustainability definitions and can advance progress against goals. By opening a dialogue with suppliers and communicating the importance of this issue, suppliers are motivated to find additional sources of sustainably harvested and farmed seafood and expand their offerings.

Through strong relationships with suppliers, Chef Glanville was able to inspire innovative solutions to issues like product availability. This led to the creation of a sustainable "Fish of the Day" program that replaced a fixed menu item with one that provided the flexibility to identify products that meet sustainability, quality, volume, and price requirements on a daily or weekly basis. "It gives the guest the best of the freshest fish that we can get, and it gives the chefs an opportunity to play around with the items," said Chef Glanville. "At the end of the day, it gives guests the best experience. It's all about how you write your menus, how you talk to your suppliers. It's about getting their buy-in, because we want to be here for the long term."

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It is also important to keep a holistic view of the hotel's food costs during this process. Can reduced costs in one area help address some premiums that may be associated with an important seafood product for your hotel? Look at how seafood fits into your overall food costs, evaluate if you are over-serving any dishes in buffets, and communicate successes to management to drive continued improvement.

Finally, as a large hotel, Grand Hyatt Singapore was able to take one additional step, which was to leverage the volume of the hotel's procurement to obtain an importer's license. This enabled the team to buy directly from sustainable and responsible producers in other countries, and ultimately cut back on costs.

## 5. Avoid Endangered Species

While some popular species can be sourced from sustainably managed fisheries, endangered species do not have a sustainable alternative, and should be avoided until they have recovered and a certified sustainable source is available.

There are several reasons why it could be difficult to identify and avoid endangered species in hotels around the world. There is frequently conflicting and misleading information about what is endangered, regional differences in the status of species, as well as many species populations that have not been scientifically assessed. Buyers must also know the scientific name of the species that they are purchasing to determine its status; however, seafood products are often sold with only a regional common name or broad item description.

Hyatt looks to species listed as "endangered" under CITES Appendix I; listed as "endangered" and "critically endangered" by the IUCN; or called out by WWF as regionally critical. To raise awareness and help avoid these species, Hyatt has worked with WWF to identify broader seafood species groups that are at highest risk of including endangered species. This provides a path forward, while full traceability and the identification of critical data, like species scientific name, is continuously improved.

Hyatt also recognizes improvement efforts that support the recovery of these species. For example, if a fishery can

demonstrate through MSC certification that populations have rebounded, and the fishery can be managed sustainably going forward, that certified seafood could be considered not endangered after careful assessment on a case-by-case basis even if the species is globally considered to be endangered.

Removing endangered species products can be a sensitive subject due to guest preference and cultural importance in some regions. However, the company has had success stories, including a complete ban on shark fin.

Hyatt made the decision in 2014 to ban shark fin in all global properties. Chef Glanville noted: "At Grand Hyatt Singapore, it was a very positive experience. We didn't have any adverse reaction. Our customers, our colleagues, our owners have been very supportive of it." And Grand Hyatt Singapore's wedding business continued to thrive. The team even created materials that guests can use at the event itself to explain to their friends and family the importance of why shark fin is not being served. Motivated by this success, Chef Glanville and his team continue to evolve their menus, removing additional endangered species like bluefin tuna.

## Reducing Food Waste to Add Value

It is estimated that every year, one-third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted.

That's enough food to feed three billion people. Preventing food waste from occurring at your property can save you money, time, and labor, while also protecting the environment and resources like seafood.

The savings from reduced food waste can allow that value to be converted into higher quality and more sustainable seafood items for menus.

To learn more about reducing food waste, visit <https://hotelkitchen.org>



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## 6. Improve the Traceability of the Seafood Supply

It is estimated that nearly one in three seafood items is mislabeled, and one in five seafood items was sourced from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) sources. To verify sustainable and responsible practices, and to reduce risk, seafood companies must be able to trace their products through their supply chains back to the point of harvest or to the farm. However, by the time a seafood product makes its way to a hotel, it can be incredibly difficult for the hotel and its suppliers to determine exactly where that product came from.

This is why options like MSC and ASC Chain of Custody certification are valuable. Businesses at every point along the supply chain can be certified and audited to ensure that the MSC and ASC certified product being sold is properly handled and can be traced back to the fishery or farm. MSC conducted DNA tests on hundreds of seafood products since 2009, [finding that](#) “incidence of mislabelling amongst MSC labelled seafood are less than one percent.”

Encouraging suppliers to obtain MSC and ASC Chain of Custody certification provides assurances that the product is labeled properly and is from the sustainable or responsible sources as described. Beyond MSC and ASC certified product, it is important to work with suppliers to trace seafood items back to where they were harvested or farmed. Tools like WWF’s [Traceability Principles](#) can provide guidance on best practices. This adds transparency to the global seafood supply chain, increases the sharing and accuracy of information over time, assists in identifying and removing high-risk items, and rewards good players that are working hard to implement responsible practices.

In 2015, Grand Hyatt Singapore became one of the first hotels in Asia to obtain MSC and ASC Chain of Custody certification. This enabled the hotel to include the MSC and ASC eco-labels on its menus for products from suppliers also holding the Chain of Custody certification. The presence of the labels provides guests with confidence about the products’ origins. To raise awareness, the hotel executed a successful guest-facing campaign, utilizing social media, local news outlets, signage, menu labels,

and direct guest engagement to talk about this process and the importance behind it.

“Guests want to be a part of a positive experience,” said Chef Glanville. “They want to know that they can dine with confidence and that the venue is sustainable and ethical.”



## Final Words of Advice

The more restaurants, suppliers, and guests that get involved, the higher the impact will be. Hyatt and other hotels can make a difference in what millions of people can do for the planet. When choosing sustainable seafood, the decision helps marine ecosystems recover and allows communities to continue to thrive. Supporting fisheries and farms as they transition to more sustainable, responsible, and traceable practices is critical to improving the industry. Chef Glanville concluded, “Initially, we expected immediate success, but it’s not the case. It’s a journey and must be part of your philosophy. It needs to be part of who you are, which is why I feel fortunate to be part of a company whose purpose is to care for people so they can be their best. This must be something you and your stakeholders believe in.”