

Enhancing seafood labelling schemes that support sustainable fishing practices

SWEEP's research has strengthened Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Cornwall Good Seafood Guide. This provides new opportunities for local fishermen in Cornwall and contributes to its vision of a more sustainable marine environment.



SWEEP Impact Summary

Mevagissey Harbour, Cornwall

1 new Marine Advisor job supported by **£20k** leveraged funding



22 Cornish fishers interviews, and **335** consumer surveys



5 evidence-based recommendations being implemented by Cornwall Wildlife Trust



Ways of Working



Why it mattered?

The seafood industry is worth almost £100m to the Cornish economy with more than £30m of fish landed every year in Newlyn alone. Seafood labels (or certification) schemes can play a key role in promoting more sustainable fishing practices, by allowing consumers to choose to purchase products that are produced more sustainably.

The increased demand for sustainable seafood can also translate into direct benefits for local fishermen e.g. providing access to new markets, reducing tariffs and decreasing price variability. But with labelling schemes increasing, it is important to understand when and under which conditions food labelling schemes provide benefits for its members. Administered by Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT), the Cornwall Good Seafood Guide (CGSG) is one such scheme. Keen to assess the effectiveness of the CGSG, CWT approached SWEEP to help.

Key goal

Evaluate the benefits for fishers from participating in the CGSG and



recommend improvements to maximise these benefits and enhance the CGSG scheme.

What we delivered

A bespoke report containing 5 key recommendations:

1. Improve the clarity of the scheme's remit.
2. Increase the visibility of CGSG labelled catch by implementing stamp/ stickers that can be used to label catch.
3. Boost internal and external communication.
4. Expand the number of engaged food businesses and fishers by building stronger relationships with Cornish fishing organisations.
5. Strengthen the CGSG network and create opportunities to foster connections and networking between members.

What we did

During 2019-2020, two key data collection mechanisms were employed. Firstly, Cornish fishers were interviewed to collect data about their fishing activities, and opinions regarding the CGSG and other labelling schemes. Fishers both participating and not participating in the scheme were interviewed and the data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Secondly, a survey aimed at seafood consumers was run over three weeks in January 2020 to understand public attitudes towards labelling schemes. The results fed into a report by Rose Regeneration, informing their evaluation of and recommendations for the CGSG.

“ Getting the fisher's opinions from SWEEP was really helpful, especially as they could be completely honest with Océane as an independent academic. I don't think we would have had the same response if we'd conducted it ourselves.”

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Impacts & benefits delivered



Organisational Function

Underpinned a successful funding bid for £20k to appoint a part-time Fisheries Adviser to deliver the Wilder West Project. The Wilder West Project was established to deliver the recommendations of the SWEEP report. Since October 2021 Abby Masterson has been in this post at CWT, developing collaborative relationships with fishers in the Fal and Mevagissey area of Cornwall. She has also been promoting sustainable fishing practices through targeted workshops, discussions and collaborations.

CWT also have made changes to the CGSG based on the following additional recommendations from the SWEEP work.

- An online registration form had been created as a formal framework for fishers to sign up to the scheme, helping to create a stronger association and connection with the project. A further two fishermen have been signed up.
- Plans are in place to implement a stamp / sticker scheme that fishers can use to label their boxes.
- CGSG is receiving additional specialist support from CWT to realise the SWEEP recommendation to target more primary buyers and food businesses to join the scheme.
- Part-time fishers in the Falmouth estuary that do not have a satisfactory direct market have been identified for discussions around improved direct sales.



The report was invaluable in helping us get the project accepted as a core piece of work within the Trust. It enabled us to go down that route of employing someone to take on a one-on-one advisory role. We're focussing on one area for now, as a kind of trial, but hopefully will roll out to a wider area over time."

Cornwall Wildlife Trust



Océane's consumer data was really useful, it gave us a perspective on the level of impact of the CGSG in terms of influencing behaviour. It enabled us to develop recommendations that they think in a more proactive way about the way their publication seeks to interact with the public and how further downstream it affects people's behaviours."

Ivan Annibal, Rose Regeneration

Looking to the future

Further research is being explored to build on this work. Descriptive statistics have already been developed on the first set of data, but there is opportunity and value in conducting further analysis to inform the future development of fisheries management tools, including, but not limited to, the CGSG.

The public survey was live in January 2020, before COVID-19, Brexit and the rapid increase in the cost of living. It would be beneficial therefore, to repeat the process to draw before/after comparisons and understand if, and how, seafood consumption patterns have evolved following these major changes.

Wider application

As well as targeted local recommendations and impact, the report established three key criteria to inform other groups when deciding on the right scheme for a given fishery and its end market:

1. The economic, social, institutional, and environmental benefits retrieved by the fishermen need to exceed the burden of being part of it.
2. A minimum degree of institutionalisation is needed: the criteria of the scheme (who is in, who is not, what are the goals of the scheme) must be clear.
3. The scheme needs to meet the market demand (primary buyers and/or final market).



Abby Masterson



Credit: Matt Slater, CWT

Organisations we've worked with



About SWEEP

The South West Partnership for Environmental & Economical Prosperity (SWEEP) is a partnership between the University of Exeter, the University of Plymouth, and Plymouth Marine Laboratory. Funded by the Natural Environment Research Council and stakeholders together to solve key challenges faced by those working with our natural resources. www.sweep.ac.uk

