

Sea Pact 2023 Summary Report



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Introduction

Each year, Sea Pact members develop an annual work plan that includes activities to support member-approved strategic sustainability priorities for the organization. The strategic priorities for 2023 were:

1. Strategic Priority: Sector-based Sustainability Improvements
2. Strategic Priority: Responsible Aquaculture Education and Advocacy
3. Strategic Priority: Social Responsibility

Some reflections from 2023:

- For the first time ever, Sea Pact members collected fishery sourcing data on a priority commodity (fresh/frozen tuna) and aggregated the data anonymously to identify collective improvement opportunities. The variety of fishery sources, as well as challenges in collecting some key data elements, prevented Sea Pact from identifying specific fisheries that multiple Sea Pact members sourced from, but the exercise did provide some valuable outcomes. Sea Pact members were able to identify long-line caught yellowfin tuna as a top priority and recently updated the Sea Pact Project Funding Guidelines to call for proposals around sustainability improvements in these fisheries. The data collection effort also enabled members to share with each other how they are tackling data gap challenges based on their positions in their respective supply chains.
- Social responsibility remains a top strategic priority for Sea Pact members, but the path forward to addressing social risks is complicated. Sea Pact members expressed interest in exploring innovations, beyond certifications and audits, to address social responsibility in seafood supply chains and agreed to include calls for these innovations in the revised Sea Pact Project Funding Guidelines.
- Sea Pact members elected to not fund projects during the second funding cycle of 2023. Overall, members felt the proposals they received were not strongly aligned with the strategic priorities and funding criteria. Ultimately, this demonstrated that members are committed to only funding proposals that meet the funding guidelines and meet the relevant criteria for Sea Pact members.
- Sea Pact is keen to grow its membership base to further the organization's mission and impact, and welcomed two additional members in 2023.
- Sea Pact's project funding program remains a core initiative, and starting in 2023, all Sea Pact funded projects reported their project outcomes on Sea Pact's new website.

Given the dynamic nature of seafood sustainability issues, Sea Pact work plan activities may be adjusted over the course of the year. The following report summarizes the progress made on Sea Pact's 2023 work plan.

2023 Strategic Priority: Sector-based Sustainability Improvements

The sector-based sustainability improvement strategy aims to address issue(s) that hinder sustainability progress across a specific seafood sector. Sea Pact members identified fresh/frozen tuna and global squid as their top two priority sectors, with the following goals:

- Fresh/Frozen Tuna: Identify and address endangered, threatened, protected (ETP) species bycatch risks in tuna sourcing. Advocacy efforts result in improved tuna management measures, including harvest strategies, at the RFMO level.
- Global Squid: Enhance and support efforts seeking to eliminate illegal, unreported, unregulated (IUU) fishing in global squid fisheries.



Additionally, Sea Pact aims to ensure strong seafood industry engagement in collaborative sector-based efforts resulting in credible and impactful improvements in priority fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Engagement includes taking actions, providing financial support, leveraging supplier participation, informing strategies, and other activities. The table summarizes Sea Pact’s 2023 activities and outcomes related to Sector-based Sustainability Improvements:

Activity	Measurement	Outputs
<p>Sea Pact members collect ETP species bycatch data associated with fresh/frozen tuna sourcing. Data will be used to identify and inform actions addressing ETP bycatch. This can be done through bycatch audits or other robust bycatch data collection approaches.</p>	<p>Number of Sea Pact members that conduct ETP species bycatch data collection in fresh/frozen tuna sourcing.</p>	<p>Eight of nine Sea Pact members that source fresh/frozen tuna provided source fishery information related to their tuna sourcing. Data from members were aggregated, but gaps in data prevented identification of specific priority fisheries shared by the eight members. The data analysis did demonstrate that longline-caught yellowfin tuna was the most commonly sourced tuna across the members. In response, Sea Pact’s 2024 Project Funding Guidelines was updated to include the following: <i>Sea Pact is seeking to fund project(s) focused on mitigating bycatch in longline yellowfin tuna fisheries. Mitigation efforts should focus on one or more of the following:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Expanding electronic monitoring and/or observer coverage,</i> 2. <i>Improving data collection related to bycatch species,</i> 3. <i>Supporting compliance with existing bycatch mitigation approaches,</i> 4. <i>Demonstrating proof of concept or effectiveness of new and existing bycatch mitigation techniques.</i>
<p>Sea Pact members continue to advocate RFMOs and delegates to address improved tuna management measures, including harvest strategies. Sea Pact members will also encourage relevant suppliers to do the same.</p>	<p>Number of advocacy efforts Sea Pact participates in. Number of industry stakeholders engaged in advocacy as a result of Sea Pact encouragement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sea Pact joined other stakeholders to call on the IOTC to rebuild the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock. ● Sea Pact joined other stakeholders to call on the IATTC to adopt and implement harvest strategies for albacore tuna stocks, and advance electronic monitoring program standards. ● Sea Pact joined other stakeholders to call on the WCPFC to urgently adopt a management procedure for North Pacific albacore and adopt a new CMM for tuna conservation that limits fishing mortality for bigeye and yellowfin tuna.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Sea Pact members attended the annual Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission meeting and demonstrated support for electronic monitoring during intersessional meetings.
Fund a minimum of two projects focused on sector-based sustainability improvements.	Number of projects funded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otoliths-Lada Canada: Investigating a novel age determination method for crab species. Improved age determination could potentially contribute to more robust stock assessment methodologies for crab species. • Note: Sea Pact members elected to not fund any projects in the second funding cycle of 2023.
Sea Pact members support and engage funded projects beyond financial support.	Actions members take in support of funded projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea Pact members provided comments on the Sustainable Eel Group’s draft sustainability standard and encouraged their supplier’s participation in the standard’s pilot.
Sea Pact will engage SFP’s supply chain roundtables (SRs) and apply collective leverage to address relevant SR actions and asks of industry members.	Number of asks addressed by Sea Pact.	Some Sea Pact members participated individually in relevant SRs, and one member joined a SR at SFP’s request, but Sea Pact did not receive any collective requests from SRs in 2023.
Sea Pact members will encourage supplier participation in collaborative sustainability efforts including, but not limited to, Supply Chain Roundtables and Global Tuna Alliance.	Number of industry stakeholders that join collaborative efforts.	There was little to no engagement on this activity and it will be revisited again when developing the 2024 work plan.
Sea Pact members adopt SFP’s Global Squid SR’s squid procurement recommendations in individual public sourcing commitments/policies.	Number of Sea Pact members that adopt procurement recommendations.	Two Sea Pact members actively participated in SFP’s Global Squid Roundtable given the relevancy to their sourcing, and Sea Pact members agreed to incorporate broader sustainability commitment efforts in 2024 as part of the 5-year goal setting process.

Strategic Priority: Responsible Aquaculture Education and Advocacy

Sea Pact’s Responsible Aquaculture strategic priority consists of two focus areas; 1) North American Responsible Aquaculture Advocacy and 2) Responsible Aquaculture Education with the focus for Sea Pact actions predominantly on education. Additional context on Sea Pact’s aquaculture strategy can be found in the 2022 Work Plan.

Responsible Aquaculture Education goal: Increase the level of awareness and education internally (within and among Sea Pact members) and externally with Sea Pact members’ customers to counter misinformation and misperceptions about aquaculture through utilizing clear, credible messaging about farmed-raised seafood. Address consumer awareness and understanding about farm-raised seafood, debunk myths, and create an enabling environment to position responsible aquaculture as a sustainable and healthy food source.

Responsible Aquaculture Advocacy goal: Along with continued strong support for U.S. and Canadian wild fisheries, Sea Pact advocacy results in the expansion of responsible domestic (US and Canada) aquaculture production and increased volumes of responsibly produced aquaculture in the North American market. Sea Pact members have identified the following actions in support of responsible aquaculture in the 2023 progress update for Responsible Aquaculture Education and Advocacy:

Activity	Intended Outcome	2023 Outputs
<p>Members publicly adopt Sea Pact Guidelines for Supporting Responsible Aquaculture in individual public sourcing commitments/policies. <i>(Future work plan activities will explore publicly reporting on volumes that meet Guidelines)</i></p>	<p>Number of Sea Pact members that adopt Guidelines.</p>	<p>Some Sea Pact members are now utilizing the Guidelines in their procurement decisions. Sea Pact members agreed to incorporate broader commitment efforts in 2024 as part of the 5-year goal setting process so the Guidelines were not formally adopted into public commitments at this time.</p>
<p>Fund at minimum one project focused on aquaculture education and advocacy.</p>	<p>Sea Pact funded projects are aligned with the organization’s strategic priorities.</p>	<p><u>Ocean Strategies: To improve coordination and education between existing and future aquaculture industries and California’s commercial fishing community (including fishermen, leadership, staff, supply chain, NGO partners and policy-makers).</u></p>
<p>Sea Pact members support and engage funded projects beyond financial support.</p>	<p>Funded projects successfully achieve objectives and projects receive greater industry engagement (if needed) and stakeholder awareness.</p>	<p>Sea Pact staff and members continued to provide fishery and aquaculture sustainability content to the <u>Seafood Literacy e-learning platform</u>, while Sea Pact members piloted the platform with their staff as well as engaged their retailer customers in pilots.</p>



Maintain Sea Pact Aquaculture Sub-committee including monthly meetings.	Aquaculture work plan is successfully implemented.	Aquaculture sub-committee consisting of six Sea Pact members met on a bi-monthly basis and selected Blue Ocean Mariculture to chair the sub-committee.
Highlight and share positive stories from responsible aquaculture producers.	Engagement and collaborations result in maximized efficiency while limited redundancy around responsible aquaculture education.	No progress to report and this activity will be reassessed.
Continue to support Stronger America Through Seafood and Eat Seafood America efforts.	Increased consumer and stakeholder awareness around the benefits of responsible aquaculture.	Some Sea Pact members continued their active participation in Stronger America Through Seafood and shared pertinent updates with the rest of the group.

Strategic Priority: Social Responsibility

In 2023, Sea Pact conducted the following activities to address these challenges and other social responsibility issues in seafood:

- Sea Pact secured a two-year grant from the Walton Family Foundation for Sea Pact members to establish specific goals and targets related to environmental and social responsibility. The generous grant funding will enable Sea Pact to add capacity and work directly with members to identify and adopt these goals.
- Sea Pact members aggregated source fishery information related to their tuna sourcing. While this exercise was conducted to identify environmental improvement opportunities and priorities related to tuna sustainability, long-term aspirations for this type of data collection effort include utilizing the data to help inform social risks in seafood sourcing.
- Sea Pact’s executive director participated on the *Driving Alignment and Building Capacity to Implement Human Rights Due Diligence* panel at Seafood Expo North America to discuss challenges and opportunities mid-supply chain seafood companies face related to human rights due diligence.
- Sea Pact members met with Seafood Ethics Action (SEA) Alliance to learn how SEA Alliance members’ approach to human rights due diligence in seafood supply chains.
- In response to the Uyghur forced labor in seafood reporting, Sea Pact members and their procurement teams met to discuss the issues and share their individual company actions in response. Examples of members’ actions included:
 - Assessing the risk of each product sourced from China based on the processing province and species.
 - Identifying alternative sourcing options outside of China for products currently sourced from China.
 - Engaging importers of record and seeking information on how they are engaging Chinese processors on this issue.
- Sea Pact joined other collaborations in supporting [A Call for Action to Combat IUU Fishing in the Pacific](#).



- Two Sea Pact members continued to engage their suppliers through the use of FishWise’s Self-Assessment Questionnaires.
- Sea Pact members elected to update the [Sea Pact Project Funding Guidelines](#) to call for proposals for innovative projects or initiatives, beyond social audits and risk assessments, that contribute to North American mid-supply chain companies’ human rights due diligence efforts focused on the vessel and processing levels.
- Three Sea Pact members actively participated in [Seafood and Gender Equality’s Gender Equality Dialogues](#).

2023 Sea Pact Projects Updates

The following projects were selected for funding by Sea Pact in 2023:

- [Otoliths-Lada Canada - Assessing a novel technique for age determination in three crab species in North America](#)
- [Ocean Strategies - To improve coordination and education between existing and future aquaculture industries and California’s commercial fishing community](#)

The following Sea Pact funded projects were completed and reported their outcomes in 2023

- [Mote Marine Lab - Electronic Monitoring for Sustainability in a Gulf of Mexico Multispecies Fishery](#)
- [Sustainable Eel Group - Pilot a Sustainability Standard for American Eel](#)
- [Reef Fish Conservation and Education Foundation - Building Bridges in the Gulf of Mexico to Support and Enhance Collaboration in the NOAA Aquaculture Opportunity Area Process](#)
- [Global Tuna Alliance – Japanese Tuna Supply Chain Engagement](#)

Other Efforts

During 2023, Sea Pact also took the following actions in support of advancing the organization's strategic priorities:

- For the first time since 2019, Sea Pact welcomed new members; [Acme Smoked Fish](#) and [Blue Ocean Mariculture](#).
- Sea Pact's [new website](#) was developed and launched, providing a platform for Sea Pact's funded projects to publicly share outcomes and lessons learned.
- Convened Sea Pact members and Comepesca members to share their experiences from their respective organizations and explore opportunities for collaboration.
- Sea Pact participated in National Fisheries Institute’s Global Seafood Marketing Conference to raise industry awareness of Sea Pact and explore new member opportunities.
- Welcomed [Pepper](#) as the exclusive ecommerce Sea Pact Supporter and [Kvarøy Arctic](#) as a Silver Supporter. Their generous donations directly contribute to Sea Pact’s project funding program.
- Hired Katherine Bostick to effectively facilitate Sea Pact’s annual strategy meeting enabling full engagement from Sea Pact staff, advisors, and members.

Funding

Funding for Sea Pact’s 2023 activities was generously provided by the following sources: Sea Pact annual membership dues, Sea Pact Supporters, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (support for Sea Pact’s project funding program), and The Walton Family Foundation (support for Sea Pact’s global collaborations and strategic planning/goal setting).