

ThisFish creates transparency

It was another successful year for ThisFish as the seafood traceability system pioneered by Ecotrust Canada in 2008 continued to grow, diversify and mature. The Lighthouse Foundation was one of the initiative's founding funders and continued to support its development in 2012 in two key ways.



First, the Lighthouse Foundation provided funding for Ecotrust Canada to create a business plan that will allow ThisFish to be self-sustaining and yet cost effective for fish harvesters and seafood businesses. Ecotrust Canada is developing ThisFish into a nonprofit social enterprise and the business planning has created a revenue model that will allow ThisFish to charge user fees in 2013.

Second, the Lighthouse Foundation funded critical research and development of new traceability and coding procedures that are essential for the system's growth, diversification and integrity. Indeed, the funding contributed to ThisFish's phenomenal success during the year. Here are the highlights of 2013:

Growth

During the year, ThisFish experienced strong

growth in the use of its system. The volume of traceable catch rose by 57 percent to 7.5 million pounds. The number of fishing vessels registered in the system increased by 47 percent to 385 and the number of processors and suppliers doubled to 24. In British Columbia, the volume of traceable halibut equaled 20 percent of the total allowable catch for that species. ThisFish is experiencing quick market adoption of its traceability service.

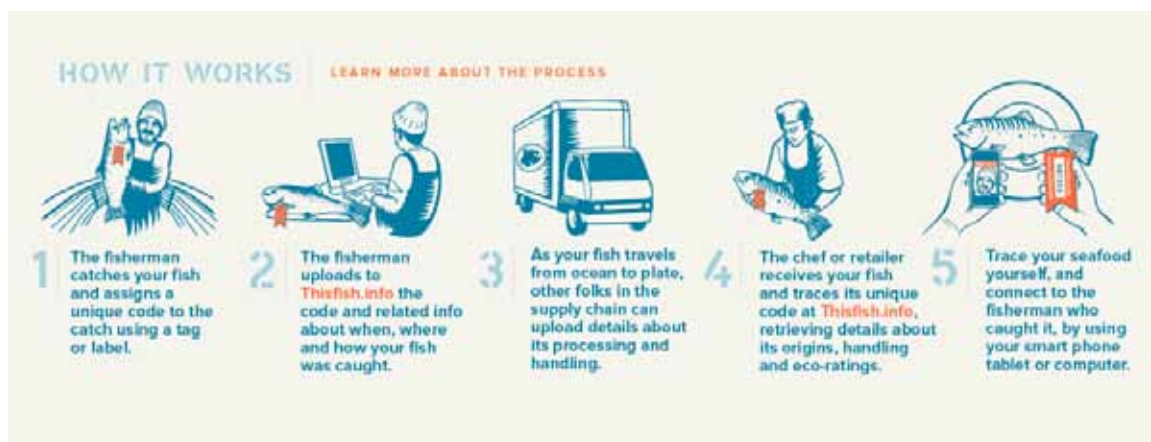
Diversification

Along with growth came diversification. When Ecotrust Canada launched ThisFish's online traceability system in 2010, almost all the catch was from British Columbia. However, in 2012, 37 percent of the traceable catch by weight came from Atlantic Canada. ThisFish also diversified the kinds of fish being traced from 15 to 22 species and began tracing more processed product

thanks to technical upgrades to the system. ThisFish expanded into the Atlantic scallop fishery, hook-and-line groundfish fishery in Nova Scotia and Dungeness crab fishery in British Columbia. ThisFish also set up freshwater fisheries on Lake Erie in Ontario which will begin tracing yellow perch and pickerel in 2013. ThisFish also made two important trips to Australia to demonstrate its traceability system and to scope out opportunities there. ThisFish also continued to operate a small pilot in the Dutch Wadden Sea.

Conclusion

ThisFish's success is especially important given the recent reports into mislabeling and seafood fraud occurring in the North American market. Investigations by The Boston Globe and environmental watchdog Oceana found widespread and systemic seafood fraud throughout the United States. Oceana collected more than 1,200 seafood samples from 674 retail outlets in 21 states. DNA testing found that 33 percent of the samples were mislabeled.



Connect to the fisherman who caught the seafood you eat, by tracing its journey from the ocean to your plate.

Integrity

In the seafood business, quality is key. The same is true with seafood traceability, except that quality isn't about fish but information. The credibility of any traceability system rests on the quality of its information. Consumers and businesses need to have confidence that the information they receive is timely, accurate and true.

Ecotrust Canada did important work to ensure that ThisFish is one of the most credible seafood traceability systems in the world. This critical work included drafting traceability data standards and chain-of-custody standards to ensure businesses properly handle traceable catch. ThisFish also piloted its auditing. Twice during the year, ThisFish audited from 10 percent to 30 percent of users' data entries to ensure that the information uploaded to ThisFish.info is validated against chain-of-custody records such as catch landing slips, bills of lading and sales invoices. Building solid standards and auditing are the backbone to ThisFish.

Concerns about mislabel and heightened consumer interest in food provenance and sustainability have created solid market demand for seafood traceability which has helped to propel ThisFish in 2012 and beyond. The Lighthouse Foundation has been critical to facilitating this social innovation that helps to foster sustainable fisheries and responsible business practices.

Period:

since May 2010

Funding in 2012:

50,000 CAD

Project partner:

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