

Local seafare facilitates healthier environment

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It's well known that eating locally sourced food is good for us physically, and it also contributes to a healthier planet. On the Oregon Coast, there is a tremendous opportunity to reduce emissions by sourcing more of the local seafood bounty locally.

A recent study commissioned by the Oregon Coast Visitors Association – the destination management organization serving the entire Oregon Coast from Washington to California – found shockingly that about 90 percent of the seafood consumed on the coast is imported from other distant domestic and international sources. While our top products were exported heavily, Oregonians purchased \$105 million in imported seafood in 2021.

“Reducing the carbon footprint of Oregon’s seafood industry while protecting oceans in other parts of the world just makes sense,” OCVA Executive Director Marcus Hinz said. “Currently, planes are leaving Oregon with exported seafood and passing planes that are flying in from around the world with imported seafood that we are actually selling and consuming on the Oregon Coast. To make matters worse, the fishing practices of most of these countries are destroying ecosystems with outdated gear and fishing practices.”

In response, OCVA has launched the Ocean Seafare initiative to help combat that trend. The initiative aims to help the Oregon Coast's communities capture more economic and environmental value from the local seafood catch.

Re-importing – shipping seafood overseas for processing and then shipping the finished product back to the United States for consumption – nearly doubles the carbon footprint of our food. For example, China took 31 percent of all American seafood exports in 2018 and, of that, about 57 percent came back to the United States after processing.

Food production makes up a quarter of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, and each year seafood continues to be sourced further from where it is consumed. By shortening supply chains and connecting local producers, harvesters, retailers and consumers, Oregonians can boast a more climate-friendly food industry. Sourcing Oregon's seafood within the state saves on transportation costs and time, as well as reduce seafood-related carbon emissions by 76 percent.

“Wild seafood has a lower carbon footprint than red meat, cheese and chicken,” OCVA Deputy Director Arica Sears said. “Across the globe, consumers are making more conscientious food choices to reduce their carbon footprints. Oregon's food industries – and particularly our coastal seafood industry – have a special opportunity to support this trend by increasing availability of foods, saving the atmosphere from the carbon cost of food transportation.”

For more information about the program, those interested can go online to <https://www.oregonseafare.com/environment>.