

GDST Re-Launches as a Permanent and Independent Organization: Transformation Reflects Value and Broad Industry Support

October 3, 2022 -- In a major step for the seafood sector, the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST) today announced its successful reorganization into a permanent new entity with full legal independence and a participatory, industry-based structure. The move will significantly strengthen the GDST's role as the leading industry forum for the promotion of digital seafood traceability and as owner of the industry's global traceability standards.

"The new GDST is open for business!" said GDST Executive Director Greg Brown. "With the strong support of companies and stakeholders worldwide, we are ready to expand our global partnerships to engage the future of seafood traceability."

The GDST was originally convened in 2017 by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Institute of Food Technologists, bringing together more than five dozen companies from around the globe and across the seafood supply chain to draft traceability standards in support of responsible seafood production and trade. The standards were published in March 2020, and are already seen as game-changing, with scores of companies altering their traceability practices and solution providers rushing to offer enabling software. But much remains to be done to transform practices across the entire global industry. With its re-launch today, the GDST moves beyond its origins as an *ad hoc*, NGO-facilitated process, completing a transition that will secure its role for many years to come.

"The new GDST is critical for bringing the industry together around the standards we need to make universal digital seafood traceability a reality," said Britta Gallus, Head of Corporate Responsibility at Metro AG and co-chair of the GDST Steering Committee. Adam Brennan, Group Director for Sustainability at Thai Union and also a Steering Committee member, agreed: "The re-launched GDST will play a vital role in the future of our industry, helping ensure that all seafood can be traced to trusted sources of supply."

The reorganized GDST will focus on industry participation while including avenues for multi-stakeholder involvement. It will offer a range of tools and services to support adoption of its standards and promote mechanisms to verify compliance, while regularly updating the standards and examining their possible expansion to address climate change and labor conditions in seafood supply chains. It will also be a leading industry voice advising governments on emerging traceability regulations.

Bryan Hitchcock, Executive Director of IFT's Global Food Traceability Center, celebrated the GDST's new status: "The launch of the GDST as a full-scale, industry-led organization is an important and exciting milestone. IFT looks forward to continuing to work with the GDST and its partner companies."

"WWF is proud to see the GDST emerge with strong industry support from its roots as an NGO initiative," said David Schorr, Senior Manager for Transparent Seas at WWF. "This is the kind of industry leadership that is needed to secure a sustainable future for seafood."

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SEE ALSO the **public statement issued today** by the eleven companies forming the GDST Steering Committee, available [here](#).

Additional Background Information:

- Between 2017 and 2020, more than five dozen companies representing over \$35 billion in annual seafood production (not including retail sales) participated in drafting the first-ever global standard for interoperable seafood.
- The GDST 1.0 standards were published with significant industry and stakeholder support in March 2020, and have recently been updated to version GDST 1.1.
- More than 100 supply chain companies and traceability system vendors in 30 countries have [adopted or publicly endorsed](#) the GDST standards, with the numbers growing steadily.
- The GDST standards have also been incorporated into the performance measures and workplans of other leading industry groups such as SeaBOS, the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA), Sea Pact, the U.K. Seafood Industry Alliance, and the U.K. Sustainable Seafood Coalition, the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI), and the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF). Several of these groups released an unprecedented [joint call for action](#) in February 2021 identifying GDST implementation as a top global priority.
- The GDST standards are emerging as an important reference point among experts and key stakeholders such as the [Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions](#), [GS1](#), [Lloyds Register Foundation](#), the [MSC and ASC](#), [Planet Tracker](#), the [Seafood Alliance for Legality and Traceability \(SALT\)](#), the [U.N. Global Compact](#), the World Benchmarking Alliance [Seafood Sustainability Index](#), and the U.N. FAO.
- The GDST standards are well-aligned with emerging regulations in the US, Canada, EU, Japan, and elsewhere. The [FSMA Section 204 regulations](#) about to be issued in the United States are based on a similar “events-based” approach to traceability. Companies adopting GDST will have a head start on compliance with these regulations.
- The GDST recently launched the [GDST Capability Test](#), an online tool that can verify claims that software is able to receive, manipulate, and transmit all GDST required data in accordance with the GDST 1.1 standard. This tool will respond to strong market demand for ways to verify commercial claims of GDST capability, and products passing the Capability Test will be authorized to bear a special “GDST-Capable” logo starting in October 2022. Note, however, that the Capability Test stops short of verifying supply chain compliance with GDST standards, a challenge that GDST is embracing for the future.
- The GDST’s transition to permanent and independent legal status has been overseen by the GDST’s industry-based [Steering Committee](#). As part of that transition, Mr. Greg Brown took the helm as GDST’s inaugural Executive Director on 1 February 2022. (see SeafoodSource interview, [here](#).)
- WWF and IFT have fully supported the evolution of the GDST from its NGO-organized origins to its new independent status; both organizations will remain strongly engaged as stakeholders and supporters as the new GDST continues to grow.

Learn more at www.traceability-dialogue.org or contact the GDST by email at info@traceability-dialogue.org