Affordable, versatile and green-rated - why tinned fish could be the best seafood choice according to the Marine Conservation Society

- Key changes include monkfish from the North Sea & west of Scotland, which is now a Fish to Avoid
- Herring and sardines join the Best Choice list
- There is still concern about most skates and rays, which are poorly managed in most places

The latest Good Fish Guide ratings are good news for tinned fish lovers, with herring and sardines joining mackerel and some tuna on the green rated, Best Choice, list.

The Marine Conservation Society’s Good Fish Guide shows consumers and businesses which seafood options are the most sustainable by using a simple traffic light system. Green is the Best Choice, amber is OK to eat but improvements are needed, and red indicates Fish to Avoid.

A recent survey from the Marine Conservation Society found that 62% of Brits frequently buy tinned or jarred seafood. The latest Good Fish Guide ratings show improvements in the sustainability credentials of some of the nation’s favourite tinned fish.

Jack Clarke, Sustainable Seafood Advocate said, “Tinned fish, if caught or farmed sustainably, can make a great sustainable meal choice. It’s affordable, keeps for a long time and really delivers on flavour. Tinned fish is incredibly versatile too, adding depth and umami to countless dishes, making a great store cupboard staple.”

There had been concerns about herring from the North Sea, as populations had been in decline since 2017. However, this seems to be slowing down, and the latest science shows that the population is a healthy size.

Sardines caught off the south and southwest coasts of the UK have also joined the Best Choice list due to new science showing healthy population levels.

It’s not all green through. More species have joined the Good Fish Guide’s Fish to Avoid list, including some sources of skates, rays and monkfish.

Charlotte Coombes, Good Fish Guide Manager said, “It’s great to see some key UK species joining the Best Choice list with this update to the Guide, including some firm favourites. With 141 Best Choice seafood options there’s plenty to choose from to support sustainable fisheries. Disappointingly, all of the new UK ratings to the guide are either amber or red rated, with a total of 161 Fish to Avoid.”

Tuna, one of the nation’s favourite tinned fish, was reviewed in this ratings update, with largely no changes. Tuna has mixed ratings depending on where and how it is caught, so the advice is to always check the Good Fish Guide. Generally, the best options are albacore and skipjack caught by pole & line or troll.
A restaurant favourite, monkfish, caught in the North Sea and west of Scotland, has moved from amber onto the Fish to Avoid list. Monkfish numbers in this area have declined from a peak in 2017 to the lowest since 2013.

Monkfish isn’t completely ‘off the menu’, however. In contrast, monkfish populations in the southwest UK are among the biggest on record. If Celtic Sea monkfish isn’t available, it can easily be replaced in recipes for a more sustainable firm white fish such as hake.

Ratings for various skates and rays remain on the Fish to Avoid list due to low population numbers. There are no green rated options for any skates or rays, and only a few amber rated options, so check the Good Fish Guide carefully before buying. Skates and rays are vulnerable to overfishing. Fishing controls need a lot of improvement to make sure these species are properly protected from overexploitation.

Brown crab and lobster were reviewed with this update to the Guide, with most ratings needing improvement and some joining the Fish to Avoid list. Population levels were found to be suffering across the board, largely due to poor management, with no catch limits in place. There is also a risk of whale entanglement in the ropes attached to pots on Scottish west coast, but more data on the frequency and whereabouts of these incidents is needed. The only Best Choice options are Shetland brown crab and Jersey lobster, both of which are MSC-certified.

For guidance on how to prepare sustainable seafood, please visit the Marine Conservation Society’s website. The Good Fish Guide has gathered a selection of recipes for inspiring meals using sustainable seafood and has ‘how-to’ cookery videos.

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For more press releases and up-to-date information visit the charity’s Media Centre.

Images

Please find a selection of high-res images here

Notes to Editors

201 ratings on the Good Fish Guide were updated in the latest period (October 2021 – January 2022). In addition to the above mentioned, please see list below.

- All farmed prawns reviewed and updated with latest information, but there were no changes to ratings which still range from Best Choice to a Fish to Avoid.
  - Most need improvement, including certified prawns. Best Choice is organic prawns and those farmed in recirculating aquaculture systems in the UK.
- Celtic cod and whiting stay on the Fish to Avoid list. Celtic haddock is an OK choice.
- King and queen scallops on the Isle of Man are showing improvements thanks to good management. Queen scallops have moved off the Fish to Avoid list and are now amber rated.
- Mackerel stays on the Best Choice list
- Scampi and langoustine stay an OK choice if trawled, or Best Choice if pot caught.
The **Marine Conservation Society** campaigns for clean seas and beaches, sustainable fisheries, and protection of marine life. Through education, community involvement and collaboration, the Marine Conservation Society raises awareness of the many threats that face our seas and promotes individual, industry and government action to protect the marine environment. The Marine Conservation Society provides information and guidance on many aspects of marine conservation and produces the Good Fish Guide as well as involving thousands of volunteers in projects and surveys such as Beachwatch. [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org).