

## TRACEABILITY, WHAT IS IT?

A commonly used definition is “the ability to follow the movement of a food through specified stage(s) of production, processing, and distribution”.\*

Legislative efforts to require traceability of foods have been led by the European Union (EU) and the United States (US), with other organizations such as Codex Alimentarius and the International Standardization Organization (ISO) playing important roles in the development of international standards and guidelines.

### Fundamental Elements

Traceability can be achieved by having a system for keeping track of products as they are received, processed, labeled, and shipped. Include these elements in your traceability system:

- **Incoming.** Knowing (proving) where the incoming materials come from.
- **Separation.** Keeping batches or lots of product separate (in space and/or in time).
- **Outgoing.** Packaging product separately as appropriate for batches and lots.
- **Labels.** All incoming products should bear requisite information. All outgoing products should bear requisite information.
- **Records.** Good record keeping of each step in the process (receiving, storing, manufacturing, and shipping).

\* *Codex Alimentarius*

## TRACEABILITY CAN BE VERIFIED BY A VARIETY OF METHODS

### 1) Company Declaration or Affidavit

The customer requests the supplier to state, in writing, confirmation of origin. The customer relies on certification (affidavit or declaration) from the supplier that they are compliant with state, federal, and applicable international laws which ensure traceability.

### 2) Customer Audit

This method of verification can be performed in two general ways. The basic method is for the customer to visit the supplier's office and review the supplier's files (fish tickets, landing reports, processing logs, purchase orders, bills of lading, invoices, etc) as they relate to the products that the customer buys. The more advanced level is for the customer to visit the supplier's processing plants (near the fishing grounds) and manufacturing facilities (away from the fishing grounds) and conduct physical verification of the traceability of the products.

### 3) Third Party Audit

The customer engages the services of a third-party auditor, and negotiates the desired degree (intensity) of audit. The auditor visits the supplier's plants, facilities, and offices and conducts the required examinations and inspections. The auditor then reports the findings to the customer.



## ALASKA SEAFOOD TRACEABILITY

Alaska seafood is traceable...by law! Alaska seafood suppliers must conform to applicable national and international laws and regulations governing food producers. In addition, Alaska suppliers must conform to the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) Traceability Standard ([www.alaskaseafood.org/sustainability](http://www.alaskaseafood.org/sustainability)), which guarantees they have traceability of the products they produce.

It is important to note that virtually all outside or third party traceability audits rely on the documentation already required by law, and the company's good faith efforts to be able to demonstrate traceability and modern Good Manufacturing Practices. Most third party audits are verifying that the fundamental elements for traceability are in place for a given company. The level of rigor you apply to documentation of traceability should be appropriate to the needs of your business, and a function of the relationship you have with your supplier.

ALASKA SEAFOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE • [www.alaskaseafood.org](http://www.alaskaseafood.org)  
Marketing Office: 150 Nickerson Street, Suite 310, Seattle, WA 98109 • 800-806-2497  
Administrative Office: 311 N. Franklin St., Suite 200, Juneau, AK 99801 • 800-478-2903



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