LOCAL SEAFOOD IN THE RETAIL MARKETPLACE:
HOW DOES RHODE ISLAND STACK UP?

Based on data from Eating with the Ecosystem's "Eat Like a Fish" citizen science project

In recent years, New England states have stepped up their commitment to local food systems. In Rhode Island, this support is exemplified by Governor Gina Raimondo's publication of the Relish Rhody Rhode Island Food Strategy in 2017. It is also embodied in the passion of organizations like the Rhode Island Food Policy Council and the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative.

One goal shared by all is to increase sales and accessibility of local seafood within the region. However, to date, little data has been available to monitor progress towards this goal. Eating with the Ecosystem's "Eat Like a Fish" citizen science project helps fill this void, by providing first-of-its-kind data on the availability and diversity of local wild seafood in New England's retail marketplace.

The Eat Like a Fish citizen science project set out to understand how well New England's retail marketplace reflects the diversity of wild seafood in nearby ocean ecosystems. The project's premise was simple: no one is better suited to investigate the seafood marketplace than seafood lovers themselves. Over six months, 86 citizen scientists in the five New England coastal states made weekly visits to neighborhood supermarkets, seafood markets, farmers markets, and fishing piers, where they hunted for 52 local wild seafood species. This fact sheet summarizes what participants learned about seafood from their searches in Rhode Island.

RHODE ISLAND PARTICIPATION STATS:

20 CITIZEN SCIENTISTS

646 MARKET VISITS

72 DIFFERENT MARKETS SAMPLED

AVAILABILITY AND DIVERSITY OF LOCAL SEAFOOD IN RHODE ISLAND:

Through their seafood searches, citizen scientists produced over 2,500 data points on the presence and absence of local seafood within the Rhode Island retail marketplace. Two indices were calculated based on this data: an index of local seafood availability and an index of local seafood diversity. The figures at right show how Rhode Island compares to other New England coastal states in its performance on these metrics.

Details on the calculation of these two indices can be found in the full report, "Eat Like a Fish: Diversifying New England's Retail Marketplace."

Rhode Island ranked second among New England states in availability of local seafood. This ranking puts Rhode Island ahead of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire, but behind Maine, in terms of local seafood availability.

Rhode Island ranked third among New England states in diversity of local seafood. This ranking puts Rhode Island ahead of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, but behind Connecticut and Maine, in terms of local seafood diversity.

AVAILABILITY OF 52 LOCAL SEAFOOD SPECIES IN RHODE ISLAND:

The tables below present findings on the availability of 52 local wild seafood species in Rhode Island and shows how this availability compares to coastal New England at large. The middle column (RI %) of each table indicates the probability of finding each species when shopping in a Rhode Island retail market. The righthand column (NE +/-) indicates how the probability of finding each species in Rhode Island differs from the probability of finding it in the New England marketplace overall (including markets in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine). Species with positive values in the righthand column tend to be easier to find in Rhode Island than in the region as a whole, whereas those with negative values tend to be harder to find.

SPECIES	RI %	NE +/-
Acadian Redfish	12%	+4%
American Plaice	4%	-2%
Black Sea Bass	12%	+1%
Blue Crab	4%	+1%
Bluefish	33%	+6%
Bonito	1%	+1%
Butterfish	2%	-1%
Cod	73%	+16%
Croaker	3%	+2%
Cunner	2%	+2%
Grey Sole	6%	-4%
Haddock	49%	-3%
Halibut	38%	+1%
Herring	2%	-6%
John Dory	0%	-2%
Jonah Crab	16%	-2%
Lobster	80%	0%

SPECIES	RI %	NE +/-
Mackerel	18%	+6%
Mahi Mahi	0%	-2%
Monkfish	36%	+10%
Mussels	38%	+8%
Ocean quahog	9%	+1%
Peekytoe Crab	12%	+2%
Periwinkle	3%	+1%
Pollock	27%	+12%
Quahog	55%	+31%
Razor Clam	0%	-3%
Red Hake	0%	-3%
Sculpin	0%	0%
Scup	10%	+1%
Sea Robin	3%	+2%
Sea Scallop	75%	+6%
Sea Urchin	0%	-1%
Skate	2%	-4%
Smooth Dogfish	0%	-1%

SPECIES	RI %	NE +/-
Soft Shell Clams	56%	-8%
Spiny Dogfish	0%	-1%
Spot	2%	+1%
Squid	62%	+18%
Striped Bass	10%	-4%
Summer Flounder	22%	+8%
Surf Clam	13%	+7%
Swordfish	71%	+23%
Tautog	0%	-2%
Tilefish	5%	+3%
Tuna	38%	+1%
Weakfish	0%	0%
Whelks	17%	+11%
White Hake	2%	-7%
Whiting	0%	-4%
Winter Founder	4%	-2%
Yellowtail Flounder	22%	+6%

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR PARTICIPANTS:

COD, DAVID FORD

"For lucky Week 13, I spent a little time looking back at all of the fish recipes that I've prepared so far, the new-to-me species that I've been lucky enough to find, and all of the great little seafood shops I've been introduced to as my search region has expanded. At the inception of Eat Like a Fish, I had no doubt that I would find, prepare, and marvel at my brilliance with new, exotic, local species of seafood each week! It would be a great excuse to seek out specific ingredients and expand my culinary horizons. I never dreamed that most weeks it would be so challenging to find even one fish on my list. After 13 weeks, I've got lots of pent-up fish envy that will only be soothed by finding species that have eluded me, like cunner and red hake (and dozens of others). I have no doubt that I will continue the quest even after the study has concluded. On the other hand, I've greatly expanded my fish recipe repertoire for species that are more commonly found in my neck of New England."

-SHERRI DAROCHA, RHODE ISLAND CITIZEN SCIENTIST

"EAT LIKE A FISH: DIVERSIFYING NEW ENGLAND'S RETAIL MARKETPLACE" IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.EATINGWITHTHEECOSYSTEM.ORG