FISH WISE

Global Fishing Watch

Sustainable Fisheries PARTNERSHIP



Vessel Viewer A How-To Guide for Seafood Due Diligence

A practical framework for retailers and suppliers seeking to assess risk and strengthen supply chains

October 2026

Credit: Canan Ildeniz via

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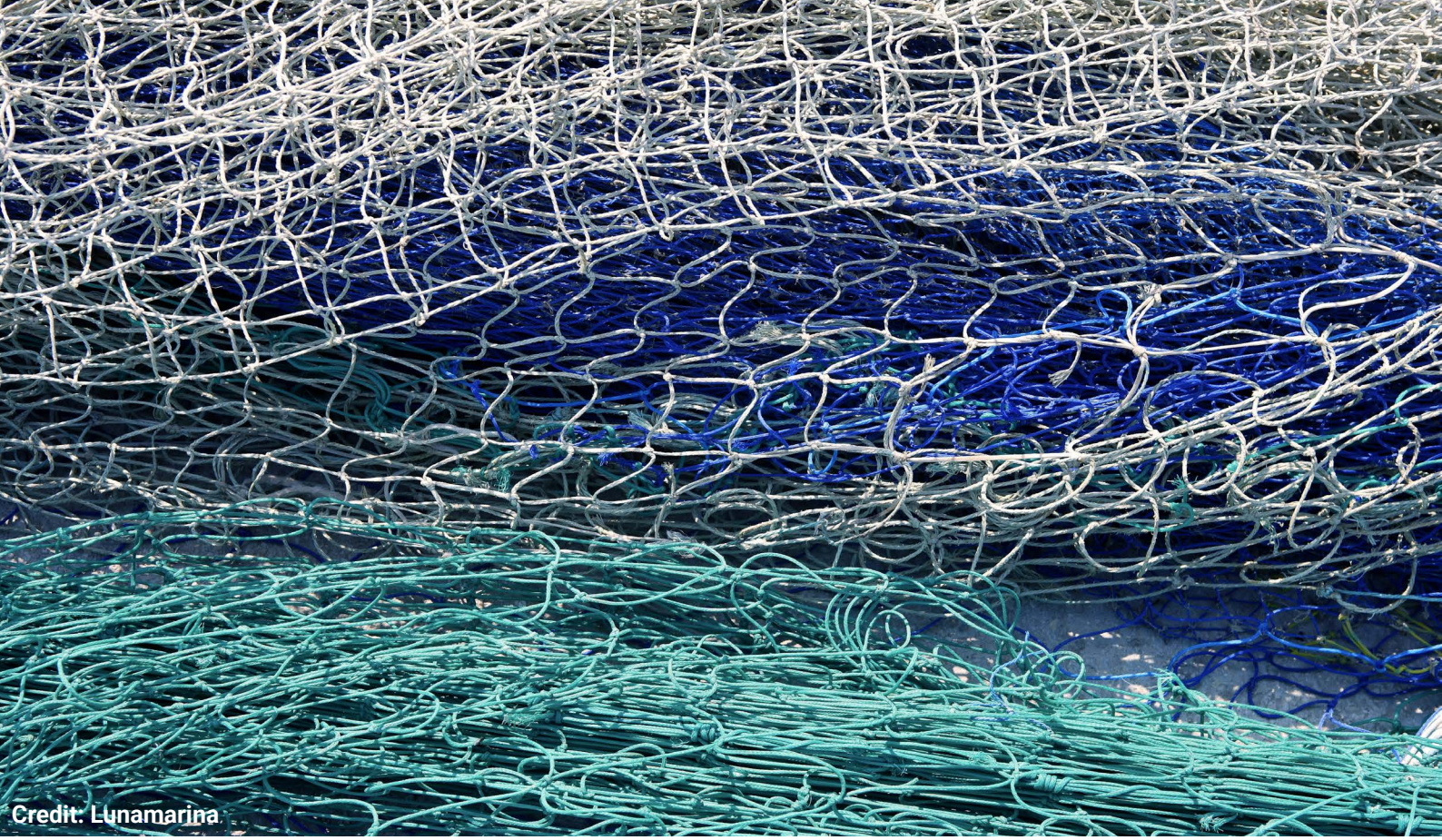
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Credit: Lunamarina

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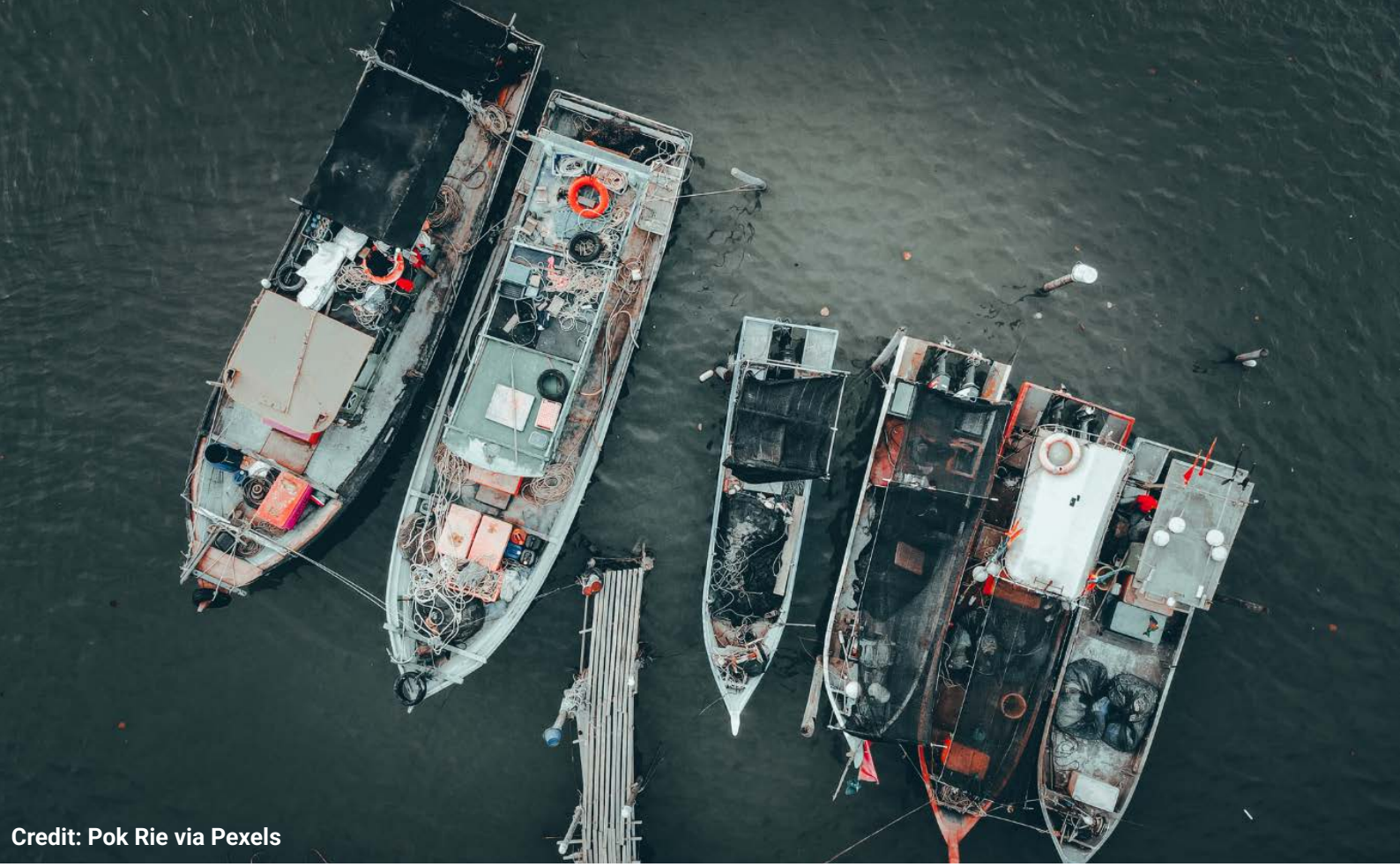
We also extend our sincere thanks to the external reviewers who contributed their time and expertise to review the guidance. Their perspectives and feedback helped strengthen the final document and ensure that it is practical and useful for seafood companies seeking to apply Vessel Viewer insights to their due diligence efforts.

Working alongside dedicated colleagues and partners in this field reinforces our shared commitment to improving transparency and strengthening due diligence across seafood supply chains. We are grateful to be part of a community united by a commitment to advancing this work.

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Credit: Pok Rie via Pexels

Introduction

The seafood industry faces mounting pressure from customers and regulators to demonstrate due diligence in addressing critical supply chain risks, including illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and labor abuses at sea. Central to these efforts is the ability to access and assess information about the vessels harvesting the seafood being sold and translating this information into action. Global Fishing Watch's Vessel Viewer is designed to support this by consolidating complex satellite tracking, vessel identity and authorization data into a single, accessible intelligence tool, enabling users to quickly evaluate a vessel and its operations.

This practical guide helps seafood companies, as well as the NGOs and consultants that support them, use Vessel Viewer to identify risks, validate documentation and strengthen responsible sourcing practices. It is designed for users at every stage — whether you are mapping your source vessels for the first time, or you already have advanced supply chain monitoring systems in place. Designed for both end-buyers and suppliers, this guide provides overarching principles and targeted case studies detailing how to:

- Understand Vessel Viewer's role in a supply chain context.
- Gather and prepare necessary vessel data.
- Interpret vessel insights and assess risk as an end-buyer or supplier.
- Take action with due diligence-informed next steps.

What is due diligence?

Due diligence is the process through which companies identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their actual and potential adverse impacts. It is an ongoing process, both proactive and reactive, and an integral part of business decision-making and risk management systems.

Due diligence helps companies demonstrate responsible business practices and comply with applicable laws, regulations and internationally recognized standards.

What is Vessel Viewer?

Global Fishing Watch's Vessel Viewer was created to address the need for publicly available insights about fishing vessels.

Developed by Global Fishing Watch and TMT, Vessel Viewer is a vessel history and insights tool that supports multiple sectors in driving operational planning and decision-making. Available to the public, it consolidates identity information and authorization data from over 80,000 fishing vessels and 100,000 other vessels across more than 60 sources, and combines it with automatic identification system (AIS) tracking data. The tool enables private and public sector actors to quickly view and cross-check vessel information and identify information gaps. This strengthens risk assessments, due diligence processes, port controls and fisheries management.

For a comprehensive guide including video tutorials on navigating the platform and uploading datasets, see the Global Fishing Watch user guide.

What is AIS?

AIS is a public broadcast system originally designed for maritime safety and collision avoidance. It automatically transmits a vessel's identity, position, course and speed through an onboard transponder.

The International Maritime Organization's (IMO) International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea requires certain classes of vessels to carry AIS, but there is no universal AIS requirement for fishing vessels. Instead, it may be regulated through conservation and management measures issued by regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) and/or national legislation. This means that coverage can vary. Even so, AIS remains a low-cost, publicly accessible tool that strengthens transparency and traceability across the seafood industry — key factors for market access and consumer trust.

Learn more about AIS by exploring, "How AIS and VMS Tracking Technologies Work: 10 Essential Questions Answered."

Why should I use Vessel Viewer?

Rather than replacing existing traceability systems or supplier engagement, Vessel Viewer complements them by providing an additional data layer to better understand your supply chains, identify risk, ask effective questions, prioritize follow-up actions and help make more informed sourcing decisions.

Vessel Viewer can help your company:

- **Visualize at-sea activities** associated with specific vessels, fleets, or sourcing region
- **Verify vessel identity and history** — such as IMO numbers, flag State history, vessel owership and authorization status — to detect inconsistencies and mitigate risks related to noncompliant vessels.
- **Complement existing traceability systems** with insights to validate documentation and identify potential gaps.
- **Strengthen supplier conversations** by using publicly accessible data to ask informed questions and support accountability and continuous improvement.


Credit: Global Fishing Watch

How to use Vessel Viewer

To maximize the value of Vessel Viewer, prepare your supply chain assessment using a three-step workflow:

1. Define your scope
2. Collect vessel data
3. Create vessel groups

This structured approach helps gather the right identifiers upfront so you can easily build group profiles, monitor vessel activity and run effective risk screenings.

1. Setting up your assessment: Scope and data collection

Before starting in Vessel Viewer, establish the boundaries of your assessment and determine what vessel data you need to gather.

Defining your scope: Start by deciding the scope of your review — the specific supply chains, fisheries, regions or fleets that you want to focus on as part of your assessment.

Required data: Once you have defined the scope of your review, establish what details you currently have and what you need to collect from your suppliers.

High-quality identifiers are the foundation of effective vessel tracking. Unique, permanent identifiers enable you to make the most of Vessel Viewer and ensure you focus your assessments on the vessels in your supply chain.

Key vessel identifiers

- **IMO number:** A seven-digit number assigned by the IMO, this is the “gold standard.”

identifier for industrial vessels and does not change over the lifetime of a vessel, even if its vessel name or maritime mobile service identity number changes.

- **Maritime mobile service identity number (MMSI):** This nine-digit number is tied to an AIS device, and can change over a vessel's lifetime, for example if it is reflagged.
- **Name:** The registered or AIS-transmitted name of a given vessel which, unlike an IMO number, is not unique.
- **Call sign:** The unique radio designation assigned by a national authority.
- **Flag State:** The entity where the vessel is legally registered.
- **Owner:** An individual or entity holding shares in a fishing vessel or fishing license. Owner information is obtained from publicly shared vessel registry information and credible research on vessel ownership.

2. Request and collect data from suppliers

Once you have established your scope and identified the required data fields, gather the necessary vessel identifiers from your supply chain.

If your company has traceability to the vessel level, you may be able to pull the vessel identifiers and other relevant data directly from your traceability platform or internal database. If you already have this information, skip to search for vessels and create vessel groups.

Collecting data from your suppliers: If you do not have all vessel identifiers immediately on hand, you can request this data from your suppliers. This can be done through spot-checks or captured routinely as part of your traceability processes.

- **Communicate the data request to your suppliers.** Use this vessel list template to standardize the request, data entry and formatting.
- **Agree on reporting frequency with your supplier on sharing data.** This could be a one-time submission or periodic updates, such as following a change in source vessels.
- **Establish the mechanism for collection.** Set up a clear process with your supplier to share this information, such as a CSV file or direct integration into your traceability software.*

3. Search for vessels and create vessel groups

With your vessel data collected, you can now search the platform and create vessel groups. Building groups unlocks the primary features of Vessel Viewer, allowing you to transform data to actionable insights.

Key features found in Vessel Viewer:

- Vessel profiles provide an easy way to learn more about a vessel, including its identity, activity, flag State, ownership and authorizations and any historical changes.
- **Custom vessel groups** help users track where groups of vessels are active over time. Users can set their own parameters to define groups, such as vessels in an area or a company fleet. Can be created manually or by uploading a vessel list with known vessel names, MMSI and IMO numbers. Vessel Viewer has a limit of ≤1000 MMSIs per upload.

* Supplier responsiveness and the thoroughness of their data may vary. Treat this as part of the due diligence process, and plan for these scenarios in advance. To build trust, clearly explain the purpose of the request and how data will be secured.

- **Vessel insights** aggregate AIS-based activity and registry authorizations into indicators that support due diligence and risk-based decision-making by flagging vessel behavioral trends and potential IUU fishing risk for further investigation.

- **Saving and sharing workspaces** lets users collaborate by bringing others into their working context. You can share vessel groups, reference layers, pinned tracks or specific time/area views. This can be useful for fishery improvement programs, supply chain monitoring and third-party certification reporting. It should be noted that Global Fishing Watch does not access user-created workspaces without user permission.

- **Historical data download** allows a deeper dive into vessel activity over time. You can download data directly from the platform into a CSV file. This can be linked to specific vessels, vessel activity like fishing events, port visits and encounters, or a subset of events for an individual vessel or group of vessels, by voyage.

Choosing your group creation process

Your approach to creating vessel groups will vary depending on the information you've been able to collect. If you have a vessel list, follow Approach 1. If you don't have a vessel list, go to Approach 2.

Approach 1: Direct vessel list (recommended)

Use this approach when you have traceability to the vessel level and hold at least one identifier, ideally an IMO or MMSI number alongside the vessel name.

- **Option 1:** Basic or advanced search: Use the vessel search function to look up individual vessels. For the most accurate results and to search for multiple vessels at the same time, use the Advanced Search to combine identifiers (example: vessel name + IMO number, or comma-separated IMO numbers).

- **Option 2:** Do a bulk CSV upload. If you have a formatted vessel list containing IMO and/or MMSI numbers, upload your file directly to Vessel Viewer to automatically generate your vessel group. See the sample template.

Approach 2: Looking at vessels in aggregate

Use this approach when suppliers cannot link specific products to individual vessels. While more granular vessel-level information — or even product-to-vessel information — is the ultimate goal, the reality of seafood supply chains means this level of visibility is not always available. Aggregated screening lets you monitor fleets operating in your target fisheries or regions.

- **Method 1** - by identifiers: Gather fleets and active vessel lists from websites of fishery improvement projects or authorized vessel lists of certified fisheries, like the MSC, then build a corresponding vessel group in Vessel Viewer.

- **Method 2** - by attributes: Use the Advanced Search function in Vessel Viewer to narrow search results based on other known attributes of your source vessels, such as by vessel flag and vessel owner. Once those results are returned, you can also filter by vessel gear and active dates.

- **Method 3** - map-based selection: Set map filters for gear type and flag, overlay management boundaries (such as RFMO layers), select the targeted zone, and click Create an analysis for this area → See Vessels → Add to group.

Understanding the limitations of using aggregated vessel groups

Evaluating aggregated vessel groups highlights potential exposure rather than a confirmed supply chain link to the vessel(s) and increased supply chain risk. Use these vessel lists and insights to prioritize where to ask deeper questions or request additional informartion.

Corroborate with additional information such as formal catch documentation, rather than issuing a final verdict on your sourcing. Treating any insight derived from Vessel Viewer alone as definitive evidence can lead to false alarms and strained supplier relationships.

Figure 1. How Supply Chain Visibility Unlocks Insights in Vessel Viewer





Credit: Youuness Arts via Pexels

Guidance for retailers, restaurants and hospitality

End-buyers like retailers, hospitality companies and restaurants are often several steps removed from harvesting activities, yet they face significant reputational, legal and commercial risks when issues such as IUU fishing or labor abuses are linked to their supply chains. As a result, effective due diligence requires visibility beyond your direct suppliers and into activities occurring earlier in the supply chain. When retailers, restaurants and hospitality companies actively participate in vessel-level due diligence, the impact ripples across the entire seafood industry:

- **Empowering first-tier suppliers:** When major buyers ask for vessel-level identifiers like IMO numbers or MMSI numbers, it signals to first-tier suppliers that transparent operational tracking is a condition of doing business. This empowers suppliers to demand greater transparency from the harvesting fleets.

- **Leveling the sourcing playing field:** Proactive screening rewards compliant, responsible vessel operators and penalizes bad actors. By using tools like Vessel Viewer to spot-check operations, companies make it harder for operators cutting corners on labor or environmental laws to access premium markets.

- **Driving sector-wide transparency:** When buyers collectively shift toward data-driven, risk-based screening, vessel transparency becomes an industry norm rather than a luxury. This collective market pressure incentivizes data sharing, strengthens fisheries governance, and protects both marine ecosystems and human rights at sea. This collective market pressure incentivizes data sharing, strengthens fisheries governance, and protects both marine ecosystems and human rights at sea.

How Vessel Viewer can support end-buyer due diligence

Integrating Global Fishing Watch's Vessel Viewer into your procurement operations bridges the gap between corporate policy and on-the-water reality. Vessel-level data strengthens your due diligence by turning passive risk screening into an active tool for brand protection and industry accountability. When integrated with supplier communication, traceability documentation and other independent verification measures, Vessel Viewer empowers companies to better contextualize and respond to operational or regulatory concerns within their supply chains.*

Traceability data verification

Vessel Viewer can provide an additional layer of independent information to validate your supply chain traceability and supplier data. Examples include:

- Reviewing vessel activity to better understand the origin and on-the-water movement of seafood products.
- Verifying reported vessel identity information, catch or landing locations, interactions with other vessels, and fishing activity reports with independent, near-real-time satellite data.

Assessing risks and prioritizing supplier engagement

Vessel Viewer can help to identify potential risks that may warrant additional review and inform when you may want to engage with your suppliers. Examples include:

- Identifying potential vessel encounters or transshipment activity that may conflict with fishery management regulations.
- Highlighting operational patterns that may indicate legal, labor or environmental risks.
- Applying consistent risk criteria, such as AIS transmission gap thresholds, authorized fishing areas or port visit patterns, as a shared basis for your escalation decisions.
- Prioritizing supplier follow-up and remediation based on the nature, severity or recurrence of identified risks.

Validating sourcing commitments and public policies

Vessel Viewer can support responsible sourcing programs by helping assess whether supplier practices align with corporate expectations and public commitments. Examples include:

- Reviewing supplier activities against company sourcing policies.
- Supporting monitoring efforts related to sustainability or transparency commitments.
- Creating a timestamped record of the activity and risk indicators to support sourcing decisions.
- Informing discussions with your suppliers regarding corrective actions or continuous improvement opportunities.

* Some risks identified through Vessel Viewer may reflect broader governance or data gaps that cannot be addressed by an individual company alone. 'Advancing governance and industry reform' outlines how these insights can inform collaborative industry and policy advocacy.

Enabling leadership

Vessel Viewer supports responsible fishing practices and can help companies advocate for broader improvements in fisheries governance, monitoring and accountability. Examples include:

- Implementing targeted, evidence-based due diligence practices and improving understanding of supplier and vessel behavior. Using flagged insights to build progressive supplier engagement strategies and drive operational fixes, rather than automatically cutting ties.

- Rewarding fishers who demonstrate responsible on-the-water behavior and shifting market incentives toward better practices.

- Combining data, buying power and voice to advocate for stronger management, monitoring and accountability across the sector.

Using Vessel Viewer insights to support end-buyer due diligence

Select an insight to view the full description, implications, caveats and your recommended actions.

01 AIS coverage VIEW

02 AIS off events VIEW

03 Fishing events in no-take MPAs VIEW

04 Fishing in high seas with no known RFMO authorization VIEW

05 RFMO IUU vessel list VIEW

01 AIS coverage

Description
An estimate of how well a vessel's activities from the time it leaves port to when it next re-enters a port can be captured by its AIS data. A vessel's AIS coverage metric is critical to interpreting vessel activity-based insights.

Implications
Higher AIS coverage increases confidence that the flagged insights and listed events accurately reflect the vessel's complete activity at sea. Low coverage may mean the vessel is not consistently transmitting AIS, which could indicate suspicious activity worth following up.

Caveats

AIS adoption is highest among large industrial fishing vessels and declines sharply among smaller fleets. Low AIS coverage is not evidence of illicit activity. Coverage can be low because the vessel operates in an area with poor reception, a highly congested area or uses a lower quality AIS device.

Your recommended actions

- Engage with your supplier(s) to understand AIS use requirements, causes for patterns of low AIS coverage and transmission gaps.
- Explore other means to verify the activities of those vessels, including requesting supplementary information such as VMS data or electronic monitoring records.

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02 AIS off events

Description
When a vessel's AIS has been turned off and is not broadcasting its location.

Global Fishing Watch records all AIS gap events over 12 hours and then applies a set of filters to identify gaps likely due to intentional AIS disabling rather than technical failures.

In line with IMO guidance, AIS should remain in operation at all times and may be temporarily switched off only where the master believes that continued operation could compromise the safety or security of the vessel, its crew or its cargo. In those authorized exceptions, the incident — including the specific reasons, duration and location — must be recorded in the ship's logbook and, where the vessel is operating within a mandatory ship reporting system, and reported to the competent authority.

Implications
AIS devices are designed to continually broadcast a vessel's position to avoid collisions. When a vessel has an extended gap in AIS transmissions, it may indicate an intention to obscure its location.

Caveats

AIS off events cover gaps that meet the following criteria: ≥ 12 hours in duration, at least 50 nautical miles from shore, in an area with good quality reception and previous consistent transmission by the vessel. However, it is not possible to confirm intent.

Your recommended actions

- Review fishing vessel activity before and after the off event and the duration of the AIS gap.
- Check if the gap occurred near a sensitive area such as a marine protected area (MPA) or a country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) where the vessel is not licensed or authorized to fish.
- Once you have assessed the context of the event, you can ask your supplier if there was a valid reason for the gap in transmission.
- Finally, if you are concerned about the location or duration of the gap event, you can ask your supplier to provide evidence of the vessel's activity during the gap, such as data from a vessel monitoring system (VMS), electronic monitoring records, vessel authorizations, captain's logs, catch documentation, port calls, etc.
- Depending on findings, discuss your company's sourcing policy and expectations for supplier vessel transparency.

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03 Fishing events in no-take MPAs

Description
Apparent fishing events detected in no-take marine protected areas. Information on MPAs is taken from the World Database on Protected Areas.

Implications
Fishing restrictions in no-take MPAs, where no fishing is permitted at all, may be IUU fishing and pose a legal risk.

Caveats

Events near an MPA boundary may trigger a false positive for fishing inside the MPA. This insight covers MPAs defined as "no take" only; it excludes MPAs that restrict only certain activity like seasonal closures or gear restrictions. Finally, some fishing vessels double as patrol boats off-season, meaning their presence in an MPA can be mistaken for active fishing.

Your recommended actions

- Check the boundary of the MPA and the exact position of the vessel to confirm if the event actually occurred within the MPA. If so, check the management measures for the MPA to confirm if the activity may have been permitted.
- If it appears unauthorized fishing took place, engage with your supplier(s) by sharing the event data — exact location fishing occurred, event date, vessel name, vessel owner — and request additional data sources such as logbooks or VMS data,) to confirm the circumstances of the event.
- Discuss your company policies and remediation or mitigation steps for cases of noncompliance with supplier(s).

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04 Fishing in high seas with no known regional fisheries management organization authorization

Description
Apparent fishing events with no known authorization in high seas overlapping with RFMO areas. Data is compiled from seven RFMO lists — five tuna RFMOs, South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) and North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC).

Implications
Vessels are required to obtain RFMO authorization for fishing activity that falls within the RFMO's remit, like species or area. Fishing within one or overlapping RFMO areas without proper authorization poses IUU fishing and legal risk.

Caveats

Vessel Viewer does not include data from every RFMO, so does not capture the full extent of all authorized vessels fishing globally. Although new data sources are added regularly, independent research may be needed to cross-check a vessel with other RFMOs that are not currently included (e.g., Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO). RFMO authorization information is not updated in real time. Vessel Viewer updates this information monthly, and there may be delays by the RFMO in uploading the list of authorized vessels. The insight only reflects the high seas portion of the RFMO areas and does not consider activities detected inside EEZs. It does not filter by gear and Vessel Viewer does not capture species, so a vessel may be outside the remit of the RFMO.

Your recommended actions

- Verify the vessel's RFMO authorizations — this can usually be done via public RFMO vessel records.
- Check for overlapping RFMOs and which species the RFMO is responsible for to confirm if the vessel was fishing for a species under the RFMO's management.
- Check the exact position of the vessel against the RFMO boundary to confirm fishing activity occurred within the RFMO convention area(s).
- If registration cannot be confirmed:
    - Engage with supplier(s) by sharing the event data — exact location, event date, vessel name and vessel owner.
    - Discuss the vessel's activity with the supplier and/or vessel operator.

Back to insights

05 RFMO IUU vessel list

Description
Highlights fishing and fishing support vessels already listed on official RFMO IUU vessel lists.

Implications
If a vessel is on this list, it has already been found to have conducted IUU activity. Vessels on an RFMO IUU list are technically not allowed to sell their catch in legal supply chains.

Caveats

This list is updated monthly, meaning there may be delays in adding recently listed vessels. This insight excludes vessels with a history of suspected or proven IUU fishing or other noncompliance not listed by the relevant RFMOs. Finally, IUU listed vessels may change their identities to evade detection, but they may also be sold to a reputable operator, which may alter the risk profile and legal standing.

Your recommended actions

- Verify the IUU listing from the RFMO list. These can be found publicly on RFMO websites.
- Share IUU vessel list information with supplier(s) and request transparency about the vessel's legal standing and ownership.
- You may also ask about beneficial ownership and potential for catch from associated vessels under the same ownership to enter your supply chain.
- Initiate appropriate escalation and remediation processes consistent with legal requirements and your corporate due diligence policies.
- Engage with supplier(s) to discuss your company's supplier expectations, including possible sourcing restrictions for the vessel(s) in question.

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Retailer case study: AIS coverage

This scenario outlines the actions a retailer took to evaluate vessel tracking data, specifically "AIS off events," using Vessel Viewer. You can use these steps as a guide to how you may analyze vessel data, determine any potential follow-ups, and work with your supplier to collect or validate any necessary data.

Scenario

A major seafood retailer incorporates Vessel Viewer into its annual due diligence review for a subset of skipjack tuna products. The retailer requests vessel names and IMO numbers for all vessels that supplied tuna over the previous year.

Fleet	Species	Review period
30 purse seine vessels	Skipjack tuna	24 months prior to product delivery

01 Identify potential risks

The retailer reviews each vessel in Vessel Viewer and identifies:

- Five vessels with low AIS coverage, defined by the retailer as below 20 percent, during the review period.
- Multiple AIS transmission gaps, or "AIS off events," several of which occurred near EEZ boundaries.

Because limited AIS coverage reduces visibility into vessel activity, the retailer cannot confidently assess whether all fishing activity, encounters or potential transshipment events are represented in the available data.

02 Assess and prioritize risks

The retailer determines that the low AIS coverage limits its ability to independently review vessel operations. While the observed AIS gaps do not indicate noncompliance, they warrant additional review to better understand whether:

- AIS is required for the vessel in question, either legislatively or per a company's internal policy.
- AIS transmissions were affected by operational or technical factors.
- Additional monitoring systems, like VMS, or supporting documentation are available.
- The level of AIS coverage is consistent with the retailer's due diligence.

03 Respond to identified risks

The retailer follows up with the supplier to request additional information regarding the vessels' AIS coverage and any supporting documentation that explains the observed transmission gaps. Based on the findings, the retailer also reviews its supplier expectations and engages through industry and fisheries management forums to encourage stronger vessel monitoring requirements.

Verification result:

Low AIS coverage identified areas where additional due diligence was needed and informed improvements to both supplier engagement and sourcing expectations.

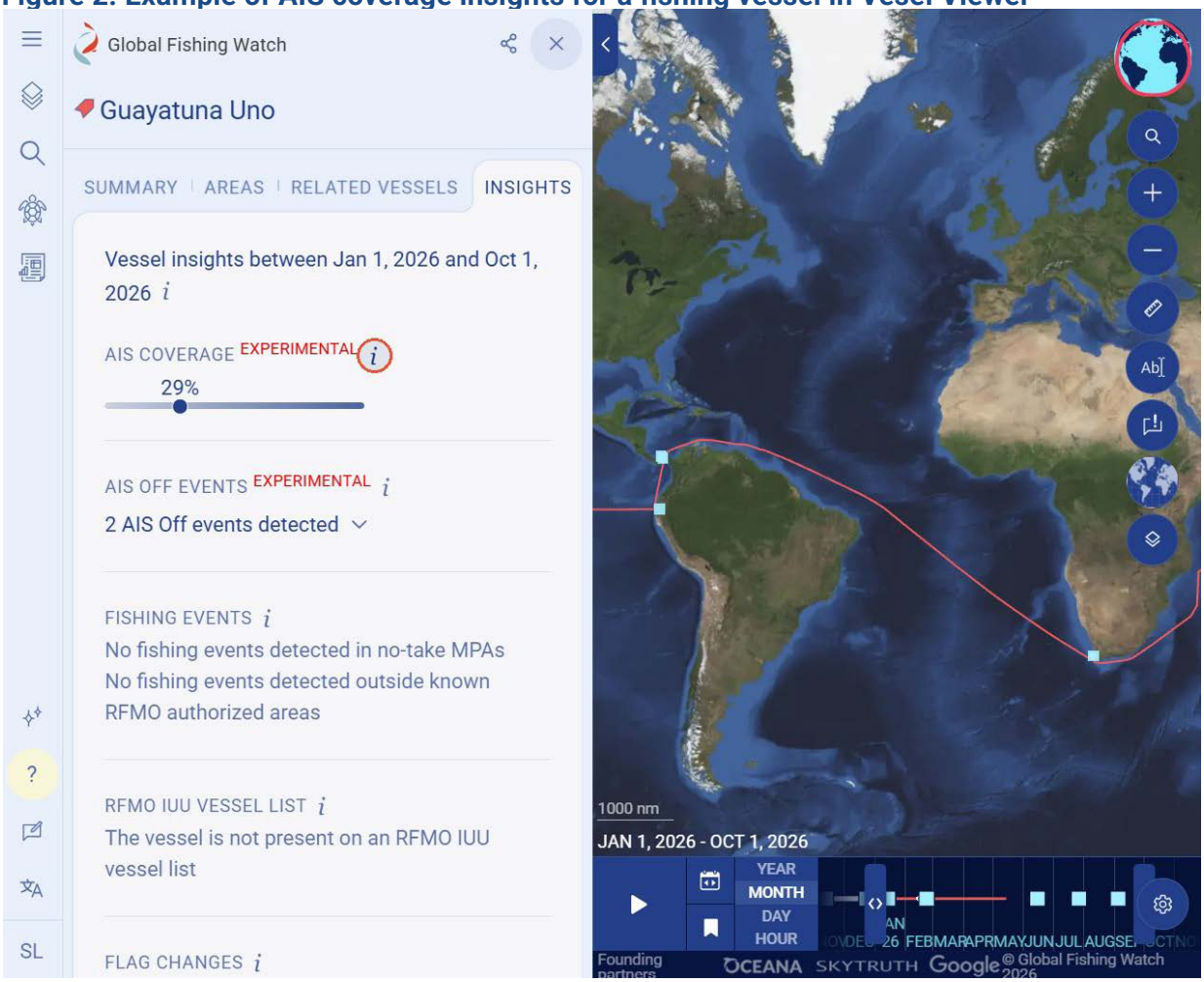
04 **Communicate and demonstrate due diligence**

The supplier provides additional information explaining the reduced AIS coverage for several vessels and identifies opportunities to improve future vessel tracking. As part of its continuous improvement efforts, the retailer updates its supplier expectations to include minimum AIS coverage requirements and continues to support broader initiatives that strengthen vessel monitoring and transparency.

What does this look like in Vessel Viewer?

Once you are logged into Vessel Viewer, you can look up a vessel and view its insights. Adjust the timebar below the map to calculate the vessel's AIS coverage for your time range of interest. Click the info icon next to each insight to access additional context on how the insight is generated.

Figure 2. Example of AIS coverage insights for a fishing vessel in Vesel Viewer





Credit: Chuanchai Pundej via FoToArtistv

Guidance for suppliers

Suppliers play a critical role in seafood due diligence because of their position between fishing fleets and buyers. Given their unique placement within the supply chain, they are typically better positioned to understand vessel-level activity, sourcing practices and operational context. As sourcing expectations, transparency initiatives and regulatory requirements continue to evolve, suppliers increasingly help translate buyer commitments into practical engagement and action on the water. In this capacity, suppliers are generally expected to demonstrate clear processes for assessing, reviewing and responding to potential risks within their supply chains.

How Vessel Viewer can support supplier due diligence

Integrating Global Fishing Watch's Vessel Viewer into your sourcing operations adds an independent layer of visibility to what you know about your own supply chain. Vessel-level data strengthens your due diligence by turning passive risk screening into an active tool for engagement and accountability. When integrated with communication to your own suppliers, traceability documentation and other verification measures, Vessel Viewer helps you better understand sourcing risks, respond to buyer requests and prioritize follow-up where concerns exist.*

* Some risks identified through Vessel Viewer may reflect broader governance or data gaps that cannot be addressed by an individual company alone. 'Advancing governance and industry reform' outlines how these insights can inform collaborative industry and policy advocacy (see Section 6).

Identifying, assessing and prioritizing risks

- Vessel Viewer gives you important information on vessel identity and activity, supporting earlier and more confident identification of potential risks. This can help you assess an emerging risk's severity and decide on appropriate follow-up, based on your company or buyers' criteria or risk thresholds. Examples include: Validating vessel identity information, such as vessel name, flag State, or IMO number, against reported records.

- Identifying vessel-level operations such as potential fishing activity, areas of operation, interactions with other vessels at sea and port visit patterns.

- Verifying reported vessel activity against independent data, especially when records are incomplete or inconsistent, or require further review.

- Using technical data — positional information, geographic overlays or time-based markers for flagged events — to assess the scope, duration and severity of identified risks.

- Applying consistent risk criteria as a shared basis for escalation decisions across your team or supply chain.

- Prioritizing follow-up and corrective action based on the nature, severity or recurrence of identified risk indicators.

- Creating a time-stamped record of the activity and risk indicators behind a sourcing decision, giving you a defensible audit trail for internal review, buyer assurance or regulatory inquiry.

Responding to risks

Vessel Viewer can catalyze, facilitate and inform engagements with your own suppliers or vessel operators, supporting both preventive and remedial action. Examples include:

- Flagging specific vessels, trips or activities early enough to prevent or mitigate a risk before it materializes.

- Verifying, or requesting verification of, a specific flagged event, such as potentially unauthorized fishing activity in an RFMO area, to sharpen the scope of action and reduce uncertainty.

- Supporting your remediation decisions, such as enhanced monitoring, corrective action plans or disengagement, where a risk has already occurred and requires a documented response.

Communicating on due diligence

Vessel Viewer helps you corroborate traceability claims and substantiate verification requests when communicating with buyers and other stakeholders. Examples include:

- Corroborating links in a traceability claim by confirming that reported vessel activity matches your product's documented catch origin or supply chain flow.

- Verifying specific vessel activity or sourcing claims in response to buyer due diligence requests and sustainability commitments.

- Demonstrating your internal processes and established methodologies for monitoring, reviewing and acting on vessel-level risk to customers and other stakeholders.

Enabling leadership

Beyond meeting your own due diligence obligations, you can use Vessel Viewer to support responsible fishing practices and advocate for broader improvements in fisheries and supply chain governance, monitoring and accountability. Examples include:

- Using flagged insights to build progressive engagement processes with your suppliers and vessel operators, mutually developing operational expectations.
- Leveraging your purchasing decisions to incentivize responsible practice, giving preference to vessels and operators with a demonstrated track record of compliance and improvement.
- Using vessel-level insights to inform and drive buyers' due diligence expectations, helping shape concrete, risk-based sourcing requirements based on observed operational realities.
- Sharing vessel workspaces with buyers to facilitate joint supply chain oversight.

Using Vessel Viewer insights to support supplier due diligence

Select an insight to view the full description, implications, caveats and your recommended actions

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01 AIS coverage

Description
An estimate of how well a vessel's activities from the time it leaves port to when it next re-enters a port can be captured by its AIS data. A vessel's AIS coverage metric is critical to interpreting vessel activity-based insights.

Implications
Higher AIS coverage increases confidence that the flagged insights and listed events accurately reflect the vessel's complete activity at sea. Low coverage may mean the vessel is not consistently transmitting AIS, which could indicate suspicious activity worth following up.

Caveats

AIS adoption is highest amongst large industrial fishing vessels and declines sharply among smaller fleets. Low AIS coverage is not evidence of illicit activity. Coverage can be low because the vessel operates in an area with poor reception, a highly congested area or uses a lower quality AIS device.

Your recommended actions

- If AIS coverage is low, engage with your supplier(s) to understand AIS use requirements, causes for patterns of low AIS coverage and transmission gaps, and explore other means to verify the activities of those vessels.
- Discuss raising minimum AIS transmission requirements in your supply chain.

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02 AIS off events

Description
When a vessel's AIS has been turned off and is not broadcasting its location.

Global Fishing Watch records all AIS gap events over 12 hours and then applies a set of filters to identify gaps likely due to intentional AIS disabling rather than technical failures.

In line with IMO guidance, AIS should remain in operation at all times and may be temporarily switched off only where the master believes that continued operation could compromise the safety or security of the vessel, its crew or its cargo. In those authorized exceptions, the incident — including the specific reasons, duration and location — must be recorded in the ship's logbook and, where the vessel is operating within a mandatory ship reporting system and reported to the competent authority.

Implications
AIS devices are designed to continually broadcast a vessel's position to avoid collisions. When a vessel has an extended gap in AIS transmissions, it may indicate an intention to obscure its location.

Caveats

AIS off events cover gaps that meet the following criteria: ≥ 12 hours in duration, at least 50 nautical miles from shore, in an area with good quality reception and previous consistent transmission by the vessel. However, it is not possible to confirm intent.

Your recommended actions

- Review fishing vessel activity before and after the off event and the duration of the AIS gap.
- Check if the gap occurred near a sensitive area such as an MPA or a country's EEZ where the vessel is not licensed or authorized to fish.
- Once you have assessed the context of the event, you can ask your supplier if there was a valid reason for the gap in transmission.
- Finally, if you are concerned about the location or duration of the gap event, you can ask your supplier to provide evidence of the vessel's activity during the gap, such as data from a vessel monitoring system (VMS), electronic monitoring records, vessel authorizations, captain's logs, catch documentation, port calls, etc.
- Depending on findings, discuss your company's sourcing policy and expectations for supplier vessel transparency.

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03 Fishing events in no-take MPAs

Description
Apparent fishing events detected in no-take marine protected areas. Information on MPAs is taken from the World Database on Protected Areas.

Implications
Fishing restrictions in no-take MPAs, where no fishing is permitted at all, may be IUU fishing and pose a legal risk.

Caveats

Events near an MPA boundary may trigger a false positive for fishing inside the MPA. This insight covers MPAs defined as "no take" only; it excludes MPAs that restrict only certain activity like seasonal closures or gear restrictions. Finally, some fishing vessels double as patrol boats off-season, meaning their presence in an MPA can be mistaken for active fishing.

Your recommended actions

- Check the boundary of the MPA and the exact position of the vessel to confirm if the event actually occurred within the MPA. If so, check the management measures for the MPA to confirm if the activity may have been permitted.
- If it appears unauthorized fishing took place, engage with your supplier(s) by sharing the event data — exact location fishing occurred, event date, vessel name, vessel owner — and request additional data sources such as logbooks or VMS data, to confirm the circumstances of the event.
- Share due diligence findings with customers, communicating the degree of risk that remains.
- Confirm internal company policy and the consequences of noncompliance.

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04 Fishing in high seas with no known regional fisheries management organization authorization

Description
Apparent fishing events with no known authorization in high seas overlapping with RFMO areas.

Data is compiled from seven RFMO lists — five tuna RFMOs, South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) and North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC).

Implications
Vessels are required to obtain RFMO authorization for fishing activity that falls within the RFMO's remit, like species or area. Fishing within one or overlapping RFMO areas without proper authorization poses IUU fishing and legal risk.

Caveats

Vessel Viewer does not include data from every RFMO, so does not capture the full extent of all authorized vessels fishing globally. Although new data sources are added regularly, independent research may be needed to cross-check a vessel with other RFMOs that are not currently included (e.g., Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO). RFMO authorization information is not updated in real time. Vessel Viewer updates this information monthly, and there may be delays by the RFMO in uploading the list of authorized vessels. The insight only reflects the high seas portion of the RFMO areas and does not consider activities detected inside EEZs. It does not filter by gear and Vessel Viewer does not capture species, so a vessel may be outside the remit of the RFMO.

Your recommended actions

- Verify the vessel's RFMO authorizations — this can usually be done via public RFMO vessel records.
- Check for overlapping RFMOs and which species the RFMO is responsible for to confirm if the vessel was fishing for a species under the RFMO's management.
- Check the exact position of the vessel against the RFMO boundary to confirm fishing activity occurred within the RFMO convention area(s).
- If registration cannot be confirmed:
    - Engage with supplier(s) by sharing the event data — exact location, event date, vessel name and vessel owner.
    - Discuss the vessel's activity with the supplier and/or vessel operator.
- Share flagged activity and the results of ongoing due diligence efforts with customers, communicating the extent to which risk remains.
- Confirm internal company policy and the consequences of noncompliance.

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05 RFMO IUU vessel list

Description
Highlights fishing and fishing support vessels already listed on official RFMO IUU vessel lists.

Implications
If a vessel is on this list, it has already been found to have conducted IUU activity. Vessels on an RFMO IUU list are technically not allowed to sell their catch in legal supply chains.

Caveats

This list is updated monthly, meaning there may be delays in adding recently listed vessels. This insight excludes vessels with a history of suspected or proven IUU fishing or other noncompliance not listed by the relevant RFMOs. Finally, IUU listed vessels may change their identities to evade detection, but they may also be sold to a reputable operator, which may alter the risk profile and legal standing.

Your recommended actions

- Verify the IUU listing from the RFMO list. These can be found publicly on RFMO websites.
- Share IUU vessel list information with supplier(s) and request transparency about the vessel's legal standing and ownership.
- Initiate appropriate escalation and remediation processes consistent with legal requirements and your corporate due diligence policies.
- Communicate to customers what remediation actions are being taken.

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Supplier case study: Fishing events detected in no-take MPA

This scenario outlines the actions a supplier took to evaluate vessel tracking data, specifically 'Apparent fishing in no-take MPA', using Vessel Viewer. You can use these steps as a guide to how you may analyze vessel data, determine any potential follow-ups, and work with your supplier(s) to collect or validate any necessary data.

Scenario

As part of a due diligence request from a retail customer, a seafood supplier uses Vessel Viewer to examine the activity of a longline vessel supplying albacore tuna from the Indian Ocean.

Vessels	Species	Region	Insight
1 longline vessel	Albacore tuna	24 months prior to product delivery	Apparent fishing in no-take MPA

01

Identify potential risks

During its review, the supplier identifies:

- Apparent fishing activity within a no-take MPA.
- Approximately 48 hours of fishing-like vessel movement within the protected area.
- Supplier documentation stating that the vessel only transited through the MPA.

Because the vessel activity observed in Vessel Viewer appears inconsistent with existing documentation on file and prior knowledge of the vessel's operations, the supplier determines that additional due diligence is needed.

02

Assess and prioritize risks

The supplier reviews the vessel track in greater detail and creates a Vessel Viewer workspace to document the timing and location of the apparent fishing activity. They determine that the activity might reflect legitimate transit, but they need more information before making any decision:

- Does the MPA's no-take designation apply year-round or only seasonally, and was it in effect during the vessel's transit?
- Is transit alone, without fishing gear deployed, permitted within this MPA?
- Was fishing gear deployed while the vessel was transiting the MPA?
- Do additional vessel tracking or operational records support the vessel owner's explanation?
- Was the vessel's activity consistent with the retailer's sourcing expectations for MPA-adjacent operations?

03

Respond to identified risks

The supplier shares the Vessel Viewer workspace with the vessel owner and requests additional documentation, including available vessel tracking records via VMS, fishing logbooks, observer or electronic monitoring information, and any other onboard records that help verify the vessel's activities during the transit period.

Verification result:
The apparent fishing activity turns out to reflect an information gap rather than a compliance issue. The vessel owner provides the deck log and VMS documentation confirming that the vessel broke down while transiting through the MPA and drifted at low speed during an extended repair period.

04 **Communicate and demonstrate due diligence**

Following review of the additional documentation, the supplier shares the full record with its retail customer, demonstrating that the vessel owner's explanation is supported by independent evidence, and logs the outcome as part of its due diligence file. The review also informs how the supplier engages with vessel owners in the future and reinforces transparency expectations for vessels operating near protected areas.



Credit: Sohan Rahat via Pexels

Contextualizing information and compounding risk

Vessel Viewer data becomes far more powerful when considered alongside other information. By layering Vessel Viewer's tracking history, encounters and port calls with complementary data sources — ownership records, sanctions lists, port State control findings and news reports — seafood companies can move from spotting a single red flag to building a fuller risk picture. Combining these insights helps identify compounding risk factors that might otherwise go unnoticed.

01	Port visit	VIEW
02	Encounters	VIEW
03	Loitering	VIEW
04	Voyage timeline	VIEW

* The event definitions and characteristics presented in this table come from Global Fishing Watch and are largely based on the logic applied to create the machine learning models. They are not necessarily representative of agreed global definitions

01 Port visit

Significance of event
Highlights when a vessel entered, stopped at and exited a port based on vessel movement patterns, location, speed and transmission behavior.

Implications
Can help determine where and when a vessel visited port. Can inform insights related to product landing locations, interactions with ports, and time spent at sea.

Note: Only vessels that visit a port are subjected to the port control measures used to uncover instances of IUU fishing, labor abuses, smuggling and other legal violations.

Other factors that compound the need for due diligence

- A port visit to a port not covered by the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), or lacking a competent inspecting authority, compounds risk because catch and crew conditions pass without independent scrutiny.
- A port visit shortly after a loitering or encounter event raises the risk that the vessel is landing transshipped or unreported catch from another vessel.
- A vessel changing its name, flag State, MMSI or call sign around the time of a port visit, commonly referred to as "identity laundering," may be evading a detention history, sanctions or an IUU listing.
- A port visit in a jurisdiction with a documented forced labor or human trafficking risk compounds crew welfare concerns raised elsewhere in the voyage.

Public sources to review

- The UN Food and Agriculture Industry's list of PSMA Parties and designated ports
- FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels and IMO GISIS/Equasis for vessel identity and ownership history
- Flag State registries for recent re-flagging
- U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report and International Labor Organization's forced labor indicators for country-level labor risk
- Port authority arrival/departure notices, where publicly available

02 Encounters

Significance of event
When two vessels are detected by AIS to be within 500 meters of one another, traveling at low speed for at least two hours, and located more than 10 kilometers from a coastal anchorage point.

Implications
Encounters indicate that two vessels may have met while operating at sea. These events can include catch transshipment, refueling, or transfers of personnel and supplies. Although common in many fisheries, encounters can present oversight challenges by increasing the risk of unreported activities, mixing of catch, or extended time at sea that may indicate IUU fishing and/or forced labor.

Other factors that compound the need for due diligence

- Encounters involving a carrier or refrigerated cargo vessel, also known as reefers, should be cross-referenced with RFMO transshipment authorizations, transshipment declarations, catch documentation, and other available records to determine whether catch transfers were authorized and documented.
- Repeated encounters with the same carrier vessel, or encounters occurring on the high seas or in areas with limited oversight, may warrant additional review to better understand operational patterns and whether supporting documentation is available.
- Encounters involving vessels with limited AIS coverage, recent AIS gaps or inconsistent identities, or vessels appearing on RFMO IUU vessel lists or other relevant watchlists, may provide additional context for prioritizing due diligence.

Public sources to review

- Global Fishing Watch encounter and carrier vessel datasets and insights
- RFMO authorized carrier/ transshipment vessel lists
- RFMO IUU vessel lists
- FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels
- IMO/MMSI registries
- Where appropriate, satellite imagery on the Global Fishing Watch map (e.g., Sentinel-1 SAR) to identify nearby vessels not broadcasting AIS

03 Loitering

Significance of event
Shows periods when a vessel remained at low speed far from shore, suggesting potential encounters, but no second vessel is detected through AIS.

Implications
A vessel slowing down away from shore may indicate interaction with another vessel not actively broadcasting AIS. It may, however, be moving slowly for other reasons — fishing, poor weather, maintenance, or waiting for owner or port entry instructions.

Other factors that compound the need for due diligence

- Loitering combined with an AIS gap or vessel identity spoofing suggests a deliberate "dark" meeting, and points to unreported transshipment or crew/catch transfer.
- Loitering near an EEZ boundary or MPA without a corresponding fishing license raises risk of unauthorized or unlicensed fishing.
- Loitering by a vessel already on an RFMO or NGO IUU vessel list, or flagged to a state with a poor compliance record, compounds the likelihood the event reflects IUU activity rather than routine operations.

Public sources to review

- Global Fishing Watch dark-vessel/SAR detections to check for non-broadcasting vessels nearby
- RFMO IUU vessel lists and the FAO Global Record of Fishing Vessels
- Marine regions/EEZ boundary data
- World Database on Protected Areas
- NGO trackers such as TMT or Environmental Justice Foundation

04 Voyage timeline

Significance of event
Measured as time between port visits.

Implications
Vessels that stay at sea for extended periods — more than one year — have fewer opportunities for oversight, making workers vulnerable. The IMO Marine Labor Convention 2006 states that the maximum duration of service on board must be less than 12 months, and stipulates a minimum of 30 days annual leave, meaning maximum time at sea is 11 months.

Other factors that compound the need for due diligence

- Extended time at sea combined with repeated at-sea encounters,rather than port calls, compounds forced labor risk, since crew resupply, refuel and transfer without ever reaching a port where they could seek help or be inspected.
- A voyage exceeding the IMO Marine Labor Convention 2006 maximum on a vessel flagged to a State that has not ratified ILO Convention 188 (Work in Fishing Convention, 2007) compounds risk, as there is no minimum labor standard obligation backing the flag.
- Long, unbroken time at sea with no recorded port state inspection compounds the risk of undetected crew abuse, debt bondage or unrecorded crew changes at sea.

Public sources to review

- Global Fishing Watch port-visit and voyage event data to calculate actual elapsed time at sea
- ILO ratification status of C188 by flag State
- International Transport Workers' Federation seafarer complaint records
- US State Department TIP report

Case study: Encounters

This scenario outlines the actions a supplier took to evaluate vessel tracking data, specifically "Encounters," using Vessel Viewer. You can use these steps as a guide to how you may analyze vessel data, determine any potential follow-ups and work with your supplier(s) to collect or validate any necessary data.

Scenario

A major tuna retailer asks its supplier's sustainability team to verify that all high-seas transshipments by a designated fleet are documented and fully authorized by the relevant RFMO.

Fleet	Target species	Region	AIS coverage	Event flagged
10 distant-water longline vessels	Albacore tuna	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)	>95 percent	Encounters

01

Identify potential risks

An internal records review identifies four transshipment declarations on file.

Using Vessel Viewer's Related Vessels tab, the sustainability team reviews the fleet's AIS-based activity and identifies:

- 15 encounters at sea
- Interactions with a carrier vessel, a bunkering vessel and other fishing vessels.

Because not all encounters indicate potential transshipment, the team filters the results to include only encounters between fishing vessels and carrier vessels on the high seas.

Result:

Six at-sea encounters involving three fishing vessels warrant additional review.

02

Assess and prioritize risks

All six encounters involve the same carrier vessel. A review of the carrier's profile on Vessel Viewer indicates that it primarily operates within the WCPFC convention area, and is authorized to operate, and transship, within the convention area.

A further examination of the WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels confirms both the fishing and carrier vessels involved are authorized to transship catch on the high seas.

Despite these initial confirmations, additional due diligence is needed, as each individual transshipment that occurs at sea between longline and carrier vessels within the WCPFC area must have its own specific authorization. The team therefore determines that the encounters may represent legitimate operational activity but require verification to determine whether:

- Catch was actually transferred between the vessels.
- If conducted, a transshipment at sea was authorized by the WCPFC.
- Supporting documentation exists to verify the at-sea transshipment.

03 Respond to identified risks

The sustainability team cross-references the six encounters against existing documentation and follows up with vessel owners where necessary.

Outcome	Number of encounters
Authorized catch transshipments	4
Personnel or parts transfers	2

Four WCPFC transshipment declarations confirm that the catch transshipments at sea took place and were authorized. These are validated further by comparing the position and duration of each declaration against Vessel Viewer's AIS data. Documentation provided by the vessel owner confirms that the remaining two encounters involved the transfer of personnel and vessel parts, not catch.

Verification result:
No undocumented catch transshipment activity is identified.

04 Communicate and demonstrate due diligence

Using a combination of Vessel Viewer and internal resources, the sustainability team is able to:

- Identify all potential encounters between fishing vessels and carriers within the fleet.
- Verify that four encounters represented authorized catch transshipments.
- Confirm that two encounters involved personnel and parts transfers rather than fish.
- Demonstrate that no undocumented catch transshipment activity occurred.



Credit: Quang Nguyen Vinh via Pexels

Advancing governance and industry reform

Many vessel-level risks trace back to broader governance challenges: fragmented registries, inconsistent AIS requirements, weak transshipment rules, poor enforcement or opaque ownership structures. Addressing these governance gaps extends beyond the reach of any single company relying on supplier engagement alone. It requires coordinated action from governments, RFMOs, industry and civil society.

Vessel Viewer provides a secondary layer of value by turning due diligence findings into actionable evidence for advocacy. Specifically, companies can leverage the platform to accomplish the following:

- Identify recurring governance or transparency gaps across suppliers or fisheries.
- Ground engagement with industry initiatives, governments and RFMOs in evidence.
- Inform their positions on fisheries management and transparency reforms.
- Strengthen collective advocacy through industry coalitions and sustainability initiatives.

Companies that have invested in vessel-level due diligence have both the experience and the credibility to advocate for the regulatory infrastructure that makes due diligence meaningful, not only for themselves but for the whole sector.

Advocacy opportunities by supply chain role

Advocacy looks different depending on where you sit in the supply chain.

- **Retailers and brands exert market pull.** They set procurement standards, make public commitments and signal expectations down the chain. Their advocacy tends to raise the floor for the whole industry, and it carries most weight in consumer-facing forums such as pre-competitive collaborations, legislative hearings and retailer coalition.

- **Suppliers exert operational push.** Closer to the vessel and flag State, their advocacy is more technical, including around practical compliance tools and workable requirements. They have a significant influence in fisheries management forums, like RFMO working groups or port State meetings, where operational knowledge of what is actually feasible on the water is critical.

- **Risk exposure diverges, too.** Retailers face reputational and regulatory risks. A connection with forced labor or IUU fishing can become a headline or an investigation -- and this can easily turn into an import ban. It is in retailers' interest to seek systems-wide solutions that can lower risk and due diligence burden across the board.

- **Suppliers, meanwhile, face operational and market access risks** — a lost contract, a failed audit, a flagged vessel that disrupts or blocks a shipment or purchase. They tend to prefer clear, predictable rules and defined compliance pathways rather than vague mandates.

Priority asks for vessel transparency

Vessel Viewer's value relies on data that only governments, RFMOs and vessel operators can provide: things such as mandatory vessel tracking, unique vessel identifiers, registry databases, authorization records and ownership disclosure. When data is missing, inconsistent or hidden due diligence efforts will remain incomplete, no matter what tools or platforms exist.

To help fill in those gaps and support robust seafood supply chain due diligence, companies can concentrate their advocacy on the specific inputs that make "knowing your vessels" possible. The priority asks below map directly onto what Vessel Viewer surfaces, and each can be raised at the policy level with governments, RFMOs and other authoritative bodies, or the commercial level, with suppliers and producers who select and/or operate the vessels a company buys from. Companies don't need to pursue all five at once, they can select one or two that best fit their leverage and operational reality, and work through existing coalitions and competitive platforms to carry forth the rest.

- **Mandatory vessel tracking:** every vessel should be fitted with AIS and/or VMS and should continuously transmit their position while at sea.

    - **Ask flag States and RFMOs to:** require fishing and auxiliary vessels to be fitted with AIS and mandate continuous transmission from port to port; and for flag States to publicly share VMS data of their fleets.

    - **Ask supply chain actors to:** mandate the use of vessel tracking and make this information available upon request.

- **Unique vessel identifiers:** every vessel should carry a unique, permanent identifier so vessels and their owners stay traceable even when name, flag or owner changes.

  Ask governments and RFMOs to: require IMO numbers for all industrial fishing and carrier vessels, and report them consistently to the FAO Global Record, the Global Information Exchange System (GIES) and RFMOs.

  - **Ask supply chain actors to:** provide IMO numbers or an equivalent unique identifier for all vessels in their supply chain.

- **Standardized, cross-referencable vessel data**: vessel records should use a common format and identifier so a vessel's status can be easily checked across registries, RFMO lists, port records and other relevant documentation.

  - **Ask governments and RFMOs to:** submit standardized vessel information to the FAO Global Record and GEIS, and publish RFMO authorized vessel lists that use IMO numbers as a common identifier so they can be easily checked against registries and port records.

- **Transparent ownership and genuine registration:** registries should disclose who actually owns and controls a vessel so companies and regulators can identify who is accountable for its conduct.

  - **Ask governments and RFMOs to:** maintain public, regularly updated registries that disclose ultimate beneficial ownership — managers, operators, ultimate owners — alongside active authorizations, and enforce UNCLOS Article 91 genuine-link requirements to close off flags of convenience.

  - **Ask supply chain actors to:** disclose ownership of the vessels behind your catch as a standard part of onboarding, not only after an incident.

- **Enforceable consequences for IUU-listed vessels:** an IUU listing should carry real operational weight so it limits a vessel's ability to fish, land or sell product.

  - **Ask governments, flag and port States to:** attach real consequences to IUU listings (e.g., license suspension, port denial, product sanctions) and fully implement legal instruments like the PSMA and the Cape Town Agreement in all ports used to land catch.

  - **As supply chain actors to:** refuse product from IUU-listed or unauthorized vessels, and confirm that landings occur through PSMA-compliant ports.



Credit: Typhoonski via Getty Images

Start small. Build from there.

Knowing your vessels — their history, behavior and patterns — gives you a solid foundation for improving and targeting your due diligence efforts. This work doesn't need to start big. Begin by reviewing a small set of vessels or incorporating a few Vessel Viewer features or data points that feel most relevant to your supply chain — build from there as your confidence grows.

Remember that these insights are a starting point for inquiry, not a verdict. Flags in the data should not be treated as evidence of wrongdoing on their own. Instead, use them to learn more about your source vessels and to ground conversations with suppliers in specifics rather than assumptions. And whenever something does raise a concern, triangulate it against other sources before drawing conclusions.

By integrating Vessel Viewer into your existing due diligence processes over time, you can strengthen supply chain transparency, make more informed risk-based decisions and support continuous improvement across your supply chain.

Vessel Viewer

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