



For anyone who knows anything about the seafood business, the “shocking” headline that as much as 40 percent of fish is mislabeled was no surprise at all. Seafood supply chains are deliberately opaque. Fishermen sell to big middlemen who sell to little middlemen who sell to chefs and consumers. Knowing where the fish comes from (and apparently even what species it is) has been the fish world’s equivalent of a state secret. If everyone knew where distributors got their fish, how would they make a buck? Sustainable seafood distributor Sea2Table was founded in 2009 with the mission to turn the traditional model on its head.

It ships fish directly from fishermen to its customers and tells them exactly where it comes from. Chefs get fish that is sustainably caught and often less than 24 hours off the boat, and fishermen get a higher price because the supply chain is short. Sea2Table is profitable and growing fast: The company doubled its revenues in 2012 to \$3.5 million and expects them to double again in 2013.

Sea2Table began after its co-founder Sean Dimin went on a family vacation to the Caribbean island

of Tobago. There, he found exquisite, sustainably caught fish and fishermen with no export market. In 2006, the Dimin family began to buy, pack, and deliver fish from the island to restaurants in New York City. In 2009, they refined their strategy to take advantage of FedEx's existing, and far more efficient, logistics and distribution networks.

Sea2Table now works with fisheries in Alaska, the Carolinas, the Chesapeake Bay, Florida, New York, and Maine and has nearly 600 restaurant customers in nearly every state. It promotes less well-known species such as Escolar, periwinkles, and Conger eel that help to take the pressure off popular and overfished species such as tuna and cod.

Point-to-point delivery may not sound environmentally friendly at first. But the old distribution networks are less efficient than one might think. Fish is moved on established routes for refrigerated trucks, and that often means that seafood goes from the Gulf Coast to New York, where it is bought and sold, then back to chefs in Miami. Sea2Table operates kind of like a 1-800-Flowers for fish, finding the best way to get its perishable product from point A to point B. For example, fresh fish going from Florida to Chicago is air shipped. But if its destination is anywhere within 300 miles of port, Sea2Table uses FedEx Ground. Fish that is frozen at sea—the fastest growing part of Sea2Table's business—is sent by truck or train to one of the distributor's seven warehouses, which are strategically placed to be within 300 miles of 95 percent of the U.S. population.

Sea2Table's next big push is into the college market. University dining services care about provenance and sustainability. They also buy in volume, which allows Sea2Table to guarantee prices for fishermen before they go out on the water. It is also testing a home-delivery service which is hopes to roll out later this year.