

Choosing fish better, every day

FOR FOOD SERVICE AND RETAIL

A practical guide for anyone who wants to eat seafood more responsibly



A note on food service and retail

The way you arrange your counter, write your menu, and brief your staff shapes what your customers choose. Small, deliberate changes to your environment at no extra cost can shift what people buy, order and eat.

Produced by Three o'clock

Co-creation and behavioural design partner of the Mr.Goodfish 3.0 consortium. Three o'clock designed the nudging framework in this guide, working with pilot partners Nordnorsk Vitensenter (NNV) in Norway, the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute (CMMI) in Cyprus, and Nausicaá, Centre National de la Mer in France to test activities with real participants across schools, science centres, and community settings.

www.threeoclock.co | www.mrgoodfish.com



Two things worth knowing before you start.

What is a nudge?

A nudge is a small, intentional change in how food options are presented. It makes one option easier, more visible, or more normal, without removing alternatives or trying to convince you of anything. Nudges work by changing the environment around a choice, not the person making it.

What is a situation?

A situation is a repeated pattern that shapes how you make food choices - not a personal failing or a knowledge gap. It describes how choices happen, not who you are. Most of us are in one or two situations that play out automatically, without us noticing them.

How to use this guide

- 1 Read the four quotes on the next page. Find the one that sounds most like you.
- 2 Turn to that page. Read the story and check whether the signals ("Does this sound like you?" section) match your experience.
- 3 Try one of the three nudges ("Three things to try" section) - start with the simplest.
- 4 Fill in the commitment card at the end. One nudge. One week.

Which situation are your customers in?

Before choosing an activity, identify the barrier that is most relevant for your specific customer group. This will vary by age, context, and prior experience. The right situation is the one that honestly describes what is getting in your customers' way.

→ Select the situation. Your customers consider/feel/think ...



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“Whatever is easiest gets chosen by customers”

Situation A on page 4

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“Customers stick with what they know”

Situation B on page 5

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“Customers think they are wasting money or food”

Situation C on page 6

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“Customers tune out when they feel lectured”

Situation D on page 7

“

“Mussels and shellfish feel like another customer's food”

Situation E on page 8



“Whatever is easiest gets chosen by customers.”

Situation A

Automatic choices

In any food service or retail environment, most choices are made fast, under time pressure, and without reflection. People reach for what is most visible, most prominent or already pre-selected. This is not a failure of motivation; it is how all human decision-making works under cognitive load. Whoever controls the environment controls the default. The most powerful nudge available to any food operator is placement.

What to say to staff

Brief staff to lead with one recommendation:
'Today I'd go for the mackerel.'

No sustainability explanation needed as confidence matters more than detail.

A 2-minute daily briefing on the featured species is enough.

What to change in your setting

- 1 Move the right species to the front.**
Place your recommended or seasonal species first on the menu, first on the counter, or at eye level on the shelf. Do not rely on customers scanning all options. The first thing seen is the most likely thing chosen. Rotate the featured species weekly to prevent re-habituation.
- 2 Create a visible daily recommendation.**
Designate one species as the recommended option and signal it clearly, a handwritten card, a small counter sign, a circled item on the menu.
- 3 Make the responsible option the default.**
Where menus or ordering systems allow, set the recommended species as the pre-selected option. Make opting out require a deliberate decision. Even in verbal orders, lead with the recommendation rather than asking customers to choose from a list.



Real example: United Kingdom → making lesser-known species the easy choice

When Sainsbury's set out to move customers off the "Big 5" (cod, haddock, salmon, tuna, prawns), which made up roughly 70–80% of its fish sales, it didn't lecture shoppers, it changed the choice environment. Through its "Switch the Fish" campaign it offered free portions of alternatives at the counter, and reported coley sales up 11.4%, rainbow trout up 42%, and 46 tonnes of alternative finfish moved, including a species 85% of customers had never heard of. It later launched a "Fishmonger's Choice" range across 210 stores with on-pack tips like "Cook me like cod" on whiting and "Cook me like prawns" on monkfish, directly tackling the "I don't know how to cook it" barrier.



"Customers stick with what they know."

Situation B

Familiar species

Seafood consumption across Europe is concentrated around five to seven species, most of them imported. When customers encounter an unfamiliar species, they experience social and practical uncertainty: will it taste right, will they cook it correctly, will it be acceptable? Avoidance is not disinterest but it is rational risk management. The nudge is to reduce the perceived cost of trying something new through endorsement, familiar format and reassurance before the moment of choice.

What to say to staff

Give staff three facts about the featured species: what it tastes like, one simple way to cook it, and where it comes from.

Not sustainability data, practical information the customer can use tonight. Rotate the briefing alongside the species.

What to change in your setting

- 1 Use staff endorsement, not labels.**
A spoken recommendation from a trusted person 'this is delicious pan-fried with butter' is more persuasive than any certification or eco-label. Train staff to offer one confident sentence per featured species. Practical information: taste, texture, prep time.
- 2 Serve new species inside familiar dishes.**
Introduce gurnard in a fish and chips format. Use sprats in a pasta. Offer monkfish where you would normally serve scampi. The familiar dish removes the social risk of an unfamiliar choice. Only the species changes.
- 3 Anchor new species to local identity.**
Frame unfamiliar species through place, season, and community, not sustainability obligation. 'Caught this week off the local coast' is more effective than 'sustainably certified' for someone encountering a species for the first time.



Real example: Norway → monkfish introduced through familiar culinary traditions

A beginner cooking workshop built around monkfish, locally abundant, rarely chosen, introduced the species through three familiar culinary traditions rather than explaining its sustainability credentials. 24 participants from 12 nationalities attended. Post-workshop feedback showed the dominant barrier was not disinterest but simply not knowing how to start. The format was a familiar dish, unfamiliar species and that's the nudge.



“Customers think they are wasting money or food”

Situation C

Hesitation at the point of choice

Cost of living pressures have increased sensitivity to financial and waste risk across Europe. Fish is perceived as harder to portion, more likely to spoil, and more likely to result in wasted spend than other proteins. This creates visible hesitation before purchase, even when interest and motivation are present. The nudge must reduce perceived risk before the decision is made, not after it.

What to say to staff

Encourage staff to ask ‘how many people are you cooking for?’ and portion to need on request.

The visible act of portioning for one person removes the waste anxiety more effectively than any sign.

What to change in your setting

- 1 Show portion guidance at the point of choice.**
Add simple cues alongside species: ‘ideal for two’, ‘one generous portion’, ‘great for four in a pasta’. Remove the mental calculation. Customers who know they are buying the right amount are far more likely to buy - and less likely to return with complaints.
- 2 Reframe leftovers as part of the plan.**
A small card next to a species that says ‘great tomorrow as a fish cake’ turns a perceived risk into a bonus. The leftover becomes the second meal, not the problem. Works especially well on whole fish or larger cuts.
- 3 Price per portion, not per kilo.**
Most customers cannot quickly calculate cost per meal from a kilo price. Displaying the price of a single portion or a meal for two removes comparison anxiety and makes affordable species feel accessible. Most fishmongers and counters can implement this immediately.



Real example: Denmark → surplus seafood reframed as a bargain, not a write-off

Too Good To Go, the Copenhagen-founded surplus-food marketplace, lets fishmongers, counters and supermarkets sell unsold stock close to its sell-by date in discounted "Surprise Bags" instead of binning it, and seafood is one of its standard bag categories. The reframe is the nudge: the same fish that felt like a waste risk at full price becomes a smart, low-cost catch sold at a fraction of retail value, so the money-and-waste worry is removed before the decision, not after it.



“Customers tune out when they feel lectured”

Situation D

Ignored sustainability messaging

Sustainability awareness is high across Europe but trust in sustainability messaging is declining. Greenwashing, contradictory labels, and moralising communication have created widespread disengagement. For food service and retail operators, the implication is clear: sustainability should not be the lead message at any point of choice. It can be present, but it must follow the practical, sensory, or social appeal.

What to say to staff

Brief staff to avoid leading with sustainability. The sequence that works: taste first, origin second, sustainability only if the customer asks.

‘This is the freshest thing on the counter today, caught off the coast on Tuesday,’ then stop. Let the customer ask about the rest.

What to change in your setting

- 1 Lead with freshness, season, and taste.**
‘Fresh from the local coast this week’ outperforms ‘sustainably certified’. ‘Caught yesterday, best eaten today’ outperforms a green label. Freshness and seasonality communicate the same information as sustainability in a language customers already trust and respond to.
- 2 Use social proof rather than moral framing.**
‘Most popular choice this week’, ‘what our chef recommends today’, ‘what locals are buying right now’ are a signal that a choice is accepted without environmental obligation. Social normalisation is more persuasive than persuasion.
- 3 Place sustainability as a secondary signal.**
A small neutral icon for low impact is the maximum signal needed at the point of choice. Place it after the primary appeal such as name, origin, taste description and not before it. Customers who want it will find it; customers who resist it will not be put off.



Real example: Cyprus → lionfish reframed as a culinary discovery

Rather than leading with the biodiversity threat posed by invasive lionfish, the message was reframed: ‘Eating lionfish helps protect local fish.’ The primary angle was culinary curiosity and local pride. Customers who had tuned out from environmental campaigns responded because the message reached them through something they already cared about: good, local food.



"Mussels and shellfish feel like another customer's food."

Situation E

Low-impact options

Mussels, farmed bivalves, seaweed and other low-impact aquatic foods are among the most responsible proteins available, but they are consistently framed as special, alternative, or niche. This framing becomes self-fulfilling: when an option signals that it is not for everyone, it is only chosen by those who already seek it out. Normalisation and making these options feel ordinary rather than virtuous is the core nudge. Repetition and integration into familiar formats are the mechanisms.

What to say to staff

When a customer chooses mussels or shellfish, reinforce with a practical comment, not a sustainability compliment.

'Great choice, they're at their best right now, just came in this morning' normalises the choice.

'Great choice for the environment' signals that it was an unusual one.

What to change in your setting

- 1 Make it the default, not the alternative.**
Include mussels or farmed shellfish as a standard component of set meals, canteen menus, or weekly specials and not as an opt-in 'responsible option'. Remove the identity signal entirely. It is just on the menu, like anything else.
- 2 Integrate into familiar dishes, not special ones.**
Mussels in pasta. Seaweed in bread. Oysters alongside familiar starters. The familiar dish removes the social barrier. Repetition across the menu, across the week, across the season is what creates normalisation.
- 3 Remove virtuous framing at the point of choice.**
Do not label low-impact options as 'eco', 'responsible', or 'responsible' at the point of choice. These signals mark the option as a statement rather than a meal. A neutral small icon is the maximum. Let the flavour make the argument.



Real example: France → mussels as everyday food, not a virtuous alternative

In northern France, including Boulogne-sur-Mer, the country's leading fishing port and home to project partner Nausicaá, moules-frites is an ordinary, affordable, popular dish, not a niche "eco" choice. At the Braderie de Lille each September, a tradition running since the 1970s, hundreds of restaurants serve mussels by default and the competing piles of empty shells become a street spectacle in their own right.

Tools that can help.

These tools are free, open, and designed to slot directly into the nudge strategies in this guide. They give you ready-made content, endorsement, and reach without building from scratch.

The MGF App



Seasonal species at a glance - launching June 2026

Provides seasonal, science-based recommendations for consumers and food service and retail professionals.

Endorsed businesses appear on the map in the app. QR codes displayed at your counter or menu link customers directly to species information, origin, and recipes. Businesses can apply to become endorsed MGF3 partners.

 [App Store](#) | [Google Play](#)

The MGF Platform



Recipes, species guides, and seasonal calendars

The platform at www.mrgoodfish.com hosts free recipes organised by species, type of a meal, difficulty level and time for preparation.

The 'Choose the right species' section on the Mr.Goodfish website explains which species to choose according to their season and fishing area.

 [Visit platform](#)

Endorsement programme



A cooperative board game for families, schools, and groups

Businesses, canteens, and retailers can join the Mr.Goodfish endorsement programme: commit to featuring recommended species as defaults, use endorsed signage, and appear on the MGF app.

 [Learn more and join](#)

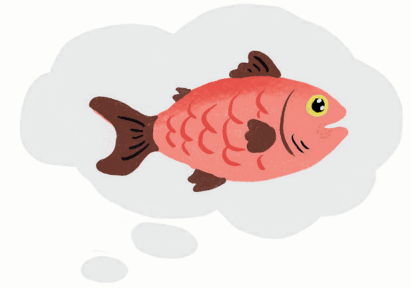
Design your experiment

Organisation <i>Name and type</i>	<i>e.g. school canteen, restaurant, market stall, food hall, fishmonger...</i>
Setting <i>Where your experiment takes place</i>	<i>e.g. fish counter, menu board, serving station, ordering system, shelf...</i>
Situation <i>Choose one</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> A - Choices happen automatically, without reflection <input type="checkbox"/> B - Only familiar species are chosen <input type="checkbox"/> C - Cost or waste anxiety creates hesitation <input type="checkbox"/> D - Sustainability messaging causes disengagement <input type="checkbox"/> E - Low-impact options never become the normal choice
What I/we observe now?	What do customers currently choose? What do you see most often? (2-3 sentences)
My primary nudge <i>One desired change at a time</i>	<i>Describe the specific change you will make - placement, label, default, staff recommendation...</i>
Supporting nudge	<i>One small additional reinforcing action...</i>
MGF3 tools	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr.Goodfish App - display QR at point of choice <input type="checkbox"/> Platform recipes - print and display beside the species <input type="checkbox"/> Campaign badge - apply for MGF3 business endorsement
Responsible person/team	<i>Name and role in experiment for each member</i>
Start date	<i>Within 7 days of completing this plan...</i>



Share your experiments: send us a photo and a few lines about your implemented activity to mrgoodfish@nausicaa.fr. We'll add it to the repository for public use. When posting about it on social media: feel free to tag Mr.Goodfish and use the hashtag #MrGoodFish.

My notes



Setting and audience	
Species featured	
Situation identified	
Nudge selected	
Observation after week 1	
Observation after week 2	
Next experiment	

About

Since its launch in 2010 by Nausicaá, Acquario di Genova and Aquarium Finisterrae, the European Mr.Goodfish programme has worked to raise public awareness about the sustainable consumption of seafood. By publishing seasonal recommendations developed by marine resource specialists, the programme encourages consumers to choose abundant and responsibly sourced species, helping to protect vulnerable fish stocks and preserve marine biodiversity.

Since 2017, the initiative has also expanded its guidance to include sustainable aquaculture products, reinforcing its commitment to responsible seafood choices across Europe.

In 2024, Mr.Goodfish entered a new phase through the European project “Mr.Goodfish3.0: Co-creating Solutions for Sustainable Seafood Consumption”, funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe programme.

During three years, the project will enhance and expand the Mr.Goodfish app, combining scientific expertise with social, cultural and economic perspectives gathered through collaboration with stakeholders, citizens and seafood professionals across Europe.

Supported by a consortium led by Cyprus Marine & Maritime Institute, the initiative aims to reach 30 million European citizens, promote

sustainable seafood practices in all EU Member States, and strengthen awareness through educational campaigns, partnerships and multilingual tools adapted to regional ecosystems and consumption habits.

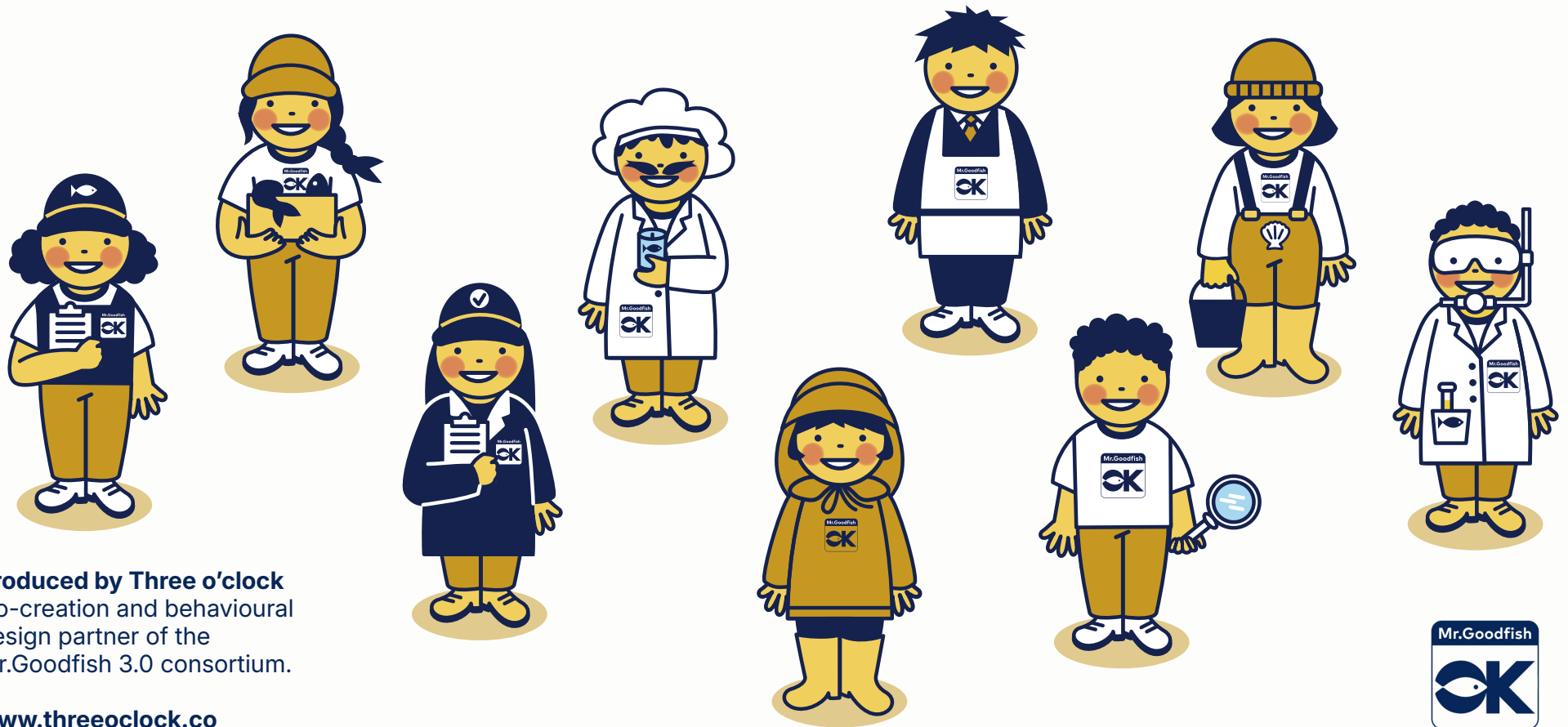
Learn about Mr Goodfish 3.0 project

<https://www.mrgoodfish.com/en/about-the-project>



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Choose the right fish at the right season!



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