



SSC Code of Conduct

V2

2025

The Sustainable Seafood Coalition is a pre-competitive progressive collaboration platform comprised of businesses and organisations from across the seafood value chain, working to ensure a healthy future for our oceans. Our vision is that all seafood sold is from sustainable sources.

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Code of Conduct on Responsible Seafood Sourcing

1. Objective

- 1.1. The Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) is a progressive partnership of businesses co-operating to address important issues in seafood sustainability. This Sourcing Code outlines general good practice in seafood sourcing which must be used by SSC members to inform their own policies for seafood procurement.

The SSC Code does not constitute legal guidance. All members are expected to meet relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

- 1.2. This Code applies equally to all members irrespective of size or sector and must be implemented within one year of publication or a member joining the SSC. It is accompanied by the SSC Guidance document which helps members to implement the Code. Full adoption and implementation of the Tier 1 of the Code is the core membership requirement (as per SSC Terms of Reference). This will be reviewed during the biennial Implementation Report for which members must provide a timely response.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This Code applies to the sourcing of all products (for human and animal consumption) with a minimum of 5% fish and seafood content (hereafter 'seafood'). Its central focus is on environmental and social aspects relating directly to fisheries and aquaculture. It is not a certification standard.
- 2.2. This Code relates to sourcing processes and behaviours regarding members' seafood buying practices for own brand seafood and owned brand/branded exclusives/tertiary brand seafood. Members who are buyers of branded products are also encouraged to include these products.
- 2.3. All members are encouraged to advocate for the wider adoption of the Code, including encouraging others in the seafood industry to implement the Code and join the SSC.

3. Members' commitments

3.1. The SSC Code constitutes a continual process: accurate and up-to-date annual data collection, clear evaluation based on that data, decision making and transparent communication (see Figure 1).

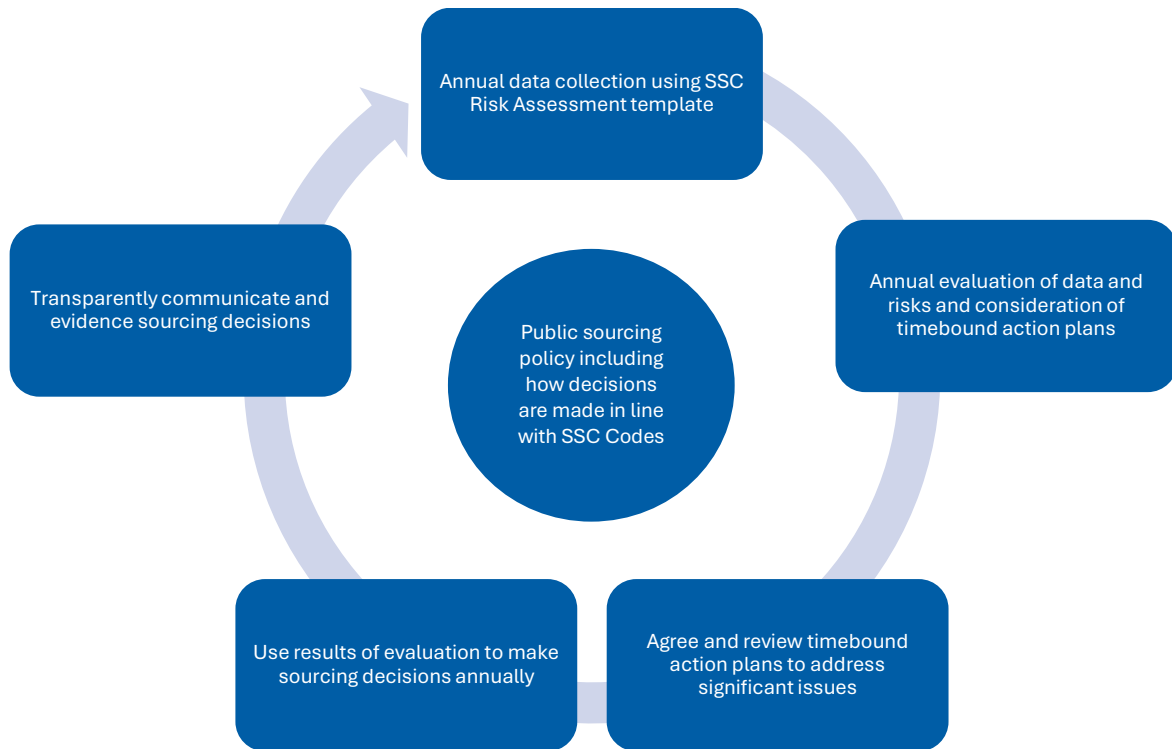


Figure 1: Continual SSC Code Process

3.2. SSC members commit to:

- I. Sourcing requirements which must include traceability, transparency, environment, human rights, feed, animal welfare and carbon.
- II. Data collection and risk assessment: conducted and reviewed at minimum annually.
- III. Evaluation of risks and SMART action plans: prioritising actions to address risks, engaging with supply chain partners, monitoring improvements, and participating in pre-competitive collaborations to address common challenges where industry collaboration is needed for impact (e.g., advocacy).
- IV. Sourcing decisions: based on the outcome of the evaluation.
- V. Transparency: ongoing openness and communication.

3.3. The Code has been designed with three Tiers. All members must meet the expectations in Tier 1. Members may choose to meet the requirements in Tier 2 and/or Tier 3.

3.4. All members are expected to commit to continual improvement regardless of the level of Tiering achieved.

4. Sourcing policies

- 4.1. Members must have a sourcing policy that describes how responsible sourcing decisions are made in line with this Code. Members should clearly define the scope of this policy. Policies must be reviewed at a minimum in line with the review of the Code, which will be at least every two years.

5. Sourcing requirements

5.1. Traceability

Members must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 3	
5.1.1	For wild seafood, members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to source fishery. The system must trace the seafood products through all subsequent stages of handling, transshipment, processing, transformation, and distribution, ensuring any legal requirements are met.	5.1.6	For wild seafood, members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to source group of vessels, including vessel identification number, license, flag state, and fishery.	5.1.10	For wild seafood members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to source vessel and include details of any bait fisheries.
5.1.2	Members must test traceability systems at least annually, which could be through external audits.				
5.1.3	For farmed seafood, members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to its aquaculture farm source through all subsequent stages of handling, slaughter, processing and distribution, ensuring any legal requirements are met.	5.1.7	For farmed seafood, members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to hatchery.		
		5.1.8	For marine ingredients (including those originating from by-products) details of the fishery name, species and FAO area must be collected.		
5.1.4	For fed species, the feed mill manufacturers must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace feed ingredients.	5.1.9	Certification status and country of origin (and if possible sub-national region) of the material should be collected for high-risk non-marine raw materials.		
5.1.5	Members must test traceability systems at least annually, which could be through external audits.				

5.2. Transparency

Members must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1		Tier 2	Tier 3	
5.2.1	Members must make publicly available their wild and farmed sourcing policies, which must include how sourcing decisions are made.	N/A	5.2.3	Members must publicly disclose (non-commercially sensitive information) of their seafood sources annually, comprising source fishery / farm country and region of origin, and method of fishing / farming at minimum.
5.2.2	Members must be able to communicate sourcing decisions with relevant stakeholders on request.			

5.3. Environment

Members must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1		Tier 2	Tier 3		
5.3.1	Members must prioritise sourcing from fisheries that have a healthy stock status, and fisheries and farms that have adequate management and low environmental impact.	5.3.7	Members must advocate for strengthened government policies and enforcement.	5.3.9	Members must invest resources (time and/or financial) in developments to improve the sustainability of source fisheries and aquaculture sites.
5.3.2	For wild seafood, members must not knowingly source IUU (Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported) catch.	5.3.8	Members must prioritise sourcing from hatcheries and feed mills certified to third party standards (e.g., GSSI benchmarked certifications) or codes of practice that require environmental stewardship.		
5.3.3	For wild seafood, members must not source from species classified as endangered or critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.				
5.3.4	Members must source from fisheries and aquaculture farms with mitigation measures for unwanted catch of ETP species.				
5.3.5	Members must prioritise sourcing from fisheries and aquaculture farms certified to third party standards (e.g., GSSI benchmarked				

	certifications) or codes of practice that require environmental stewardship, and/or low risk sources.
5.3.6	If certified or low risk sources are not available, then members must identify sources where a SMART action plan is in place.

5.4. Human rights

Members must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
5.4.1	5.4.7	5.4.11
Members must make a public commitment to uphold human rights of workers, approved by the highest level in the organisation.	Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation including the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29, and the 2014 protocol).	Members must invest resources (time and/or financial) in developments to promote social responsibility and human rights.
5.4.2		5.4.12
Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).		Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights in their individual businesses, direct and indirect operations, and throughout their supply chains. It must cover both permanent and temporary employees as well as contracted and seasonal labour.
5.4.3	5.4.8	
Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights in their individual businesses; it must cover both permanent and temporary employees as well as contracted and seasonal labour.	Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights in their individual businesses, direct operations, and throughout their supply chains. It must cover both permanent and temporary employees as well as contracted and seasonal labour.	
5.4.4		5.4.13
Where significant human rights violations are identified, action plans must be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to remedy harms they caused or contributed to and mitigate against these.		Members must undertake Human Rights Due Diligence in alignment with the UNGPs, to identify, prevent, mitigate and remediate actual and potential risk in their own operations and supply chain:
5.4.5	5.4.9	
Certified sources (e.g. SSCI benchmarked certifications) and/or low risk sources must be prioritised first, then members must identify sources where a SMART action plan is in place.	Members must advocate for strengthened government policies and enforcement.	
5.4.6	5.4.10	
Members must collect relevant information to evaluate the status of the fishery or aquaculture source,	Members must work to align their Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging workers and empowering worker voice

<p>using the SSC Risk Assessment Template; assess actual and potential risks and impact; integrate and act on findings.</p>	<p>Rights Due Diligence, with UNGPs, to identify, prevent, mitigate and remediate actual and potential risk in their own operations and supply chain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data gathering</i> • <i>Assess actual and potential risks and impact</i> • <i>Integrate and act on findings</i> • <i>Track effectiveness of solutions and commit to continual improvement</i> • <i>Communicate progress.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing (or supporting upstream suppliers in developing) effective operational-level grievance mechanisms and remediation processes for own operations and the supply chain</i> • <i>Explicitly supporting and advocating for freedom of association and collective bargaining</i> • <i>Ensuring companies' business models align with their commitments, especially when it comes to procurement practices.</i>
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5.5. Feed

Members must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p>5.5.1 For fed species, there must be a written policy that outlines the criteria for sourcing of feed ingredients.</p> <p>5.5.2 Policies must include a commitment to source marine raw materials in line with the environmental requirements of the Code, and also in line with human rights requirements of the Code.</p>	<p>5.5.3 Raw materials derived from soy and palm should be from supply chains which are low risk regarding deforestation and land conversion concerns and in line with relevant legislation.</p>	<p>5.5.4 For fed species, there must be a publicly available written policy that outlines the criteria for sourcing of feed ingredients, including disclosure of fisheries.</p> <p>5.5.5 Members must encourage the proactive and progressive adoption of more sustainable alternative/novel ingredients.</p>

5.6. Animal welfare

Members must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 3	
5.5.1	Members must develop animal welfare policies.	5.6.7	Members must make a public commitment to upholding animal welfare in their businesses supply chain and communicate on its progress.	5.6.10	Members must ensure animals throughout their seafood supply chain are harvested humanely, or, in the absence of humane methods, members must seek information about the latest scientifically validated best practices and implement where feasible.
5.5.2	As a minimum, policies must include a commitment to implement humane harvest/kill, or, in the absence of humane methods, members must seek information about the latest scientifically validated best practices and implement where feasible.	5.6.8	Policies must detail how animal welfare risks are assessed when evaluating sources and describe how this assessment takes place.	5.6.11	Members must invest time and resources to improve areas of welfare concern and advocate for strengthened government policies and enforcement.
5.5.3	Members must promote animal welfare throughout their supply chain.	5.6.9	Members must develop a plan for continuous improvement based on their identified welfare concerns.	5.6.12	For Aquaculture , members must ensure that farmed species follow either a certification standard that includes animal welfare within its criteria, and/or a veterinary health plan must be in place to address all aspects of fish health and welfare.
5.6.4	Members must map their current supply chain and identify welfare concerns.			5.6.13	For Wild Caught , members must adhere to established scientifically validated welfare best practice to minimise harm and stress in capture fisheries. Members must engage with new research and innovation efforts to continuously advance welfare practices in the supply chain.
5.6.5	For Aquaculture , members must include in their policies that farmed species follow either a certification standard that includes animal welfare within its criteria, and/or a veterinary health plan must be in place to address all aspects of fish health and welfare.				
5.6.6	For Wild Caught , members must include in their policies a commitment to advocate for and support established scientifically validated welfare best practice to minimise harm and stress in capture fisheries.				

5.7. Carbon

Policies must include the following requirements:

CORE Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
5.7.1 Members must develop a SMART action plan to map and identify their Scope 1, 2 and 3 seafood emissions.	5.7.2 Members must develop a plan to measure Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions from their seafood operations and seafood supply chain.	5.7.3 Members must develop a plan to reduce emissions identified.

6. Data collection for Risk Assessment

- 6.1. Members must annually (as minimum) collect relevant information (on the minimum requirements detailed in 6.2) to evaluate the status of the fishery or aquaculture source, using the content at a minimum of the SSC Risk Assessment Template.
- 6.2. The SSC Risk Assessment Template's questions represent minimum requirements for the data points that must be collected to evaluate environment, human rights, feed, animal welfare and carbon risks.
- 6.3. The Risk Assessment must be made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

7. Evaluation

7.1. Evaluation requirements

- I. Members must annually (as a minimum) perform an evaluation to categorise each fishery or farm as low, medium or high risk. This evaluation must include the content of the SSC Risk Assessment Template, including if any significant issues are identified alongside consideration of SMART action plan requirements.
- II. The evaluation must be made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

7.2. Significant issues

7.2.1. **Members must review the content of the SSC Risk Assessment to consider risks, in particular significant issues:**

- I. Proven poor stock status
- II. High risk of decline to poor status without appropriate management
- III. No data or management (even if the fishery is not at high risk of decline)
- IV. Unacceptable environmental impacts including:
 - *Risk of habitat destruction of vulnerable marine ecosystems*
 - *Absence of unwanted catch mitigation measures for ETP species*
 - *High risk of deforestation and land conversion.*
- V. Unacceptable social impacts including:
 - *Modern slavery*
 - *Forced labour or child labour*
 - *Lack of effective grievance mechanisms.*

7.3. SMART action plans

7.3.1. **If significant issues and/or multiple moderate issues are identified in the Risk Assessment, a member must have a public SMART action plan to reduce and mitigate risks.**

7.3.2. **SMART action plans must be:**

- I. **Specific** - Detailed actions linked to risks / improvement opportunities identified
- II. **Measurable** - How progress is defined and monitored; communication audiences and frequency

- III. **Achievable** - Resources (including budget / in kind support); commitment from stakeholders for actions
- IV. **Relevant** - Aligns with objectives of SSC's vision and the member's seafood sourcing policy
- V. **Timebound** - Timescale for each action, workplan regularly reviewed

- VI. Prioritised appropriate to a member's influence and resources.
- VII. Made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.
- VIII. Publicly communicated at minimum annually including progress updates.

7.3.3. Action plans could include improvement projects within a specific framework (e.g. FisheryProgress), which may be active or being established, and internal action plans established by the individual member and their supply chain.

7.3.4. Any delays in the progress of the action plan should be documented and explained. Businesses must outline actions taken and planned and demonstrate supply chain commitment to mitigate risks previously identified.

7.3.5. In the absence of action within the defined timeline of the SMART action plan, businesses must plan for a responsible exit.

7.4. Risk categories

7.4.1. Members must categorise each fishery or farm as low, medium or high risk:

LOW RISK

- No significant issues and not more than one moderate issue identified.
- The Risk Assessment is reviewed to consider where any additional improvements are needed and can be implemented.

MEDIUM RISK

- Significant and/or multiple moderate issues identified.
- Documented SMART action plan agreed and on-track.

HIGH RISK

- Significant and/or multiple moderate issues found and no SMART action plan in place.
- Documented insufficient action in the delivery of the SMART action plan.

8. Sourcing decisions

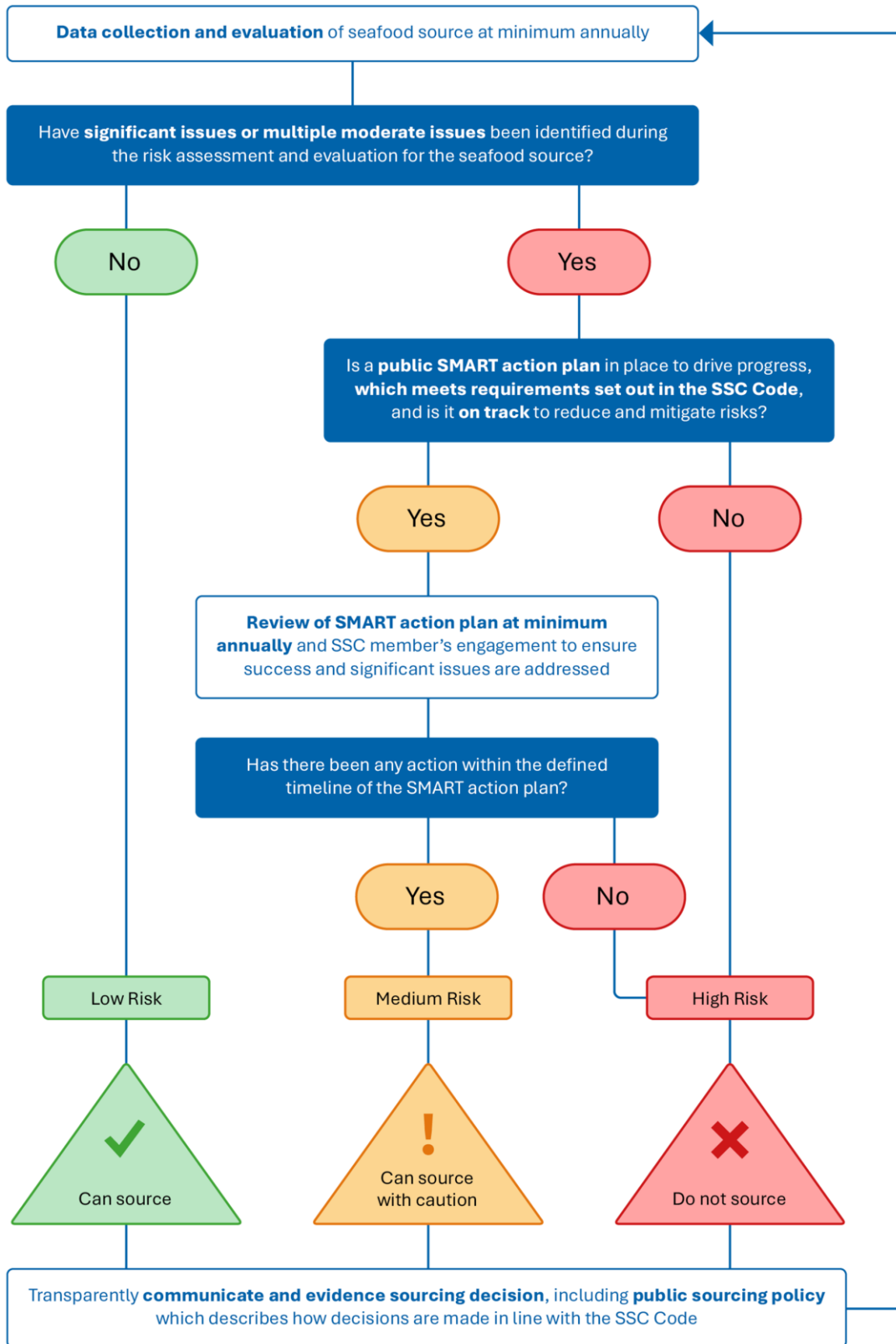
8.1. Sourcing decision requirements

- I. Members must annually agree and review SMART action plans to address significant issues and/or multiple moderate issues and use the results of the evaluation to make sourcing decisions.
- II. Members must prioritise their engagement in the SMART action plans appropriate to their influence and resources. Members must use their leverage to influence improvement project development and establishment.
- III. Members must follow the development of certified fisheries and aquaculture farms to ensure non-compliance or conditions are closed in a timely manner.
- IV. Sourcing decisions and SMART action plans (including assigned actions) must be made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

8.2. Responsible exit from supply chain

- I. Members must not source seafood where there has been no action in the delivery of the SMART action plan, or in situations in which the member lacks the leverage to prevent or mitigate high risk adverse impacts and is unable to increase its leverage.
- II. If exiting the supply chain, this must be performed responsibly in line with guidance from United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the member must consider credible assessments of potential adverse impacts of doing so.
- III. A responsible exit should be documented and made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

9. Sourcing Decision Tree



This document will be reviewed and updated on a biennial basis.

Further information and examples are available in the Guidance document and at www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org or by contacting secretariat@sustainableseafoodcoalition.org

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