

# Joint position on seafood labelling reform

## Accurate seafood labelling is essential for the sustainable management of fish stocks, protection of public health, and informed consumer choice.

Per capita seafood consumption in Australia has doubled since 1975<sup>1</sup>. In that time, regulation has kept domestic production stable, meaning Australia is now a net importer of seafood with approximately 70% of seafood consumed coming from overseas<sup>2</sup>.

Despite this, the majority of Australians believe they are mostly purchasing Australian seafood<sup>3</sup>. This misperception is the result of a market failure perpetuated by inadequate labelling. The greatest information deficit exists in the food-service sector where no information is required to be displayed indicating where the seafood has been caught or what type of seafood it is. Restaurants and takeaways are where Australians are increasingly making their seafood purchases.

Australian seafood is highly valued domestically and overseas because of the combination of quality, diversity and management credentials attributed to it. Research shows that Australians want to purchase local, sustainable seafood and are willing to pay a premium for it<sup>4</sup>.

This premium is essential for Australian seafood producers who incur high production costs relative to many imported products with which they compete directly. Inadequate labelling means imported products are not differentiated from Australian seafood.

**Not all seafood available to Australians is sustainable. In the interests of ensuring that consumers are able to make an informed choice when purchasing seafood it is essential that they are advised what seafood they're purchasing and where it comes from regardless of whether it's consumed in or out of the home.**

**Our organisations support the removal of the current exemption regarding country of origin labelling applied to cooked or pre-prepared seafood sold by food-service under standard 1.2.11 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code as recommended by the 2014 Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee report on the current requirements of labelling of seafood and seafood products. To ensure consumers can be confident about the type of seafood they are purchasing, we support the mandatory use of the Australian Fish Names Standard for identification of seafood.**



<sup>1</sup> Department of Agriculture (2013) Australia's seafood trade, Department of Agriculture, Canberra. [http://www.agriculture.gov.au/Style%20Library/Images/DAFF/\\_data/assets/pdffile/0005/2359643/aus-seafood-trade.pdf](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/Style%20Library/Images/DAFF/_data/assets/pdffile/0005/2359643/aus-seafood-trade.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ruello NV (2011) A study of the composition, value and utilisation of imported seafood in Australia: project final report, Ruello & Associates Pty Ltd for the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra. [http://frdc.com.au/knowledge/Factsheets/Factsheet\\_Imported\\_Seafood\\_in\\_Australia.pdf](http://frdc.com.au/knowledge/Factsheets/Factsheet_Imported_Seafood_in_Australia.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The National Seafood Industry Alliance makes this claim, attributing it to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), Roy Morgan Research and the Seafood Cooperative Research Centre: <http://www.wfsa.org.au/index.php/news/2/41-national-seafood-industry-alliance-submission-country-of-origin-labelling-inquiry>

<sup>4</sup> National Seafood Industry Alliance (2014) Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Agriculture and Industry - Country of origin food labelling inquiry. Available from: <http://www.wfsa.org.au/images/pdf/20140502NSIACoOLFINAL.pdf>