

IS THAT THE FISH YOU ORDERED? THINK AGAIN

Seafood fraud is a global problem and is widespread in Canada. A study by Oceana Canada found that over 44% of tested seafood from restaurants and supermarkets were mislabelled. This poses a risk to public health, the economy, and endangered species.

Policy options and other strategies that can reduce seafood fraud in Canada include:



Trace all seafood from boat to plate



Require catch documentation



Introduce traceability verification measure



Improve consumer information

Seafood fraud is preventable. There is evidence⁴ demonstrating the effectiveness of these policies for seafood fraud prevention but these programs need to be acted upon.

INTRODUCTION

- Seafood fraud is mostly driven by economic gain
- The 'fish list' of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) allows several species to be grouped together under single 'umbrella' terms¹
- Seafood goes down the supply chain and is handled by many actors, which creates numerous opportunities for mislabelling to occur²
- Mislabelled seafood causes consumers risk to allergens, toxins, environmental contaminants, or aquaculture drug residues^{1, 2, 3, 4}
- Seafood fraud undercuts prices for responsibly caught seafood, labelling cheaper fish as an expensive variety²
- The abundance of mislabelled fish labelled as an endangered species leads consumer to believe that the species is sustainable^{1, 4}

APPROACHES AND RESULTS

- 400 fish samples were tested from supermarkets and restaurants in five cities throughout Canada, and 44% were mislabelled⁴
- 50% of tested fish in restaurants were mislabelled⁴
- 30% of mislabelled fish were endangered, threatened, or a vulnerable species⁴

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LINKS FOR FURTHER READING

- <https://www.oceana.ca/en/blog/canada-has-seafood-fraud-problem>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/fish-fraud-mislabelling-seafood-montreal-1.5321978>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/30/canada-declares-fish-crackdown-but-leaves-out-restaurants>
- <https://www.foodincanada.com/features/tackling-seafood-fraud/>

REFERENCES

- ¹ Cawthorn, D., Murphy, T. E., Naaum, A. M., & Hanner, R. H. (2021). Vague labelling laws and outdated fish naming lists undermine seafood market transparency in Canada. *Marine Policy*, 125, 104335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2020.104335>
- ² Fox, M., Mitchell, M., Dean, M., Elliott, C., & Campbell, K. (2018). The seafood supply chain from a fraudulent perspective. *Food Security*, 10(4), 939-963. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-018-0826-z>
- ³ Liu, X., Teixeira, J. S., Ner, S., Ma, K. V., Petronella, N., Banerjee, S., & Ronholm, J. (2020). Exploring the potential of the microbiome as a marker of the geographic origin of fresh seafood. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 11, 696-696. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2020.00696>
- ⁴ Oceana Canada. (2019). *Seafood fraud and mislabeling across Canada*. <https://oceana.ca/en/our-campaigns/stop-seafood-fraud/campaign>