

A new California's Senate bill would make it unlawful for any person to knowingly sell mislabeled seafood.

Senate Bill 1138, sponsored by Senator Alex Padilla, addresses the growing problem of seafood mislabeling and its effects on public health, consumer choice, and sustainable fishing practices.

The bill was announced at a press conference held in Sacramento, where the senator was accompanied by Danny Johnson from Taylor's Market, who conducted a seafood identification demonstration highlighting how easy it is to mislabel seafood. Also attending was Geoffrey G. Chester, PhD, the California Director of [Oceana](#), the largest international organization focused solely on ocean conservation.

Senator Padilla stated that while spending on seafood in the United States has grown to more than USD 80 billion annually, California's law does not provide clear guidance regarding accurate labeling of seafood. The lack of standards has led to high rates of mislabeling throughout the state.

In a recent survey by Oceana, 84 per cent of Southern California sushi samples were mislabeled and 58 per cent of restaurants visited in Northern California mislabeled their fish offerings. SB 1138 is modeled after similar legislation passed in the state of Washington.

"SB 1138 will address the growing problem of seafood mislabeling. To protect our health, economy and oceans it is essential that seafood be labeled accurately," said Senator Padilla.

"Seafood consumers need accurate information about what they are buying to make informed decisions about their own health and the health of the ocean," added Dr. Geoff Shester, California Campaign Director of Oceana. "Senator Padilla's bill will ensure California consumers don't get duped when buying seafood."

Taylor's Market co-owner and head butcher, Danny Johnson, said that Taylor's Market has made a conscious effort to buy their meats and seafood from sustainable sources, "Our customers support the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch's blue eco-label in our store and restaurant. We're very lucky that our customers understand what that means and why it's important."

In 2013, Oceana released the results of a nationwide study on fish sampled at retail outlets, such as restaurants, grocery stores and sushi bars including in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Monterey and found:

- 84 per cent of sushi samples were mislabeled in Southern California;

- 58 per cent of restaurants visited in Northern California sold mislabeled fish;
- 52 per cent of all fish sampled were mislabeled in Los Angeles and Orange Counties;
- 38 per cent of all fish sampled were mislabeled in Northern California;
- 27 per cent of grocery stores visited in Northern California sold mislabeled fish;
- Southern California leads the nation in mislabeled fish.

"The Oceana study revealed that half the tested seafood sold in California is routinely mislabeled. SB 1138 will change that. Honesty in seafood labeling is important to both our health and our oceans," said Senator Padilla. "It's quite simple, when the menu says halibut, we should actually be served halibut. Seafood labeled 'red snapper' should actually be red snapper," he added.

While seafood is an excellent choice in a healthy diet, seafood mislabeling can lead to the consumption of seafood that is unhealthy and potentially dangerous.

Seafood mislabeling also undermines conservation efforts and threatens at-risk species. Conservation efforts rely on an informed public making responsible and sustainable choices, but it is difficult to make sound choices if seafood is mislabeled.

The bill was scheduled to be heard by the Senate Health Committee this Wednesday.

Source : <http://fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&ndb=1&id=67772> (10/04/2014)