

Australia, QR code created to enhance seafood traceability

Non-for-profit entity driving sustainability in the local seafood industry OceanWatch Australia has devised a unique QR code for fresh seafood in an attempt to boost traceability.

This code, which is part of the OceanWatch Master Fisherman Program funded with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), was launched on 21 November at the World Fisheries Day, reported Foodmagazine.

During the ceremony, Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for Agriculture, Senator Richard Colbeck stressed Australia's fisheries as one of the best managed in the world, pointing out it is a great initiative that promotes sustainable fishing practices and reassures the community that their seafood is caught using best-practice techniques.

Senator Colbeck said QR codes are an effective way to provide consumers with more information about a product without imposing regulations which could be costly and difficult to regulate.

"Consumers can be confident they are supporting a sustainable fishery when buying Australian sourced seafood," he said.

The aim behind this world-first initiative is to contribute to provide wholesale buyers with a complete picture of where, how and by whom the catch was caught by scanning the code with a smartphone, The Weekend Australian informed.

By scanning the code, buyers are able to access information relating to the fisher behind the catch, how the seafood was caught, which part of Australia the seafood comes from, and information about the characteristics of the species, migration patterns and population statistics.

"These QR codes offer real transparency around the provenance of seafood. It's important the community knows where their seafood comes from, and is confident the fisher is dedicated to responsible fishing and best-practice techniques to protect our marine environments," points out Brad Warren, executive chair of OceanWatch Australia.

For this code to be allocated, fishermen must also complete food safety training and hold a maritime competency qualification, in this way completing the Master Fisherman Program.

The program involves setting protocols and standards for everyday fishing practices; from assessing the equipment fishers use, to the steps they take in reducing bycatch.

"OceanWatch has ensured its Master Fisherman Program aligns with the United Nation's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. To date, the accreditation and QR codes have already been allocated to over sixty NSW Estuary General fishers," concludes Warren.

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