



Daily updated news for the whole Fishing,
Seafood and Processing industries.



Governor Jay Inslee passed the law to fight against fish fraud in Washington state. (Photo Credit: Thomas Sorenes)

Washington state adopts seafood fraud bill



UNITED STATES

Friday, May 24, 2013, 05:00 (GMT + 9)

Washington State Governor Jay Inslee has signed into law House Bill (HB 1200) to fight seafood fraud in the state. Environmental group [Oceana](#) has commended the governor for his initiative, following the group's recent seafood fraud testing which found that 18 per cent of fish sampled and sold in Seattle was mislabelled, not to mention that seafood fraud has become a US-wide epidemic.

"Washington state continues to lead the way on seafood consumer protection issues," said Whit Sheard, Pacific Counsel and Senior Advisor with Oceana. "This bill is a win for seafood processors, fishermen, consumers, and, ultimately, healthy and productive oceans."

Oceana noted that more than 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the US today is imported, yet less than 1 per cent of it is inspected by the government specifically for fraud, to make sure that the label accurately describes the product in question.

HB 1200 begins to tackle seafood mislabelling by requiring that any fresh, frozen or processed fish and shellfish be labelled by the common name so buyers can make an informed purchasing decision. Common names of fish are defined by the Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and, if a species' common name is not already defined by the Director, then the market name becomes the acceptable common name as provided in the [Food and Drug Administration's](#) (FDA) guidelines.

Another way in which the bill is fighting seafood fraud is by addressing halibut mislabelling, by requiring that only the species *Hippoglossus hippoglossus* (Atlantic halibut) or *Hippoglossus stenolepis* (Pacific halibut) be labelled as halibut. Many lower value species of flatfish are often labelled as halibut.

Finally, the legislation requires that salmon species be labelled by their scientific or accepted common name, which is especially significant in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, where consumers face the possibility of farmed Atlantic salmon being sold as wild caught Pacific salmon.

Detailed definitions, scientific names and common names are provided for the terms "commercially caught," "food fish," "shellfish" and "salmon," among others, to help keep labels as accurate as possible.

Violating the bill is punishable by fines or imprisonment.

"Americans deserve to know more about the seafood they purchase and HB 1200 will begin to fill the gap in public awareness on this critical economic, environmental, and health issue," Sheard added.

HB 1200 passed both the House of Representatives and the Senate unanimously.

Related article:

[- Oceana, restaurant industry demand an end to seafood fraud](#)

By Natalia Real
editorial@fis.com
www.fis.com