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18<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

**PRAWN FARMERS RENEW CALL FOR CANBERRA TO EXTEND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING FOR ALL COOKED SEAFOOD - AS A MATTER OF URGENCY - AMID IMPORTED BERRIES HEALTH SCANDAL.**

**A SENATE INQUIRY HAS RECOMMENDED THIS BE DONE - AND APFA URGES ALL MP'S TO ADOPT A BI PARTISAN APPROACH AND PASS THE AMENDING LEGISLATION WHEN IT IS INTRODUCED.**

The growing health and testing regime scandal swirling round Nanna's imported frozen berry products has again shone a great big spotlight on the need for proper country of origin labelling for all our foods.

And The Australian Prawn Farmers Association is renewing its call on the Federal Government to make Country of Origin labelling for all seafood mandatory, nationwide - in all restaurant and fish and chip shops.

Currently only uncooked seafood in super markets and other retail outlets must have its country of origin clearly displayed. Fishing and aquaculture Industries want this all important consumer safeguard to be all encompassing.

A recent Senate Inquiry Report into extending CoOL to all seafood has strongly recommended this be done with the addition of either the word "Australian" or "Imported" included on printed menus or chalk boards whenever cooked fish is being offered to diners.

The Inquiry noted Australia's aquaculture and fishing operations a stringently regulated especially in regard to sustainability, fish handling and hygiene procedures.

APFA EO, Helen Jenkins said the Inquiry's finding is in - and the political will to make the change in the consumer's interest is gaining considerable momentum. The Nanna's berries contamination scandal has seen consumers clamouring to be told where and what foodstuffs they purchase originate.

"Senator Nick Xenophon and NPA Senators Barry O'Sullivan and John Williams are out in front now leading the push and making the case for the CoOL extension after years of duck shoving and procrastination by governments at state and federal level," said Jenkins.

Senator Xenophon who will introduce legislation shortly to mandate the change has said – "With the right information, consumers can have greater confidence in the seafood they are buying, and make purchasing decisions that don't impact on the health of our oceans."

The Senator has called for a bi- partisan supportive approach when the draft bill for change is introduced which already has the support of key National Party of Australia senators.

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NPA Senator O'Sullivan said - "we have the means to make these labelling changes. The extension of country of origin labelling across all retailed seafood is just common sense and I call on my ministers to make it happen."

Senator John Williams told the Senate on February 12, 2015 - Senate the Inquiry committee "recommends the removal of the exemption, subject to a transition period of no more than 12 months. I hope the government takes this recommendation on board as a matter of urgency, as it is a simple fix supported by the majority."

APFA expects legislation for the change will be introduced soon and members of my Association urge all MP, s and Senators to support Nick Xenophon's call to adopt a bi-partisan approach and vote as one to implement the change.

"The fish buying public throughout Australia deserve no less" she said.

An updated survey by consumer watchdog choice Choice found - "of those who aim to buy Australian instead of imported food, popular reasons for doing so include better overall quality, less exposure to chemicals and pesticides during the production process, and the negative environmental impacts associated with overseas products.

68% of the Choice survey respondents said it was crucial to know the origin of fresh seafood.

Helen Jenkins said "the simple origin description will ensure consumers clarity and confidence in making their choice and will stamp out rip offs from product substitution."

"The racket involves a cheaper and in many cases imported fish being passed off as Australian Barramundi or Australian Tiger Prawns."

"Seafood lovers are being systematically misled by the omission of country of origin labelling for all cooked seafood"

"Surveys revealed a strong perception amongst the public that the seafood we eat at dining venues or takeaway outlets is Australian product when in fact 70% of seafood sold here is imported," Jenkins said.

Prawn farmers and other aquaculture sectors as well as our wild fishers have long have held grave and growing concerns regarding biosecurity, hygiene and other fish farming practices in overseas aquaculture operations and more and more consumers are becoming aware of inadequate and safety regulations of some overseas producers.

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