



The Hon. Warren Entsch MP
Chair
Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia
Po Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600, Australia
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1 September 2015

Dear Mr Entsch MP

Re: Australian Barramundi Farmers Association (ABFA) Supplementary submission to the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia - Inquiry into opportunities for expanding the aquaculture industry in Northern Australia

The ABFA has previously provided a submission to the Committee but felt that, in light of the Senate's recent action in not supporting the *Food Standards Amendment (Fish Labelling) Bill* in May 2015, a supplementary submission should be made to the Committee to highlight the importance of Country of Origin labelling (CoOL) as part of growing and developing aquaculture in northern Australia.

The ABFA strongly supports the bipartisan recommendation developed through the open and inclusive process, undertaken in 2014 by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, that assessed the current requirements for labelling of seafood and seafood products. As you would be aware, the committee accessed information from a range of stakeholder groups, and made one unanimous recommendation - *'that the exemption regarding country of origin labelling under Standard 1.2.11 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code for cooked or pre-prepared seafood sold by the food services sector should be removed'*.

Increasing seafood consumption in Australia, particularly that which is produced in Australia, is an objective of the ABFA. A key means to achieving this is through the use of CoOL throughout the supply chain, including at dining outlets. The issue of CoOL and its misuse, by omission, is of particular concern to the ABFA, the Australian fishing and seafood industry, and most importantly, consumers. The issues regarding the omission of CoOL are compounded when iconic species are involved, such as Barramundi, as to both Australians and international tourists, barramundi means Australian. When purchasing barramundi they believe it is an Australian product and are prepared pay a premium over imported cheaper fish. Without labelling, by omission, people are assuming that they are buying Australian fish, whilst in fact approximately 60% of this fish is imported. This equates to around 6 out of every 10 barramundi meals being made with imported fish, in most instances without the consumers' knowledge.

The importance of CoOL from a northern development perspective is that barramundi is a key aquaculture species, and its growth is strongly linked to domestic consumption in the first instance. This growth however, may be limited without labelling in place that addresses the recommendation of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee.

Australian Barramundi Farmers Association

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As such we request that the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia - Inquiry into opportunities for expanding the aquaculture industry in Northern Australia, as a key part of your findings, strongly note the need for appropriate CoOL that addresses the current exemption under Standard 1.2.11 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

The ABFA believes that CoOL is a critical factor in developing northern aquaculture, particularly when farming species that can be readily produced in near regional areas (e.g. barramundi and prawns). CoOL is part of the suite of requirements necessary for growth, and should be considered as importantly as the matters we raised previously relating to;

- having an acceptable broader regulatory framework that allows and encourages, not inhibits, sustainable aquaculture development
- providing appropriate infrastructure and logistics
- having access to appropriate labour and skills
- developing technology and production methodology
- developing sustainable marketing programs for any new ventures so as not to destroy existing businesses
- having strong border protection as part of a biosecurity program.

The ABFA strongly believes in growth of the Australian aquaculture industry and are excited by the prospects for ecologically and economically sustainable development in northern Australia. The ABFA would welcome the opportunity to provide additional information to the Committee if that was necessary.

Yours sincerely

Chris Calogeras
Executive Officer
Australian Barramundi Farmers Association