



Submission to Creating sustainable economic growth in rural and regional Australia

Submitted [here](#), 17 Oct 2025

About SIA

Seafood Industry Australia (SIA) is the national peak-body representing the Australian seafood industry as a whole. With from the wild catch, aquaculture and post-harvest sector, including state, territory and sectorial associations, along with seafood businesses and producers. We are the voice of Australian seafood industry.

Currently valued at more than \$11.9 billion and directly supporting more than 79,491 Australian families (BDO 2025), the Australian seafood industry plays a key role securing Australia's food base, creating and maintaining jobs, boosting economic activity, and generating valuable export income for Australia and our rural and regional communities.

Growth of our industry delivers increased jobs and investment in rural and remote Australia, and puts more than 1.5 billion meals of quality, healthy, sustainable seafood for Australian families and our international neighbours.

SIA provides consumers, Government and other stakeholders with confident and united representation. Our mission is to Promote, Protect and Develop the Australian seafood industry on the national and international level. Our unity indicates that we love what we do, we stand by our products, and that our products are the best in the world.

Our Pledge

We are the Australian seafood industry, and we are committed to putting the best Australian seafood on your table now and for generations to come. To ensure we do this in ways we are all proud of, we promise to:

- Actively care for Australia's oceans and environment and work with others to do the same;
- Value our people, look after them and keep them safe;
- Respect the seafood we harvest and the wildlife we interact with;
- Be transparent and accountable for our actions;
- Engage with the community and listen to their concerns; and,
- Continually improve our practices.

This is our pledge to you.

Futures of Seafood

The Australian seafood industry faces continued, increasing economic pressure from a variety of sources including competition for ocean access, increasing compliance obligations, climate change and the cumulative impacts of government policy.

Industry, governments and the community need to collectively understand the social, economic, environmental and governance values associated with the industry to understand the impact of decisions that change ocean access, what the breaking points are as well as what can drive growth opportunities and business certainty.

Recognizing these challenges, SIA has successfully campaigned for initiation of the [Futures of Seafood](#) study. This program is a novel study that will describe, map and model the spatial, economic and social impacts of government targets and decisions, including but not limited to:

- offshore energy zones and proposals,
- marine parks and environmental regulation,
- oil and gas,
- desalination plants,
- tourism and recreational use and rocket launch pads.

With this knowledge, the people and businesses that support Australian seafood can make decisions and plans around the potential impacts to their future. This is also what government needs to make informed policy that achieves an inclusive and sustainable future.

SIA was pleased to secure a funding commitment from Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCEEW), FRDC and the Blue Economy CRC toward the ground-breaking *Futures of Seafood* study.

The federal government, through its support of the *Futures of Seafood* study, has acknowledged the desperate need for better data and insights to forecast policy impact on the seafood industry's longevity.

Introduction

SIA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the *Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth on Creating sustainable economic growth in rural and regional Australia*.

Seafood is a critical component of Australia's economic growth in rural and regional areas. The seafood sector is often the backbone of many coastal communities, supporting jobs, small businesses, and regional identities.

For Australian seafood suppliers, markets remain fragmented, with growing competition from imported product and subdued domestic demand. The current economic environment has placed additional strain on regional seafood businesses, highlighting the importance of coordinated government support to strengthen market access, reduce regulatory burden, and promote Australian seafood.

We have broken this submission into two focus areas, domestic marketing and consumption of seafood and export as we believe the opportunities to value add within these spaces are different.

Recommendations

Domestic focused:

1. SIA supports the rollout of a strong enforcement program in support of Country-of-Origin Labelling (CoOL) as was seen in 2016. This should be tied with a food service education program and a public awareness campaign.
2. Bring Australians into a conversation on the contribution of Australian seafood to food systems through a seafood literacy program showing the importance of wild catch and aquaculture. Activities could include:
 - a. Leveraging the [Great Australian Seafood](#) brand and resources to improve general industry knowledge and awareness with consumers.
 - b. Programs to support and expand regional tourism linked to the seafood industry and promotion of consumer/seafood experiences.

Export focused:

3. Continuation of programs, partnerships and activities to build stronger strategic relationships with importing countries, improve 'brand Australia' awareness, and champion product innovation.
4. Ongoing support for the provision of market intelligence and assistance enabling Australian exporters to make informed decisions.

Additionally, SIA supports the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA) submission on this topic and their recommendations, including:

- Regulatory consistency as a brand strength: Streamlining overlapping requirements under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC), World Trade Organization (WTO) conditions, and third-party certifications will allow government and industry to market Australia's robust sustainability story with clarity and efficiency.
- Climate-adaptive credentials: Government marketing should highlight Australia's climate-responsive harvest strategies, reinforcing trust in the resilience of Commonwealth fisheries.

Australian domestic market

Country of Origin Labelling

SIA strongly believes in the rights of consumers to make informed choices about the food they purchase and consume. Thanks to a strong food safety reputation in Australia, and a trusted agricultural supply chain, Australian consumers have developed an expectation of food safety, authenticity and trust in their purchases. SIA welcomes the Albanese Government commitment to mandatory Country-of-Origin Labelling (CoOL) for seafood in food service.

On 30 June 2025, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) finalised the Information Standard for CoOL in food service, requiring hospitality venues to indicate the origin of the seafood they serve using the Australian–Imported–Mixed (AIM) model. This change affects restaurants, cafés, pubs and other hospitality venues, requiring them to display if their seafood as A: Australian or I: Imported or M: Mixed.

The new law will be enforceable from 1 July 2026. A transition period is now underway to allow venues to update menus and signage. A multipronged program is needed to assist the seafood and food service sectors in this transition, in conjunction with an awareness campaign targeting consumers. As stated above, SIA recommends rollout of a strong enforcement program in support of CoOL, tied with a food service education program to upskill staff and management at food service outlets on what's required under the new legislation. The CoOL program should within 2-3 years of implementation be evaluated for its effectiveness in addressing consumer confusion at point of purchase.

Seafood literacy program

The CoOL consultation process has highlighted that the Australian consumer's general knowledge and awareness of the seafood sector is very low with misinformation regularly spread about its sustainability credentials, practices and impact on the environment. The Australian public does not realise we have one of the most highly regulated fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the world, with a focus on continuous innovation to improve environmental outcomes.

It is time to bring Australians into a conversation on the contribution of Australian seafood to food systems through a seafood literacy program.

Tactical suggested activities to support the literacy program include:

- Branding - Leveraging the [Great Australian Seafood](#) brand as a communication platform with consumers.
- Sea and aqua tourism - There is significant opportunity to leverage the natural link between seafood and regional tourism across Australia. This could be through for example oyster lease experiences, facilitating back of boat sales, tastings and seafood festivals.

All across coastal Australia there are regional initiatives celebrating seafood. These programs play a crucial role in promoting the regions and seafood and bringing additional tourism business to those areas. This is a model which could be leveraged and expanded to develop for example seafood-tourism hubs (as detailed in the CFA submission) providing memorable 'consumer experiences' such as tastings, cooking demonstrations, live product displays, and storytelling about the journey from ocean to plate. This is important, as much of the seafood industry's production is currently sold and consumed, not just within the Australian domestic market, but often a significant percentage is consumed within the state or territory it was caught or farmed.

Export

BDO (2025) estimates that \$1,267m worth of Australian seafood is exported each year. Our main export commodities are rock lobster, salmon, abalone and tuna ([ABS 2022](#)). Our major export markets are China, Hong Kong, Japan, and the USA ([ABS 2022](#)).

Access to premium markets can be costly as exporters bear the cost of third-party certification schemes (often essential for market access) and regulatory burden via duplicative EPBC Act's export approval processes and other government requirements.

The following tactical activities have been identified by SIA and CFA as suggestions to support the expansion of Australian seafood exports:

- Provision of support for third party certification for wild catch and aquaculture sectors as the West Australian government has in the past provided to many of its fisheries.
- Harmonization of the EPBC export processes with third party certifications to reduce duplication and cost.
- Continued support for the "Made in Australia" brand with a re-evaluation of allowances for imported products to be marketed as "Australian" despite minimal local processing. This allowance runs the risk of undermining the integrity of Australia's clean and green brand.
- Assistance in:
 - Building strategic relationships with importing countries to help reduce the impact of non-trade barriers.
 - Diversifying export markets.
 - Championing product innovation in line with export market requirements.

The "Made in Australia" brand is highly respected in export markets and brings a level of consistency across Australian products. This could be further supported in helping industry tell its provenance story, showcasing the origin, production practices, and environmental stewardship behind Australian seafood. This could be tied in with government and third-party endorsement of fisheries with proven environmental credentials.

Participation in international food expos and trade missions with direct links to commercial seafood businesses has proven to be very successful. This in-market engagement should be industry led in partnership with commercial companies.

Austrade's assistance in the develop market intelligence tools has been invaluable as exporters need regular updates on emerging markets, consumer trends, and regulatory requirements. Programs designed to encourage innovation in product formats (e.g., ready-to-eat, frozen, value-added) to suit different market needs and preferences have also been well received.

Thank you

SIA, on behalf of our members and the entire Australian seafood industry, would like to thank you for taking the time to review our submission.

Yours sincerely,



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