

I would like to make a submission for the ongoing inquiry into seafood labelling laws.

The current fish labelling laws make it easier for consumers to make an informed choice at larger fish markets. Species and provenance are clearly marked. However, the laws do not extend to 'value added' retailers, such as fish and chip shops and restaurants. Of concern is that the former are almost universally selling 'Butterfish' to consumers. This is a generic term applied to any fish available at the cheapest price. Restaurants also describe many dishes as containing 'fish,' without mentioning the species or provenance. Often they cannot provide this information to patrons.

In the 1970's, the name 'Butterfish' referred to Coorong Mulloway, which was caught in abundance. As this fish population declined, Flake (shark) was often labelled ' Butterfish.' Throughout the 1980's and 1990's Gemfish (NZ) and Hake (South Africa) took on the name. In recent years, Basa from the Mekong Delta in Vietnam is most often sold as ' Butterfish.' The dubious farming practices used in this area have been well documented. Clearly, the term 'Butterfish' has become meaningless. It is a convenient front for whatever the retailer chooses to sell under the moniker.

I submit that consumers require more information to make an informed choice. In addition to fish being labelled as local or imported, generic terms like 'Butterfish' should be abolished. All fish sold, raw or cooked, should be clearly labelled with the relevant species and provenance. Where this is not practical (ie. 'Market fish of the day' on a printed menu), waiting staff should be provided with this information.

Thank you  
Simon McGuire