



# One Name, One Fish: Why Seafood Names Matter

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Seafood is the most valuable and highly traded food commodity in the world. Globally, the United States is the second largest seafood market, yet more than 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported, more than any other seafood producing country.

The path that seafood travels from its source to the consumer is long and complex. Throughout this journey, seafood is often transformed from whole fish to fillet, shrimp to cocktail and crab to cake. This process may obscure the true identity of many types of seafood, creating frequent opportunities for fraud. In fact, between 2010 and 2015, Oceana conducted seafood fraud investigations of fish, shrimp and crab cakes in the retail market. In general, around one-third of the seafood examined in these studies was mislabeled—the product listed on the label or menu was different than what the buyer thought they purchased, often a less desirable or lower priced species. Oceana has observed threatened species being sold as more sustainable, expensive varieties replaced with cheaper alternatives, and safe fish substituted with those that can cause illness.

**One simple but vital step the federal government should take is requiring the use of species-specific names, or one name for one fish, throughout the entire seafood supply chain, from the fishing boat to the dinner plate.**

The use of ambiguous names for seafood sold in the U.S. can lead to confusion and undesired consequences. For instance, a fisherman in Panama could catch a Warsaw grouper, considered critically endangered by the

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and it could be legally sold in the U.S. as simply “grouper,” with no ability to differentiate it from the 64 other fish that can be sold as grouper. With wide ranges in the sustainability of the grouper fisheries, a consumer would have no way to make an informed seafood buying decision. Without requiring species-specific naming, seafood loses its identity through the supply chain.

Additionally, making species-specific names available at the point of sale would allow consumers to make more informed seafood choices based on their preferences, whether it be taste, sustainability, health or other factors. Packing several species under a general acceptable market name, without providing the unique scientific or common name, diminishes the ability of the consumer to make informed purchasing decisions.

## ONE NAME FOR ONE FISH WOULD:

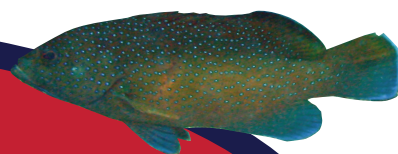
- Stop Seafood Fraud
- Deter Illegal Fishing
- Improve the Ability to Track Seafood from Boat to Plate
- Protect Endangered or Vulnerable Species
- Decrease the Chance of Eating Fish with Health Advisories, like Mercury
- Prevent Honest Fishermen from Being Undercut by Illegally Caught and Mislabeled Products
- Allow Consumers to Source Sustainably Caught Seafood

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**NASSAU GROUPER**  
ENDANGERED

**SAND PERCH**  
LEAST CONCERN

**CONEY**  
LEAST CONCERN



**64 different species are allowed to be sold as "Grouper" in the U.S., even though about 36 percent of them are considered to be at risk of extinction by the IUCN.**



**GRAYSBY**  
LEAST CONCERN



**GOLIATH GROUPER**  
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



**RED HIND**  
LEAST CONCERN

Coney, Graysby, Red Hind and Sand Perch ©NOAA  
Goliath Grouper ©OCEANA | Carlos Minguell  
Nassau Grouper ©Marine Photobank | Colin Zylka  
PHOTOS ARE NOT SCALED TO SIZE.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. needs to ensure that all seafood sold is labeled with one name for one fish throughout the entire supply chain.

- For documentation and traceability requirements, the U.S. should require the use of the scientific name, as it is universally recognized regardless of language and already used on regulatory documents around the globe.
- Consumers should be provided with the species-specific name, either the scientific or common name, on labels, menus and packaging, in addition to whatever acceptable market name is allowed by the Food and Drug Administration.

A simple name could have dramatic effects on consumer safety, market fairness and our oceans' biodiversity and abundance. One name for one fish would benefit consumers, the seafood industry and governments across the world.

In June 2014, President Obama created the Task Force on Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Seafood Fraud. The task force issued recommendations and an action plan outlining the implementation of international and domestic measures to address these issues. The U.S. must require catch documentation, full supply chain traceability as well as provide more information to consumers in order to ensure that all seafood is safe, legally caught and honestly labeled.

**For Oceana's full report, please visit [oceana.org/OneNameOneFish](https://oceana.org/OneNameOneFish).**