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1 in 5 Seafood Samples Mislabeled Worldwide, Finds New Oceana Report *Oceana Calls on President Obama to Track All Seafood from Boat to Plate as Ocean Leaders Prepare to Gather in DC for Our Ocean Conference*

WASHINGTON – Today, Oceana released a [new report](#) detailing the global scale of seafood fraud, finding that on average, one in five of more than 25,000 samples of seafood tested worldwide was mislabeled. In the report, Oceana reviewed more than 200 published studies from 55 countries, on every continent except for Antarctica. The studies found seafood fraud present in each investigation with only one exception. The studies reviewed also found seafood mislabeling in every sector of the seafood supply chain: retail, wholesale, distribution, import/export, packaging/processing and landing. An interactive map of the global seafood fraud review compiled by Oceana can be found at www.oceana.org/seafoodfraudmap.

The report comes as ocean leaders from all over the world prepare to gather in Washington, DC for the Our Ocean Conference next week. Earlier this year, the President's Task Force on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Seafood Fraud released a proposed rule to address these issues that would require traceability for 13 "at-risk" types of seafood from the fishing boat or farm to the U.S. border. Oceana contends that while this is a good step forward, the government needs to expand the final rule to include all seafood species sold in the U.S. and extend it throughout the entire supply chain, from boat or farm to plate.

"Without tracking all seafood throughout the entire supply chain, consumers will continue to be cheated, hardworking, honest fishermen will be undercut, and the long-term productivity of our oceans will continue to be in jeopardy. It's clear that seafood fraud respects no borders," said Oceana senior campaign director Beth Lowell. "The path seafood travels from the fishing boat or farm to our dinner plates is long, complex and non-transparent, rife with opportunities for fraud and mislabeling. American consumers deserve to know more about their seafood, including what kind of fish it is, how and where it was caught or farmed, and they should be able to trust the information is accurate. The fight against seafood fraud must include all seafood and extend from boat to plate."

The report also highlights recent developments in the European Union to crack down on illegal fishing and improve transparency and accountability in the seafood supply chain. Following numerous seafood fraud investigations over 12 years, as well as public attention to the problem, overall fraud rates in the EU appear to have decreased from 23 percent in 2011 to a low of 8 percent in 2015. According to Oceana's analysis, preliminary data out of the EU suggests that catch documentation, traceability and consumer labeling are feasible and effective at reducing seafood fraud.

A few of the report highlights include:

- In the U.S., studies released since 2014 found an average fraud rate of 28 percent, weighted by sample size.

- More than half (58 percent) of the samples substituted for other seafood were a species that pose a health risk to consumers, meaning that consumers could be unwittingly eating fish that could make them sick.
- The majority of the studies (65 percent) include clear evidence of an economic motivation for the seafood mislabeling.
- Asian catfish, hake and escolar were the three types of fish most commonly substituted worldwide. Specifically, Asian catfish was sold as 18 different types of higher-value fish.

A few of the most egregious examples that Oceana has collected include:

- Eighty-two percent of the 200 grouper, perch and swordfish samples tested in Italy were mislabeled, and almost half of the substituted fish were species that are considered threatened with extinction by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- In Brazil, 55 percent of “shark” samples were actually largemouth sawfish, a species considered by the IUCN to be critically endangered and for which trade is prohibited in Brazil.
- Ninety-eight percent of the 69 bluefin tuna dishes tested in Brussels restaurants were another species.
- A 2015 German study found about half of the samples sold as “sole” to be lower-value fish upon testing.
- In 2015, Santa Monica restaurant and two sushi chefs were charged for selling whale meat, including meat from the endangered sei whale. The restaurant, which has since closed, had labeled the whale as fatty tuna to hide its true identity when it was shipped to the restaurant in order to sell whale sushi.

“Because illegally caught seafood, some caught or processed with slave labor, could be making its way onto our dinner plates disguised as legal catch, it is doubly important to improve transparency and accountability in the global seafood supply chain,” said Dr. Kimberly Warner, report author and senior scientist at Oceana. “The increased traceability and consumer labeling efforts in the EU point us to solutions that really do work to decrease seafood fraud, particularly in sectors and products covered by these legal provisions. The U.S. government should take note and issue the strongest possible final traceability rule. Only full-chain traceability for all species will ensure our seafood is safe, legally caught and honestly labeled.”

To access Oceana’s full report, brochure of highlights and other materials, please visit www.oceana.org/DeceptiveDishes.

To learn more about Oceana’s campaign to stop seafood fraud, please visit www.oceana.org/seafoodfraud.

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Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. Oceana is rebuilding abundant and biodiverse oceans by winning science-based policies in countries that control one third of the world’s wild fish catch. With over 100 victories that stop overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution and killing of threatened species like turtles and sharks, Oceana’s campaigns are delivering results. A restored ocean means that one billion people can enjoy a healthy seafood meal, every day, forever. Together, we can save the oceans and help feed the world. Visit www.oceana.org to learn more.