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U.S. industry responds to accusations of fraud

CEO discusses 'ideal' solution to not mislead consumers.

Avani Nadkarni

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On the heels of a University of Washington study reporting seafood fraud in Seattle earlier this summer, two reports regarding seafood fraud in Boston, one by Oceana and one by the *Boston Globe*, that came out this week concluded there is rampant mislabeling in Boston supermarkets and restaurants.

"It's always a shock when you see something that you think would be plentiful (be mislabeled)," Oceana Senior Scientist Kimberly Warner told **IntraFish**. "There should be plenty of cod in Boston."

Stavis Seafood is a member of the National Fisheries Institute's Better Seafood Board, and CEO Richard Stavis stressed to **IntraFish** that his company does not sell misrepresented fish.

Fraud and mislabeling "is indefensible and I think that it should be exposed," Said Stavis. But, he said, it is a misconception that restaurants and supermarkets always mislabel maliciously for financial gain and called the two Boston studies "broad-stroked" accusations.

For example, Stavis said, there are a number of species that can legally be classified as grouper, including Atlantic grouper and Indian reef cod, which have "totally different texture." Atlantic tripletail cannot be legally labeled as cod, though Stavis said "it's a more similar dining experience to Atlantic grouper."

Another example, is black cod, also known as sablefish in the United States. Stavis said some sellers would prefer referring to the species as the more expensive black cod to allow customers to better understand the product, not to dupe them.

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"Where that becomes fraud, I don't know," he told **IntraFish**.

Still, he said, he understands consumer concerns and said he does have a suggestion for an "ideal" solution.

"If somehow we could come up with a way of grouping fish by characteristic so the consumer would have a predictable eating experience, that would be ideal," Stavis said. "We've got to educate people and look at fish differently ... it's not the same as these one-dimensional proteins. The name of the fish is a heck of a lot less important than the experience."

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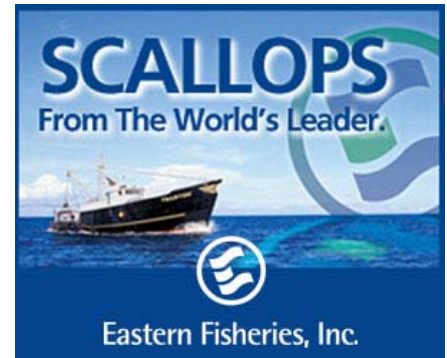


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