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## **Talking Points for Food Retailers and Wholesalers Country of Origin Labeling for Seafood April 2005**

- Retailers and wholesalers have been working hard to make sure that by April 4, 2005, consumers will be informed where seafood comes from and whether it was wild-caught or farm-raised — as required by the mandatory country of origin labeling law.
- Most fresh and frozen seafood products will carry this information, including whole fish and fillets, and shellfish such as shrimp, lobsters, crabs, oysters and clams.
- USDA excluded “processed” foods from the labeling requirements, exempting cooked and many canned products, along with seafood that is cured, smoked or combined with other foods or sauces.
- The regulations under this law are still not final; USDA says it will issue the final rules this fall. There is, however, no question that costs will increase.
- The law should not significantly affect the selection of seafood products available.
- The law may affect the sources of seafood products. Facing fines of \$10,000, retailers must do business only with suppliers able to furnish records reliable enough to withstand the scrutiny of government auditors.
- Food retailers and wholesalers believe that a voluntary labeling program would be most beneficial for the industry and consumers alike. We continue to urge Congress to enact legislation that will replace mandatory labeling with a voluntary program covering seafood, meat and produce.



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