

# A consumer's guide to seafood

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A University of Queensland academic has contributed to Australia's first comprehensive consumer guide to seafood.

Visiting Fellow with UQ's School of Economics Dr Colin Hunt says *Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide* has been developed and published by the Australian Marine Conservation Society in response to growing public concern about over-fishing and its impact on our oceans and their wildlife.

The guide is designed to help consumers make informed seafood choices thereby influencing the way fisheries are managed, Dr Hunt says.

Each seafood species is classified according to a traffic light system (green=Better Choice; Amber=Think Twice; and Red=Say No).

Many of the world's [fish stocks](#) are now over-exploited and in trouble and so are a number of Australian fisheries. The 70-page guide gives consumers an insight into the sustainability of species commonly found at Australian fishmongers, supermarkets, fish-and-chip shops and restaurants.

Moreover, the guide indicates where destructive fishing gear and poor aquaculture practices have a deleterious impact on marine wildlife and habitats.

The guide can easily be slipped into the shopping bag; there is also a user-friendly online version – just enter a fish name and up comes the

assessment. But as well as Australian wild-caught fish the most common imports of fresh and chilled fish and canned fish are also classified.

Dr. Hunt, who has a background in fisheries management, undertook the research and classifications for over 100 species. Fisheries scientists and management experts have refereed the classifications, and the web version of the guide will link 350 references with the species listed.

The classifications are based on the publicly available information, either published research or the official assessments of fisheries by the managing agencies – state government departments or, in the case of Commonwealth-managed fisheries, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and the Bureau of Rural Sciences.

"Most official assessments are based on the health of the stocks of single species. However, this oversimplified system has been found wanting. This is especially so where fisheries are multi-species or where there is also a high level of catch of unwanted but ecologically valuable fish and marine organisms. In some [fisheries](#) there are unacceptable levels of mortality of threatened sea birds and mammals." Dr. Hunt said.

"The guide goes beyond providing species by species assessment and gives warnings to consumers where the marine ecology – or in the case of aquaculture, the terrestrial environment – is under threat.

"Eating a fish now needs to be a special experience, enhanced by the knowledge of where it comes from, how it is caught and how it is faring as a species."

As well as classifications, the AMCS website features an array of colourful graphics and photographs and much useful background information, and is available [online](#).

Provided by University of Queensland

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