

Action for accurate BARRAMUNDI labelling in MIDDLE-EAST COUNTRIES

MAC. WG3 meeting. 1-December.



ACTION FOR ACCURATE BARRAMUNDI LABELLING IN MIDDLE-EAST COUNTRIES

Background

- We draw your attention to an issue that concerns the misuse of the term “seabass” in several Middle-East markets.
- Countries such as Saudi Arabia are an increasingly important destination for EU-farmed European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*), making accurate product labelling there relevant for EU producers.
- Recent market observations show that barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*), a fish species caught and farmed in the Indo-Pacific region, is frequently placed in those markets simply as “seabass”.



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- Without making any judgement about the quality of barramundi, this practice risks misleading consumers and importers in those markets and affecting the reputation of farmed European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*), a distinct species produced responsibly and sustainably throughout the Mediterranean.
- Accurate labelling is essential to ensure transparency, uphold consumer confidence, and protect fair competition in international trade.
- For products derived from *Lates calcarifer*, the terms “barramundi”, “giant seaperch”, or “Asian seabass”, as recognised by the FAO, should be used to correctly distinguish them from European seabass.

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Our reactions

- Letters have been sent to FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, and to food competent authorities in the affected countries.
- DG MARE has informed that their competence on food information and labelling applies to products placed on the EU market and to the obligations of EU operators. Consequently, the Commission does not have the authority to prescribe how retailers in Saudi Arabia, or any other third country, should label their products. However, they remain ready to consider the issue in the context of EU positions within relevant international fora, such as Codex committees and FAO fisheries-trade discussions, where voluntary standards are developed.

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Legal situation

- The labelling of aquatic food products marketed in third countries certainly falls under the jurisdiction of the respective national authorities.
- FEAP encourages competent authorities, retailers, and industry stakeholders worldwide to ensure that seafood products are accurately identified using their correct common and scientific names.
- At present, there is no binding international framework comparable to the EU's CMO system of commercial designations that would establish mandatory naming rules for markets outside the EU.
- FEAP understands that the labelling practices described are not unlawful under international law.

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Purpose of this presentation

- FEAP brings this issue, although unrelated to the EU market, to the attention of the MAC because it affects the marketing of EU-produced farmed fish in certain third-country markets.
- Our objectives are to:
 - Inform the MAC about the situation;
 - Gather the views and opinions of experienced MAC members;
 - Invite suggestions on a possible MAC response.