

Queensland Seafood

Industry Association

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MEDIA RELEASE

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“SUPPORT RESTAURANTS SERVING LOCAL SEAFOOD”: FISHERMEN

FISHERMEN have called on Cairns diners to support restaurants serving local seafood.

“Far North Queensland has some of the best seafood in the world,” fishermen’s spokesman Neil Green said today. “Why would you want to eat seafood that had come from anywhere else?”

Mr Green, President of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA), said that dining on wild-caught local seafood was one of the essential “must do” experiences in places like Cairns, whether you were a local resident or visitor.

“Far North Queensland is famous for its local seafood, with species like barramundi, prawns, crabs and reef fish available in abundance,” he said.

“At the same time, you will find some of Australia’s best restaurants and top chefs in Cairns, Port Douglas and elsewhere in the region. What a perfect combination that is: world-class local seafood and world-class local restaurants.”

Mr Green said the QSIA believed restaurants serving local seafood should be rewarded.

“I know it’s very easy for restaurants to just order a batch of frozen imported seafood from suppliers, where the same old rubbish is available year-round, and then try to dress up the chewy texture or tired flavour with a range of exotic sauces or other cover-ups.

“On the other hand, restaurants that go to the trouble of buying local seafood in season and presenting it so that the lively taste and texture of FNQ seafood can be enjoyed, well, they deserve recognition from the fishing industry and support from Cairns diners.

“They are supporting local businesses through purchasing quality local seafood and in turn should be supported by local residents. Looking after your local business has never been more important than it is these days.”

Mr Green said the QSIA was supporting local restaurants through publicity in the “Queensland Catch” seafood promotion project.

“Restaurants that serve local seafood and are part of the ‘Queensland Catch’ project will be receiving publicity and promotion from the QSIA as part of the project. We will be directly promoting those restaurants, for example with newspaper advertising, suggesting diners patronize them,” he said. “After all, the seafood is so good in those restaurants that fishermen eat there, so why wouldn’t we be suggesting everyone else does the same?”

“I think people in Cairns and elsewhere in the region are keen to know which restaurants are serving local seafood, as opposed to imported seafood that’s probably travelled thousands of kilometres to get here and is who knows how old. In the case of visitors, no-one really wants to eat seafood that’s travelled further than they have, and locals don’t want to be served imports when the world’s best seafood is swimming along their own coast either.”

Mr Green said the QSIA strongly supported the concept of restaurants displaying country-of-origin labels on their seafood menus.

“Restaurants serving imported seafood should inform their patrons of that fact, and then let them decide whether that’s what they really want,” Mr Green said. “Country of origin labeling is now a fact of life in retail shops and the same should apply in restaurants.

“We have been promoting this idea for years and we certainly support the call made by the Australian Barramundi Farmers Association in Cairns recently for country of origin labeling in restaurants.

“In fact, we included this issue in a telephone poll of seafood consumers conducted on our behalf by an opinion survey firm back in 2007. More than 90% of people asked said they were in favour of restaurants displaying the country of origin beside their seafood dishes on the menu.

“We will continue pushing the Federal Government to introduce country of origin labeling on seafood in restaurants, because this is a federal rather than State responsibility.

“In the meantime, the QSIA will be encouraging restaurants to display that information voluntarily. In the case of restaurants featuring local FNQ seafood, I believe promoting the fact they serve local seafood will be a real bonus. They will certainly be supported by us through advertising and other promotion for ‘Queensland Catch’.

“It comes back to what we say: ask ‘Is it local?’ and insist on ‘Queensland Catch’. Restaurants who can answer ‘Yes’ to that question deserve the support of all FNQ residents and visitors. They are supporting local industry and they should be supported in return.”

FURTHER INFORMATION: Mr Neil Green 0408 182 252