

# EATING RIGHT

## Making Sense Of Seafood Guides

(NAPSA)—Eat this, don't eat that—Americans get information on food choices every day. Sometimes the message is easy to swallow; sometimes it's a little more complicated. Especially when that advice is about conserving marine resources by making responsible seafood choices.

For instance, respectable organizations such as the Audubon Society and the Monterey Bay Aquarium have issued guides that tell consumers whether or not they should choose certain species of fish or shellfish based on environmental and conservation considerations. While these guides are published with the best intentions, they're often misleading because they can't give the reader the whole story about a particular species. The scientific basis for these guidelines is often outdated, incomplete or simply unavailable.

Take, for example, farmed shrimp. These seafood guides suggest that shrimp farming is responsible for worldwide destruction of mangrove forests. Mangrove forests have been used by man for centuries for timber, fuelwood, leather tanning, and charcoal production, chipped for paper production, and reclaimed to pro-



vide land for agriculture, aquaculture, and the construction of mines, ports, tourist resorts, and housing. Natural disasters such as typhoons, tropical cyclones, hurricanes, drought leading to increased salinity, and microbial diseases are also important factors affecting mangrove abundance. Even if all of the lost mangrove areas had been cleared for shrimp farming, it would amount to less than 4% of the world's mangrove forests.

These guides also promote private management of public resources. Far from plundering the oceans unchecked, the fishing industry works closely with a host

of local and national government agencies to ensure that commercial seafood species will be available for generations to come. The National Marine Fisheries Service, under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, oversees a myriad of harvesting regulations, including fishing quotas for some species. The U.S. Coast Guard ensures that shrimp trawls in the Gulf of Mexico use devices that ensure the safety of sea turtles and that vessels in the Northeast steer clear of Right whales. The U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees site planning and wastewater management for fish farms. And the U.S. Customs Service checks import documentation on many of the imported species to ensure that they have been harvested in compliance with international fisheries management agreements and fishing restrictions.

To find out more information on individual species, visit [www.nfi.org](http://www.nfi.org) for fact sheets on more than 30 of the country's most popular species. To find out more about the seafood guides, visit [www.oceantrust.org/news](http://www.oceantrust.org/news). Get all the facts, then let your conscience be your guide when choosing seafood.