

Sponsor Statement for SJR 29

Labeling Fish as Wild or Farmed

Relating to the labeling of finfish as wild or farmed.

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SJR 29 urges the United States Congress to pass legislation that would require finfish to be labeled as having been farmed using antibiotics, dyes, and other chemicals or as wild. Alaska prides itself on its wild salmon and other finfish, and the sale of wild finfish is a significant part of the state's economy.

We have all seen the beautiful displays of farmed salmon at fish counters or restaurants without realizing that the varying shades of pink are artificially created. Almost 100% of all farmed salmon is artificially colored with either canthaxanthin or astaxanthin, a process sometimes called "color finishing" to give farmed salmon the attractive red color associated with wild salmon and salmon products that consumers expect.

Federal regulations call for declaration of the use of canthaxanthin or astaxanthin at the retail level but that information is rarely passed on to the consumer. Additionally, it is common practice to add antibiotics and other supplements to farmed finfish diets.

A national approach to labeling finfish products as having been farmed using antibiotic, dyes, or other chemicals or as wild would help consumers to make intelligent purchasing decisions and would enable consumers to purchase finfish products with confidence as to what they were buying.