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December 19, 2012

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: MISLABELED SEAFOOD SOLD IN RESTAURANTS AND GROCERY STORES

On November 20, 2012, on a motion by Supervisor Antonovich, the Board instructed the Department of Public Health (DPH) to outline next steps regarding mislabeled seafood.

As detailed in the November 1, 2012 memo regarding this subject, DPH collaborated with the California Department of Public Health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to appropriately address the issue of seafood mislabeling. Part of that effort involved in conducting a preliminary survey in Los Angeles County. The survey findings revealed a common deficiency in seafood labeling and menu disclosure wherein product information was found to be inaccurate or false. Inaccuracies were noted at all levels of seafood commerce (retail, wholesale, and import). For DPH to address this systematic problem, a broad partnership is required.

To this end, DPH is expanding the Seafood Task Force to include industry stakeholders, such as the National Fisheries Institute, Better Seafood Board, and Oceana. DPH will convene the Seafood Workgroup in early 2013 with the purpose of developing strategies to address species substitution, mislabeled seafood, and deficiencies in menu disclosures. Strategies will include developing educational components for DPH Environmental Health inspectors, consumers, and retail and wholesale food facilities that sell or distribute seafood. Workgroup efforts will also include creating an enforcement plan to be jointly supported by State and federal partners, as well as industry stakeholders.

DPH will report back to your Board on the progress of the Seafood Workgroup by April 2013.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like more information, please let me know.

JEF:pk  
PH:1204:004

c: Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors