

Seafood industry in Australia resists push to reel in traceable wild fish

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Seafood giants are resisting the push to use technology to trace wild seafood and clean up the industry as it may bite into their profits, a Monash University report reveals.

The article found an oligopoly of big seafood wholesalers and fish markets are reluctant to use traceability technologies, as a way of avoiding closer scrutiny on their supply chain practices.

Lead researcher Dr Benjamin Thompson said the use of digital technologies, including blockchain, would improve the integrity and sustainability of the seafood supply chain by disclosing more information about where and how seafood is caught, and its journey from ocean to plate.

Dr Thompson said it was clear from the research that a powerful group of actors at the centre of the supply chain are keen to maintain a culture of confidentiality regarding trade, price and product information.

This oligopoly reduces the power of fishers who have to accept the prices set by wholesalers rather than determining their own prices based on market demand and availability, he said.

Despite Australian fisheries being considered sustainably managed, the study found that non-wholesalers, including some chefs, suspected wholesalers of mislabelling and engaging in food fraud.

The study focused on the Victorian and New South Wales markets and involved 24 research interviews with those deeply embedded within Australia's seafood sector, from fishers and aquaculture companies to seafood restaurants and regulators.

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