

Fish often labelled as more desirable or eco-friendly species: study

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GUELPH, Ont. — A team of New York City high school students and researchers at the University of Guelph have teamed up to determine that fish sold at stores and restaurants is often mislabelled.

The students joined forces with Guelph researchers, who used their DNA testing facilities to examine 100 different samples of fish purchased at markets and restaurants in Toronto, New York and Guelph.

They found fully one-quarter of the samples had been labelled incorrectly, usually as a species that was either more expensive or otherwise more desirable.

"Many fish are hard to tell apart once they've been filleted and packaged," 17-year-old Trinity School student Louisa Strauss said in a release.

"We hope our work lights the way to getting mislabelled and endangered fish species out of grocery store refrigerators and frying pans."

The students say authorities should use DNA "bar-coding" technology to protect consumers from fraud and ensure endangered species aren't sold illegally.

Guelph researcher Robert Hanner says people with allergies to certain species could face danger if they eat mislabelled fish.

"This not only raises concerns of consumer fraud, but also public health," Hanner said in a release.

The most commonly mislabelled fish was red snapper. The study also found endangered species were labelled as fish that are considered eco-friendly.

"We are not certain where the mislabelling occurs, but it seems it is not the fishermen, since the mislabelled fish are from completely different parts of the world," Strauss and 18-year-old classmate Kate Stoeckle write in an article to be published next month in the U.S. journal *Pacific Fishing*.

"Perhaps the mislabelling occurs somewhere in the middle, when the fish are filleted and no longer easily identifiable."

The journal of Food Research International is scheduled to publish the Guelph findings next week.