

California Grocers Association

Statement Regarding Methylmercury Levels in Fish

March 1, 2010

California grocery retailers are committed to providing consumers with safe, wholesome food in compliance with state and national standards.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for the safety of commercial seafood. The FDA operates an oversight compliance program for fishery products under which responsibility for the product's safety, wholesomeness, identity and economic integrity rests with the processor or importer, who must comply with regulations.

Most commercial fish have relatively low amounts of methylmercury and can be eaten safely in moderate amounts. According to the FDA, fish are an excellent source of protein and are low in saturated fats. Fish contain omega-3 fatty acids that can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve how the brain develops in unborn babies and children.

However, the types of fish in this test –large, predatory, long-lived – often register higher levels of methylmercury.

CGA encourages fish consumers – particularly those at high risk, including pregnant and women who might become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children – to follow the safe eating recommendations set by the FDA and Environmental Protection Agency. These guidelines provide information to help consumers choose the safest fish to eat and can be found online.

In addition, many grocers voluntarily post informational signs and provide brochures for consumers on safe fish consumption. Some grocers employ independent companies to test the mercury levels of fish sold in their stores.