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## **Tighter Steps for Imported Seafood Safety** **Proposed**

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Staff Reporter

Koreans are eating more seafood than before, and imported products, mostly from China, Russia and Vietnam, accounted for 36 percent of all fishery goods sold in 2006.

Despite the increasing consumption, many consumers are not sure if imported seafood is safe enough to eat, said the National Assembly Research Service, Wednesday.

In a paper titled "Food Safety of Imported Seafood Products and Recommendations," the think tank found that the public distrust of imported goods resulted from flawed food safety monitoring and practices involving false labels of origins.

Compared with 1988, Korea imported 10 times more seafood in 2007, caused by an increase in demand and a decrease in local production.

The nation imported seafood products from about 80 countries worldwide, but those from China, Russia and Vietnam accounted for 56 percent of them.

A survey conducted by the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries earlier this year showed that 62 percent of Koreans didn't trust the food safety of imported seafood products.

The think tank pointed out that some 80 percent of seafood products worldwide are produced in nations with relatively poor reputations regarding sanitation and food safety, making the situation worse.

"Koreans eat more raw fish, such as sashimi, than people in many other nations. This makes Koreans feel more sensitive about the safety of imported fisheries products," said the paper.

Currently, the agriculture ministry randomly tests some 28 percent of imported goods to see if they meet food safety standards. It plans to increase the number of samples by 30 percent next year.

In addition, the ministry will increase the number of imported seafood items to undergo testing for antibiotics from the current 32 to 44 next year.

The think tank said food safety monitoring was flawed as the agriculture ministry reportedly exaggerated the number of products that it had investigated.

In addition, the institute recommended the government to take action immediately after food safety scares occur, rather than just taking preemptive safety measures.

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