

Welfare Measurement with Imperfect Information: An Exposition and Empirical Application to Fish Consumption Advisories

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Nearly every state currently issues "fish consumption advisories (FCAs)" to warn recreational anglers about potential health risks from the consumption of contaminated fish caught in local waters. FCAs are often viewed as imperfect, but necessary, interim measures, put in place to limit health risks while government agencies continue long-term efforts to reduce contaminant concentrations in fish. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of FCAs as a policy tool is limited by the fact that many anglers are completely unaware of local advisories and others misinterpret advisories

When consumers have incomplete information about the attributes of a product—such as the safety of fish obtained through recreational angling—the assessment of the benefits of policy efforts designed to improve these attributes becomes complicated. In essence, this is because consumer choices are "misinformed" and no longer accurately reveal preferences.

This empirical application used data from a survey of Tennessee anglers to estimate the value of improved information about fish consumption advisories as well as the value of quality improvements when information remains imperfect.

About Dr. Jakus ...

Dr. Jakus received his Ph.D. in Economics from North Carolina State University in 1992. He received a B.S. in Agricultural and Natural Resource Economics from the University of Nevada in 1982 and an M.S. in Agricultural and Natural Resource Economics from Colorado State University in 1984.

He joined the faculty in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Tennessee in 1992. He accepted a position at Utah State University in the Economics Department in 2001, and was promoted to Full Professor in 2003. He teaches Environmental Economics and Math Econ, among other courses, and currently serves as the department's Graduate Coordinator.

Most of Dr. Jakus' work has been in the realm of non-market valuation, with applications to recreation, food safety, and recycling. Current research is moving into the realm of risk and uncertainty, especially with regard to PCB and mercury contamination of fish and arsenic contamination of rural drinking water.

