

Codex/SPS Updates (Nov 2018 – March 2019)

The number of correspondence items between 01 November 2018 and 31 March 2019 from the monitored Codex Committees was 24, and 15 of those were relevant to the seafood industry. An overview is shown in Figure 1. In addition, Thailand and Macau each issued one Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) notification of relevance to seafood trade.

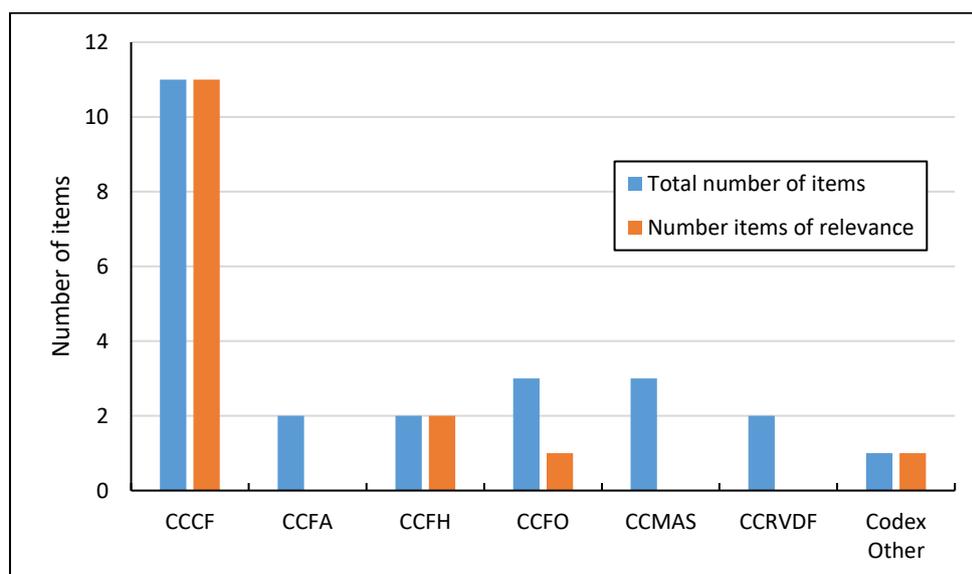


Figure 1 Codex correspondence: 01 November 2018 – 31 March 2019

The pertinent Codex/SPS activities that relate to seafood include:

- [Histamine - Update on sampling plans and harmonisation of control guidance](#)
- [Methylmercury – Sampling plans and maximum levels in other fish species](#)
- [Ciguatera – Ah-hoc FAO/WHO Expert Meeting](#)
- [Dioxins – EFSA lowers the tolerable weekly intake](#)
- [Named Fish Oils – CCFO26 report on conformity](#)
- [Food Fraud – Now on the Codex agenda](#)
- [Thailand SPS –New maximum levels \(MLs\) for various metal contaminants](#)
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Histamine - Update on sampling plans and harmonisation of control guidance

The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) is in the final stages of modifying the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products. These modifications aim to harmonise the histamine control guidance with the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products. Dr Stephen Pahl participated in an electronic working group and in November 2018 CCFH agreed with the recommendation from the eWG that the **histamine control guidance should be located directly after Section 9 in the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products. In addition, during the CCFH meeting the committee agreed to postpone the development of histamine sampling plan as many delegations expressed differing views.** The development of sampling plans will likely be reviewed in a few years' time when more data is available and the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) may have revised the General Guidelines on Sampling. The implications are that:

- The current Codex health-based safety limit for histamine of 200 mg/kg in any sample tested will remain (400 mg/kg for fish sauce).
- The current Codex histamine decomposition (quality) limit of 100 mg/kg based on the average (mean) of sample units tested will also remain

In March 2019 SafeFish widely canvassed the seafood industry for final comments on these changes through email notifications to executive officers and representatives of seafood sectors or associations that could potentially be impacted, **however, to date no feedback has been received.** SafeFish may make a formal submission to Codex Australia suggesting several minor grammatical changes relating to the harmonisation of the histamine control guidance. **The modifications to the Code of Practice with respect to histamine and histamine control are expected to be adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in July 2019.**

Methylmercury – Sampling plans and maximum levels in other fish species

The Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling (CCMAS) endorsed the methods of analysis for methylmercury, but was unable to respond to several questions raised by the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF). In addition, **CCMAS did not endorse the sampling plans for methylmercury, as proposed by CCCF.** The issue will return to the upcoming CCCF meeting for further consideration. SafeFish is sponsoring Dr Hazel Farrell (NSW Food Authority) to be part of Australia's delegation at this meeting.

Following the recent Codex adoption of maximum levels (MLs) for methylmercury in tunas, alfonsino, marlin and shark, the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF) established an electronic working group that prepared a **discussion paper on the establishment of MLs for methylmercury in additional fish species.** This discussion paper will be tabled at the upcoming CCCF meeting. **The discussion paper identifies the fish species for which MLs for methylmercury could be established and a suggested timeframe.**

During this process **SafeFish contacted relevant national, state and sector-level executive officers or representatives of the impending changes and made several submissions to Codex Australia.** In these submissions SafeFish continued to advocate that if MLs are set, then these should be based on a risk-benefit approach. SafeFish was also highly critical of an initial proposal that proposed MLs for methylmercury to be based on total mercury levels (often derived from a small number of data points with no consideration to the geographical distribution of the fishery or how consumption of the individual fish species would actually contribute to dietary exposure).

Ciguatera – Ah-hoc FAO/WHO Expert Meeting

On 19-23 November 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) held an expert meeting to develop scientific advice in response to a request from the 11th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF11). In particular, the requested scientific advice to FAO/WHO entailed a full evaluation of known ciguatoxins (toxicological assessment and exposure assessment), including geographic distribution and rate of illness; congeners; methods of detection; and based on this, guidance for the development of risk management options. **The FAO/WHO is aiming to release the meeting report by June 2019.**

Dioxins – EFSA lowers the tolerable weekly intake

In November 2018 the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a press release that confirmed the conclusion of previous assessments that dietary exposure to dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs – environmental pollutants present at low levels in food and feed – is a health concern. EFSA's Expert Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) has completed the Authority's first comprehensive review of the risks to human and animal health from these substances in food and feed. **The Panel has set a new tolerable weekly intake [TWI] for dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in food of 2 picograms per kilogram of body weight.**

SafeFish informed representatives from Tuna Australia and Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association of the developments. Whilst the new EFSA TWI is seven-times lower than the previous EU tolerable intake, no changes to maximum levels have been proposed.

Named Fish Oils – CCFO26 report on conformity

In August 2017 the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) invited comments regarding any monitoring of the Standard for Fish Oils (Codex Stan 329-2017) with respect to the conformity of named fish oils with the requirements (especially the fatty acid profile), and its effect on trade. In August 2017 SafeFish informed TSGA and NuMega of the call for information.

SafeFish maintained a watching brief of discussions at CCFO. At the 26th Session of CCFO no significant trade problems had been reported. However Chile highlighted that the monitoring period was too short and that fatty acid profiles alone are not adequate for confirmation of authenticity and needs to be accompanied with product tracing/traceability data. **CCFO agreed that no further monitoring of the implementation of the Standard for Fish Oils was needed.**

Food Fraud – Now on the Codex agenda

The Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) have established a EWG to further consider the role of CCFICS with respect to **tackling the challenge of food fraud in the context of food safety and fair practices in the food trade.** Alexandra McLaren (Department of Agriculture and Water Resources) will be leading the Australian position on the Food Fraud EWG. **SafeFish will maintain a watching brief and may input into the development of Australia's position.**

Thailand SPS –New maximum levels (MLs) for various metal contaminants

In February 2019 Thailand issued a SPS notification (THA263) that included their **intention to change the MLs for cadmium, lead and methylmercury in fish and fishery products**. No date has been set for the proposed adoption or enforcement.

SafeFish compared the proposed MLs to current Thailand, Codex and FSANZ MLs. **Most of the proposed changes were in line with Codex MLs. SafeFish informed national, state and sector-level executive officers or representatives of the impending changes.** To date no feedback has been received.

Macau SPS – Maximum levels (MLs) for sulphites in fish and fish products

On 20 March 2019, Macau issued a SPS notification (MAC24) that **revised the MLs of food additives. Changes came into effect on 05 March 2019.** Macau’s Standard for Uses of Preservatives and Antioxidants in Foodstuff includes MLs for sulphites in fish and fish products. An extract from an unofficial translation is below. **SafeFish informed relevant sector-level executive officers and other representatives of the changes.**

Additive	Food Category	Description	ML (residual SO ₂)
220 – sulfur dioxide 221 – sodium sulfite 222 – sodium bisulfite 223 – sodium metabisulfite 224 – potassium metabisulfite 225 – potassium sulfite 226 – calcium sulfite 227 – calcium bisulfite 228 – potassium bisulfite 539 – sodium thiosulfate	9.1.2	Fresh mollusks, crustaceans, and echinoderms	100 mg/kg
	9.2.1	Frozen fish, fish fillets, and fish products, including mollusks, crustaceans, and echinoderms	100 mg/kg – only applicable to molluscs, crustaceans and echinoderms
	9.2.4.2	Cooked mollusks, crustaceans, and echinoderms	150 mg/kg
	9.2.5	Smoked, dried, fermented, and/or salted fish and fish products, including mollusks, crustaceans, and echinoderms	30 mg/kg
	9.4	Fully preserved, including canned or fermented fish and fish products, including mollusks, crustaceans, and echinoderms	150 mg/kg (1000 mg/kg for canned abalone)
	12.6	Sauces and like products (includes fish sauce)	300 mg/kg

Upcoming Codex Meetings

Date	Committee	Location	SafeFish sponsored representation
25 - 29 March 2019	CCFA51 – 51 st Session of the Codex Committee on Food Additives	Jinan, China	-
29 April - 3 May 2019	CCCF13 – 13 th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminates in Foods	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Dr. Hazel Farrell (NSW Food Authority)
27 – 31 May 2019	CCMAS40 – 40 th Session of the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling	Budapest, Hungary	-
8 – 12 July 2019	CAC42 – 42 nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission	Geneva, Switzerland	-
4 – 8 November 2019	CCFH51 – 51 st Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene	USA (TBC)	-
TBC - 2020	CCRVDF25 – 25 th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods	TBC	-
22 – 26 February 2021	CCFO27 – 27 th Session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils	Malaysia (TBC)	-