

## SafeFish Partnership Meeting

Thursday 27th July 2017

### COMMUNIQUE

The SafeFish partnership held its quarterly meeting in Canberra at the offices of the Department of Agriculture, Water and Resources (DAWR). The meeting was chaired by Dr. Anne Astin (independently appointed chair for the July 2017-June 2018 period).

The SafeFish partners group is responsible for providing general oversight and strategy, and assisting in the identification of emerging and contemporary food safety issues impacting the seafood industry as well as assisting in communicating the technical outputs of SafeFish through appropriate channels in Australia and overseas to facilitate the resolution of these issues.

The discussions and outcomes from the meeting included:

#### **1. Formalized approach for New Zealand and Australian research collaboration**

Many of the food safety and trade issues facing the Australian and New Zealand seafood industries are similar. By collaborating on research and extension activities Australia and New Zealand could gain advantage of leveraged funds, resources and shared expertise. SafeFish and Seafood New Zealand will explore the potential for both formal and informal collaborations, including the potential for ministerial agreements.

#### **2. SafeFish value proposition**

SafeFish is scheduled for renewal in June 2018. Dr. Len Stephens was commissioned to conduct a review of the value of the work undertaken by SafeFish on behalf of the seafood industry and its impact. This review also outlined the proposed costs and some funding options to continue SafeFish post June 2018. A value proposition will be presented to industry bodies at the August Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC) stakeholder workshop in Adelaide, followed by consultation with industry in preparation for an FRDC application by September 2017.

#### **3. Fighting Food Waste and Fraud Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)**

A seafood authenticity project for the Fighting Food Waste and Fraud CRC bid was drafted by South Australian Research & Development Institute (SARDI), Curtin University, Honey and Fox, Safe Sustainable Seafood and ICS Seafood. This project proposal included partnerships with FRDC, Abalone Council of Australia (ACA), Southern Rock Lobster (SRL) and Australian Council of Prawn Fishers (ACPF), and focuses on countering the accidental and deliberate fraud of domestic and exported seafood. The SafeFish partners supported the concept and committed to in-kind funding, should the project proceed.

#### **4. Harmonised Australian Retailer Producer Scheme (HARPS)**

The seafood industry has an array of standards and regulations to meet various domestic markets requirements to ensure ongoing supply (e.g. supermarket requirements). As a result, industry is subjected to multiple audits. Other sectors, including horticulture and the Australian Food and Grocery Council are implementing harmonised certification schemes, significantly reducing the cost and time for industry. The SafeFish partners agreed to scope the possibility for a similar program for Australia's seafood industry.

## **5. Microplastics in Seafood**

Microplastics in seafood are an issue of heightened public interest both domestically and internationally. SafeFish will distribute a fact sheet on the issue to industry on this issue, and will continue to monitor the issue as a watching brief.

## **6. Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) in abalone**

During a trade mission to China with the Seafood Trade Advisory Group (STAG) and the Australasian Abalone Association (AAA) in May 2017, SafeFish met with key researchers and businesses to gain support for an amendment to the Chinese food standards code to allow sulphites in canned abalone. SafeFish is finalising the technical submission for AAA to use in their bid to allow Australian canned abalone to be exported to China.

## **7. Rapid test kits for Paralytic Shellfish Toxin (PST) analysis**

Marine biotoxins have been a substantial issue for bivalve shellfish recently, with 23 domestic and 3 international recalls occurring over the last 5 years, with consequential public health risks. The time taken to analyse samples for biotoxins is partly to blame. In response to this issue, SafeFish has successfully validated a rapid and cost effective biotoxin test kit. The kits can be used on-site with immediate results. The work will now be advanced to allow uptake of the kits into business and regulatory programs providing significant industry benefits including; protection of market access, reduced public health risk, re-opening of previously lost export markets, and an estimated \$500k per annum in saved analytical costs.

## **8. Codex Alimentarius update**

In June 2017, Hong Kong issued a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) notification proposing to establish/modify Maximum Levels (MLs) for metallic contamination in a range of foods and food groups including fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic animals. The proposed amendments will be stricter than Australian domestic (FSANZ) and Codex Maximum Limits. SafeFish is actively consulting with key industry stakeholders on this critical issue and potential ramifications for Australia's seafood industry and its markets.

Codex standards and Codes of Practice for seafood currently under review or development are:

- Methylmercury in fish;
- Ciguatoxins;
- Non Dioxin-like PCBs;
- Lead in fish;
- and fish oils.

SafeFish will participate in the Australian delegation to the next Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) meeting to be held in Illinois in November 2017 where the topics specifically relating to the seafood industry include:

- Proposed Draft Guidance on histamine control and sampling plans for histamine
- The revision of the Proposed Draft Revision on the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969) and its HACCP
- Proposal to merge all guidance for control of foodborne parasites: Guidelines on the Application of General Principles of Food Hygiene to the Control of Foodborne Parasites

## **9. Carbon monoxide use in Tuna**

There have been some industry concerns around the use of Carbon Monoxide in imported tuna. The Seafood Importers Association asked to bring this matter to the attention of SafeFish who agreed to provide the relevant Codex discussion documents.

## **10. Engagement with Seafood Industry Australia**

SafeFish has welcomed and met with Seafood Industry Australia (SIA). Potential areas for future collaborations include seafood authenticity development of a national seafood incident response plan and building industry capability.

The next meeting of the SafeFish partners is currently scheduled for October 24<sup>th</sup> 2017 in Sydney. A stakeholder event open to the public will be held on the evening following the meeting. Interested parties are invited to contact the SafeFish secretariat to register their interest in attending.

**Visit the new SafeFish website for further information: [www.safefish.com.au](http://www.safefish.com.au)**

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