

COMMUNIQUE

SafeFish held its quarterly meeting at the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) offices on Monday 8th April 2019, chaired by Dr. Anne Astin. The meeting included participants from DAWR, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), FRDC, representatives from various seafood industry sectors (wholesale, processing, import and export fields), and researchers.

Highlights of the topics discussed can be found below:

1. Potential changes to the Microbiological Criteria in the Food Standards Code

Dr. Wendy Henderson from FSANZ outlined the current review of the Food Standards Code (FSC) involving Standard 1.6.1 'Microbiological limits in food' and its associated Schedule. The aim of the review is to relocate all process hygiene criteria into compendia leaving only end-product standards in the Code. Consultation for a seafood working group has begun and FSANZ has approached SafeFish to be involved/lead this process to ensure that appropriate stakeholders are engaged and involved. SafeFish would like to invite any stakeholders with expertise or an interest in the area to [contact the secretariat to be involved](#).

2. Risk communication of microplastic research

The joint Adelaide University/SafeFish FRDC project 2017-199 'A preliminary assessment of the prevalence of marine microplastics in Australian seafood' has now begun. The project investigators have developed a detailed communication plan to ensure that information on the project is distributed to relevant stakeholders, and to enable correct messaging of the results obtained. Facts will be developed to be incorporated into media releases to ensure consistent messaging is achieved, and infographics detailing the findings of the work will be widely distributed.

3. National Traceability Project

Ms. Eleanor Doig from DAWR Trade and Market Access Division provided a presentation on the National Traceability Project which aims to enhance Australia's traceability systems into the future. The project comprises two parts: [Stage 1](#), a desk-top review of current systems, arrangements in place and global drivers for the future (this has been completed); and Stage 2, the development of commodity specific action plans developed through industry engagement processes (currently underway). At this point, an action plan for seafood has not yet been developed. In order to progress this, FRDC will raise the item with relevant seafood industry associations and Seafood Industry Australia (SIA) to gauge interest and engage with stakeholders. SafeFish and DAWR will coordinate a working group to develop the plan. If you would like to be involved, please contact [Nicole Stubing](#) or the [SafeFish secretariat](#) for more information.

4. Succession planning for SafeFish

Discussions on succession planning and skills mapping have been taking place between the SafeFish partners to ensure that the partnership remains sustainable and appropriately represented for the tasks that it undertakes. To evaluate this, a process is currently underway to determine what skills are needed, those currently provided by current members and areas where additional skills are needed. The secretariat also engages additional stakeholders to attend meetings based on their relevant expertise.

5. Ciguatera Workshop and Prioritisation Meeting

On March 27 and 28th 2019, SafeFish held a ciguatera fish poisoning workshop and meeting in Brisbane to outline the current knowledge of ciguatera in Australia, to prepare a national ciguatera research strategy by identifying priority issues and, determining how best to address them. Attendees included the NSW and QLD fishing industry, Sydney Fish Market, QLD and WA Health, FSANZ, DAWR, SafeFood QLD, NSW Food Authority, OzFoodNet and a number of Australian researchers. Feedback from the workshop was overwhelmingly positive and significant progress was made. SafeFish is currently drafting the strategic document to provide to the working group for comment before distributing to funding bodies and key stakeholders. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organisation (WHO) have expressed interest in the outcomes and will be sent a copy of the national research strategy to reduce ciguatera fish poisoning in Australia.

6. Notice of upcoming SafeFish prioritization workshop

In July 2019, SafeFish will be facilitating its annual prioritisation process to set its [technical program](#) for the next 12 months and beyond. This process involves scanning and collating current and emerging food safety and market access intelligence affecting seafood, prioritising these and undertaking technical work to address those of highest priority.

A number of issues have already been raised and will be included in this process. These include ciguatera fish poisoning research, the development of a seafood incident response plan for food safety issues, research into harmful algal blooms (HABs) and their impacts on seafood, off-label chemical use in Australia, vibrios in bi-valve shellfish, the revision of the Food Standards Code for microbiological criteria, the use of carbon monoxide as a processing aid, traceability within the seafood industry, and the effects of microplastics in seafood.

If you would like to nominate an issue that is not currently on the list above, [please contact the secretariat](#) prior to **COB 14/06/2019**.

7. Iso-eugenol (AQUI-S) fact sheet

Following a trade recall of eels in South Korea, the SafeFish secretariat compiled a fact sheet for the seafood industry on Iso-eugenol, more commonly referred to as AQUI-S to ensure that accurate information was available on the use of this compound in seafood. The fact sheet contains information on what the substance is, why there are restrictions on its use, how industry can get approval to use this compound off-label, and how it is currently being regulated. To download it, please visit the [SafeFish website](#).

The next SafeFish meeting will be held in Adelaide in July 2019.

Meetings are now open to observers. Interested parties should contact the SafeFish secretariat to register their attendance.

For enquiries, please contact Natalie Dowsett - SafeFish Executive Officer: 08 8429 2286

Email: info@safefish.com.au

Website: www.SafeFish.com.au