

COMMUNIQUE

SafeFish held its quarterly meeting at the Plant Research Centre on Tuesday 21st August 2018, chaired by Dr. Anne Astin. The meeting was successful with 23 participants from Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR), Food Standards Australia New Zealand, FRDC, Seafood Industry Australia, a range of seafood industry representatives from the catch, wholesale, processing, import and export fields and research advisory committees, and SARDI researchers in attendance.

An overview of the topics that were discussed can be found below:

1. Prioritization of Issues to Form the 2018-19 SafeFish Work Program

SafeFish undertakes a full prioritization process (which includes scanning for issues, producing hazard sheets and undertaking a risk ranking process) every few years, with the last being run in 2016. In the interim years, a smaller process to prioritize the issues that have not yet been progressed with technical research is facilitated to determine the SafeFish work program for the following year. This process was run at the last SafeFish meeting and two priority issues to work on for 2018/19 were agreed: a national strategy for ciguatera capability development (research and public health), and harmonization of Australian biotoxin regulations with international standards. The urgent issue of development of a national seafood incident response plan was identified as a high priority at the meeting, however due to the scale of the work and the limited resources, it was referred to the FRDC stakeholder forum for broader discussion. If you would like more information on this process, please contact the [SafeFish secretariat](#).

2. The use of Carbon Monoxide and Odourless, Flavourless Smoke in Fish

The use of Carbon Monoxide (CO) and odourless flavourless smoke in fish processing was a key point of discussion at this meeting as there have been a number of cases where its use has created a market advantage due to its ability to enhance the appearance and extend the shelf life of seafood. The Food Standards Code currently restricts the use of CO by itself, however the use of odourless smoke (which is mainly CO) is permitted as long as the product is labelled as being smoked. Mr. Mark Boulter from the Seafood Importers Association Australia (SIAA) and Mr. Mike Pearce from Seafood Processors Australia gave presentations to outline how these products are currently being used by their associations, and discussions were had by the SafeFish partners relating to whether the current standards were adequate. Given this is mainly an interpretation and enforcement issue, SafeFish partners agreed to write to the Implementation Subcommittee of Food Regulation to highlight the issue and request its consideration. SafeFish will continue to monitor this issue.

3. Seafood Authenticity Report

While traceability is one method of combatting food fraud, it is not sufficient on its own. Increasingly, attention is turning to methods for determining authenticity in the market, so SafeFish has recently completed a report that critically reviews the available tools and provides information on the current state of play relating to food traceability and authenticity in Australia for the Seafood Industry. The report details information for track and trace technology, DNA metabarcoding, trace metal profiling, chemical fingerprinting, stable isotope technologies and metabolomics. This report is freely available from the [SafeFish website](#).

4. PASE Biotoxin Test Kit Project Update

This project has been extremely successful in its operation, engagement by industry/regulators and co-investment (the initial \$15K SafeFish investment has been leveraged to close to \$400K over the life of the project). Following the validation of the kit, a workshop was held to train industry on the use of the kits. This was extremely well attended and identified a number of variables/issues that were able to be addressed and overcome. A proficiency trial followed the formal training which highlighted that the kits are not as easy to use as originally thought and ongoing training and experience in interpreting the data is required to ensure that the kits can be used effectively in shellfish businesses in the future. The SafeFish input into this project has now been completed, however the potential use of this kit as a regulatory tool is being raised at the upcoming Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Committee meeting in September.

5. Input into *Codex Alimentarius* and other International Standard Setting Bodies

Technical input was provided for a number of issues affecting seafood at Codex, with substantial input and consultation provided on the call for data by FAO/WTO for Ciguatoxin through the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF), input into the control guidance for histamine levels at the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH), as well as comments relating to establishing a level for Methylmercury in fish species at CCCF. A copy of the Codex update for this period can be accessed through the [SafeFish website](#).

A recent recall from Korea relating to residues of Iso-eugenol in live eel products highlighted that the levels that were proposed to be implemented by Korea are now being applied (this was initiated in July 2018). Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for a number of metallic compounds will be implemented and enforced by Hong Kong from November onwards. This has the potential to impact a number of seafood commodities. For further information, please contact [Dr. Stephen Pahl](#).

6. New Reports Page for the SafeFish Website

The SafeFish website was recently re-designed to make the reports section more user-friendly and easier to navigate. There is now the ability to search for reports using keywords and filters, and you are able to directly link to documents and report. To explore this new functionality, [click here](#).

7. SARDI Food Safety & Innovation Researchers

Find below a brief bio for three SARDI Food Safety and Innovation researchers that have direct involvement with SafeFish and its research:



Dr. Stephen Pahl (Research Scientist)

Dr. Stephen Pahl specializes in food safety, product development and process innovation within the seafood sector. He completed a PhD in 2010 in Chemical Engineering and has over 15 years' experience in bioprocess engineering research and development activities. Dr Pahl is currently the SafeFish facilitator for Codex and other International standard setting processes and recently released a review of commercial tools and technologies that can be used to identify species substitution and mislabelling.



Dr. Andreas Seger (Senior Research Officer)

Dr. Andreas Seger has a background in the mitigation of fish-killing algal blooms, with expertise in algal physiology, algal culturing and toxicology. He joined the SARDI Food Safety and Innovation group in early 2018 to help study the uptake and depuration of paralytic shellfish toxins by oysters, abalone and rocklobster, as well as coordinate the SafeFish ciguatera working group.



Dr. Valeria Torok (Research Scientist)

Dr. Valeria Torok has been part of the SARDI Food Safety and Innovation team since 2012 and is both the Food Microbiology Sub-Program Leader and the Fighting Food Waste CRC Food Safety and Integrity Theme Leader. She has helped establish and expand the team's foodborne virus testing capability in both shellfish and produce, establish cell culture capability for foodborne viruses and parasites and has a keen interest in the development of novel real-time diagnostics for foodborne pathogens and hazards.

The next SafeFish meeting will be held in Brisbane on November 14th 2018.

The partner meetings are open to observers. Interested parties are invited to contact the SafeFish secretariat to register their attendance.

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Visit the SafeFish Website for further information

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