

# SEAFOOD TRADE MATTERS

## e-Newsletter

### SafeFish Update January 2014



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## Methyl Mercury in Fish

Following an FAO/WHO expert consultation on the risks and benefits of fish consumption in 2010, the eighth session of Codex Committee for Contaminants in Food (CCCF8) has been considering changes to the guidelines for Methyl Mercury in Fish. Debate continues on several aspects, including the best approach for managing this issue: the provision of guideline levels (as current), the move to convert these to maximum levels, setting limits based on a risk-benefit approach or considering risk management measures other than maximum limits with consumer advisories playing a more important role. The draft report of an electronic working group has been circulated for comment and can be [accessed here](#). It is expected there will be minor changes to the paper which will be discussed at the next CCCF8 meeting in the Netherlands in mid-March. SafeFish is canvassing the seafood industry's response to this report to feed into the Australian position that will be taken to that meeting. Any comments should be submitted to [Natalie.dowsett@sa.gov.au](mailto:Natalie.dowsett@sa.gov.au) by 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2014.

The provisional recommendations for discussion during CCCF8 are:

1. The CCCF should consider the following on the basis of the discussion paper
  - a. Appropriate analyte and necessity of conversion factor (refers to the use of total mercury or methylmercury for settling limits);
  - b. New classification of fish species instead of “Predatory” and “Non-predatory”;
  - c. Effectiveness of GL for fish other than predatory fish at 0.5 mg/kg as a risk management tool;
  - d. Revocation of the GL for predatory fish, 1 mg/kg and elaboration of new MLs for total mercury or methylmercury in new class such as a group covering tunas, billfish and sharks
  - e. Whether GLs are appropriate risk management tools for MeHg in fish by giving more consideration to health benefit from fish consumption.
- 2 If it is agreed that regulatory limits for mercury in fish are necessary, then the current GLs should be reviewed, and they should preferably be converted to MLs.
- 3 Although consumption advice was out of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this eWG, it should be discussed at the CCCF8.

## **Codex Committee on Fish & Fish Products (CCFFP) Meeting**

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The 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the Codex Committee on Fish & Fish Products (CCFFP) is being held in Bergen, Norway on February 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> 2014. SafeFish are sending a representative to the meeting to assist the Australian Delegation by providing scientific advice. In addition to this, SafeFish has also engaged relevant members of the seafood industry to provide assistance in developing technical advice around relevant CCFFP standards.

The issues that SafeFish have developed advice for are as follows:

- Draft Performance Criteria for Reference and Confirmatory Methods for Marine Biotoxins in the Standard for Live and Raw Bivalve Molluscs (CX/FFP14/33/5)
- Standard for Smoked Fish, Smoke-Flavoured Fish and Smoke-Dried Fish – Section 4 Food Additives (CX/FFP14/33/6)
- Draft Standard for Raw, Fresh and Quick Frozen Scallop Products (CX/FFP14/33/7)
- Proposed Draft Code of Practice on the Processing of Scallop Meat (CX/FFP14/33/8)
- Discussion Paper on Histamine (CX/FFP14/33/13)
- Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products (optional final product requirements for commodities) (CL 2013/27-FFP)

## SafeFish Prioritization Process

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In the next few months, SafeFish will be coordinating a process to identify and prioritize food safety and trade and market access issues affecting the Australian seafood industry. Following this process a work-plan for 2014-15 will be generated in which SafeFish will provide technical research/advice to assist in the resolution of high priority issues.

Please contact SafeFish if you have a food safety related issue that you would like to see included in this process: [natalie.dowsett@sa.gov.au](mailto:natalie.dowsett@sa.gov.au)

The prioritization process will entail the following:

- An independent consultant will undertake a risk ranking process on the issues identified, taking into consideration the likelihood of impact on trade and the consequences (severity) of any impact.
- The SafeFish Secretariat will liaise with its Technical and Industry Expert Pools to scope the issues identified and establish whether technical input could assist in resolution of the problems.
- Based on this feedback the SafeFish Secretariat will form a short list of issues that could be addressed by technical work.
- A prioritization workshop involving key stakeholders (partnership members, technical & industry expert/(s), panel members and other relevant parties) will then be held to discuss the potential progression of the short listed issues. This workshop will also allow stakeholders to provide input to the shortlist of issues and suggest alterations to this list.
- Following the prioritization workshop, the technical work program for SafeFish will be generated.