

COMMUNIQUE

Due to COVID-19, we are facing a time where there are incredible disruptions to food chains. Given this, food safety could not be more important. If you have any concerns, issues, or need information or support please visit the following sources of information for assistance:

- For regulations and standards, visit the [Food Standards Australia, New Zealand website](#)
- For COVID specific food safety information, visit <http://seafoodsafetycovid19.wordpress.com/>
- For COVID specific information relating to travel, food safety, seafood demand, reputational risk, supply chains and other impacts, visit the [FRDC COVID-19 webpage](#).
- For information and links to resources to assist Australian seafood exporters manage the impact of COVID on their businesses, visit the [Seafood Trade Advisory Group webpage](#).
- For assistance with incident response, please contact the [SafeFish secretariat](#)
- For import/export controls and assistance, visit the [Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment website](#).
- For the national peak-body representing Australian seafood, visit the [Seafood Industry Australia website](#)
- For assistance with New Zealand seafood (standards, food safety, trade etc.) visit the [Seafood New Zealand website](#)

SafeFish held its quarterly meeting virtually through Zoom on Thursday 12th November 2020, chaired by Dr. Anne Astin AM. The meeting included participants from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Food Standards Australia, New Zealand, the New Zealand Seafood Industry Association, representatives from Australian seafood industry sectors (wholesale, processing, import and export fields), and researchers. Highlights of the discussions can be found below:

1. New bid for SafeFish 2021 to 2025

The process for building the re-bid proposal to secure industry and FRDC funding for SafeFish for 2021-2025 is well under way. The Secretariat has begun canvassing existing funding partners for their continued support and also circulated a stakeholder survey to identify if the services, activities and outputs that SafeFish currently provides are what our members need and want. Throughout these consultation efforts, the Secretariat determined additional elements to be included in the re-bid proposal for development in the new project. These include:

- The development of industry specific food safety risk registers, including ongoing scanning and updates to ensure that the risks to particular sectors are captured effectively.
- Assisting the Seafood Trade Advisory Group in developing a module in the Exporter Training Package that would include identifying specific food safety risks, accreditation requirements and country standards to assist with seafood export.
- To continue providing ciguatera research, with a specific focus on educating health care workers and recreational fishers.
- To extend capability within SafeFish by engaging students to assist with research deliverables, and to provide additional training opportunities for stakeholders (through workshops, masterclasses etc.).

2. Ciguatera Survey



Over 400 fish species worldwide have been found to carry ciguatera, including a number of tropical reef fish species.

As an outcome of the [National SafeFish Ciguatera Strategy](#) that was developed in 2019, SafeFish has been working to raise the awareness of the toxin amongst recreational fishers in Australia. To do this, a short survey on ciguatera has been developed - what it is, how it ends up in the fish, and how to avoid it. We are also hoping to gauge the willingness of the recreational fishing community to be involved in future citizen science projects to improve our understanding of ciguatera and to develop real-time risk maps of hotspots to avoid.

Have you ever heard of ciguatera fish poisoning? Would you like to learn more about it and help to reduce the risk of it in the future? If yes, have your say in our survey by [clicking here](#), or read more about it on the Redmap blog by [clicking here](#).

3. Emergency Response

A core function of SafeFish is the ability to provide incident response advice and management to industry and regulators, to enable them to appropriately manage food safety and market access related emergencies when they arise. With vast stakeholder networks, consisting of experts in a range of fields, consultants and scientists as well as access to a range of regulators (both on a State and Federal level), SafeFish has the ability to quickly connect industries with the appropriate parties and provide assistance to work through the restriction as quickly as possible.

If you have any questions about this service or you require help with an incident, please don't hesitate to contact the [SafeFish secretariat](#).

4. 2020 SafeFish Annual Report



The 2019-2020 annual report is now available to download from the SafeFish website: <http://safefish.com.au/reports/annual-reports/2019-2020-safefish-annual-report>. The report contains information about our activities and outcomes for the last financial period. This includes information relating to:

- SafeFish governance arrangements
- Input into international standard development (e.g. Codex)
- Technical research to overcome trade and food safety issues
- Communication and extension activities
- Future research and direction of SafeFish

5. Review of Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act. 1991

From October to November 2020, the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* (FSANZ Act) was available for public review. The process included a comprehensive examination of the effectiveness of the *FSANZ Act 1991* and the associated operations and responsibilities of FSANZ. Stakeholders were asked for their views on a Scoping Paper, which outlined key issues identified with the Act and provided an opportunity for views and suggestions for both legislative and operational reform. SafeFish, in conjunction with the Fish Names Committee and FRDC completed a submission on behalf of the seafood industry following consultation with various parties. The submission highlighted the following areas that had caused issues/delays or concerns in the past:

- The inconsistent application of FSANZ Standards
- The inconsistent harmonisation across States and within jurisdictions
- The inability of FSANZ to accept International Risk Assessments without having to undertake a full assessment of the data themselves
- The increasing role of FSANZ to support businesses with Food Safety advice rather than being limited to a standard setting body
- The inability to coordinate or facilitate food safety research within FSANZ

For further information on the review, [please click here](#). SafeFish will update its stakeholders on the outcomes of the review when they become available.

6. Review of the New Zealand Animal Products Act 1999

Seafood New Zealand is in the process of participating in a series of external reference group workshops bringing together industry leaders and experts to undertake a redesign and review of the current *Animal Products Act 1999*. These workshops have been coordinated by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) in New Zealand in order to simplify the content and potentially remove some of the tertiary requirements that are listed in the Act. Following the workshops, a consultation process will also be undertaken to gather input and comment from the general public to ensure that the redesigned regulations are fit-for-purpose. This process is ongoing with a targeted end date of March 2022. For further information, [please visit the MPI New Zealand website](#).

7. SafeFish Stakeholder Survey

As we are currently in the final year of our project term, we have commenced the process for a re-bid to continue SafeFish from July 2021 to June 2025. To assist with this, in November 2020 we circulated a survey to all stakeholders to seek advice on the areas that are working well, those that need improvement, and getting feedback on other areas/services that we could potentially develop in the future.

Thank you to all of those that participated in the survey. We asked, you responded, and here is a snapshot of what you told us:

8. Next SafeFish meeting

The next SafeFish meeting will be held virtually in March 2021. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity for our many stakeholders to attend and engage with partners and other key industry, research and government members. If you would like to attend or present at our next meeting, please contact the [secretariat](#) to register your interest.



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

Email: info@safefish.com.au

Website: <https://www.safefish.com.au>