

# THE FISH INSPECTOR

A Newsletter on Seafood Inspection, Quality Control and Technology



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## GLOBAL

### FAO: Codex adopts new food safety and quality standards

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year with the 46<sup>th</sup> session adopting a series of new food safety and quality standards including: the new Guidelines for the Control of Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) in Raw Beef, Fresh Leafy Vegetables, Raw Milk and Raw Milk Cheeses, and Sprouts; the Guidelines for the Safe Use and Reuse of Water in Food Production and Processing; and Revisions to the Standard for Follow-up Formula (CXS 156-1986). A new Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Mycotoxins Contamination in Cassava and Cassava-based Products was also adopted, as well as Principles and Guidelines on the Use of Remote Audit and Inspection in Regulatory Frameworks and Revisions to General Guidelines on Sampling (CXG 50-2004). Report adoption was over in seven hours, with CAC Chairperson, Steve Wearne (United Kingdom), commending delegates for their efforts in facilitating the adoption and for their work throughout the week. Find more information: [here](#)

### FAO: How new Codex guidelines will help food business operators addressing water hazards

The safe use and re-use of water in food production and processing guidelines provide a framework of general principles and examples for applying a risk-based approach to determine if the water to be sourced, used, and re-used by food business operators involved in food production and processing is fit for purpose from a microbiological safety perspective. "Access to potable water is not always an option when it comes to food production and processing so it is important to have an approach that will allow the safe use of water from different sources at the various steps in the food chain" said Sarah Cahill, Senior Food Standards Officer, Codex Secretariat. "These Guidelines are an important tool that will help in the application of a risk-based approach to water use in the food sector, focusing on a fit for purpose approach and recognizing that, for many,

water is a scarce resource". The work was co-led by Honduras, where the guidelines are already being applied and where authorities anticipate an increasing need for efficient use of water in the production of food. "We are very proud of these guidelines and happy to have received the support of Codex Members and Observers during their development", said Mirian Bueno, Honduras, who was part of the working group that led the development of these guidelines, "We now need to work on their implementation to see how to better use them as they become the reference point for our government and industries". Read more about the guidelines and their role in food production and processing, in a new feature story published by FAO: [here](#)

## ASIA PACIFIC NEWS

### Australia: CoOL mandatory for hospitality

The unanimous vote by the State Governments around Australia to support the Albanese Government's plans to change Australian Consumer Law to allow for the implementation of mandatory Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) for seafood in hospitality settings is a historic win for the seafood industry. CoOL gives consumers dining in Australian cafes, restaurants, and other food service areas clear and transparent information about the origin of the seafood, empowering them to make choices aligned with their preferences and values. The implementation of mandatory CoOL for seafood in food service has been one of Seafood Industry Australia's (SIA's) key member priorities since its establishment and a cause championed by many other state representatives, sector representatives and businesses across the Australian Seafood industry for over 15 years. (SIA's) CEO, Veronica Papacosta, commented on the historic decision, stating, "It's difficult to explain how important this decision is to all of the industry leaders and advocates who have put some much time and effort over the last 15 years into achieving this outcome. SIA is so proud and grateful to have been a part of a unified stand by the wild catch and aquaculture sectors of this amazing industry. To have delivered a result that will



1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Wisma LKIM, Jalan Desaria, Pulau Meranti, 47120 Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia  
(P.O. Box 10899, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

Tel: (603) 8066 8112 • Fax: (603) 8060 3697 • E-mail: [info@infofish.org](mailto:info@infofish.org)  
Website: [www.infofish.org](http://www.infofish.org)



IAFI

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Sustainable Global  
Seafood Supply

provide the Australian community with the ability to make informed choices about the food they purchase and consume is a credit to the constant support and encouragement of SIA members and leaders across the industry. The new legislation is scheduled for implementation in 2025, following a suitable transition period and an extensive education campaign. In the coming months, detailed advice will be made available to assist the hospitality and seafood sectors in understanding and adapting to these new requirements.

Read more: [here](#)

### **Japan: IAEA inspectors test Fukushima fish**

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors took samples from a fish market near the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant following the release of treated wastewater from the wrecked facility in August. China and Russia have banned Japanese seafood imports since the discharge began but Japan says it is safe, a view backed by the IAEA. Some 540 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water have been collected since a tsunami sent three reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 plant into a meltdown in 2011 in one of the world's worst nuclear disasters. Japan says that the water has been filtered by its special ALPS technology of radioactive substances except tritium and diluted with seawater. Japan says tests have shown that tritium levels are within safe limits. The IAEA team comprising scientists from China, South Korea and Canada were collecting fish, water and sediment samples this week to verify Japan's findings. Paul McGinnity, a member of the mission, told reporters that the aim was "to ascertain whether the Japanese labs are measuring and analyzing properly" the tritium levels. "Tritium is the concern because tritium levels as you know are relatively high because it is not removed by the ALPS process," McGinnity said. "I can say that we don't expect to see any change (in tritium levels), certainly in the fish. We do expect to see a small rise in levels of tritium in seawater samples very close to the discharge point. But otherwise, we don't. We expect to find levels that are very similar to what we measured last year. "Samples will be sent back to labs in the team members' home countries for independent review, and the IAEA will evaluate and publish those results.

Read more: [here](#)

### **Thailand: Imported fish and seafood should undergo strict quality check in a bid to boost consumption**

In a bid to build consumer confidence, the Department of Fisheries has instructed its officials to check all imported fish and seafood products, check final processing steps and block illegal imports. Mesak Pakdeekong, the department's director-general, said due to COVID-19, people are not consuming many fish or seafood, which has brought down the prices.

"However, export of processed fish and seafood products is likely to pick up, so this is an opportunity for farmers to improve their processing system," he said. In a bid to gain confidence among people, he said the department has appointed the Fish Quarantine and Fishing Vessels Inspection Division and Fish Inspection and Quality Control Division to check imported fish and seafood products. The departments are also tasked with ensuring all processing procedures are done in line with the department's standards. He also dismissed rumours that Thailand was importing shrimp from India, saying that the import of shrimp from the subcontinent had been banned since 2017. However, the department is evaluating Indian shrimp exporters. "We confirm that all processes related to fish and seafood products are done under the department's supervision. Hence, we call on businesses, farmers and consumers to start selling and buying fish and seafood products in a bid to stimulate the country's economy."

Read the full article: [here](#)

## **EUROPEAN NEWS**

### **32 rapid alerts were notified for fishery products**

During December 2023 there were 32 notifications for fishery products with 6 rapid alert notifications for bivalve mollusc products, 5 for crustacean products, 21 for other fishery products and none for cephalopods or gastropod products. These included 3 consignments of frozen shrimp from India, 2 consignments of swordfish from Spain, 3 consignments of frozen salmon from the USA and 2 consignments of fresh bluefin tuna from Spain.

**Source:** Megapesca Lda FishFiles  
[www.megapesca.com](http://www.megapesca.com)

### **Spain: EC finds inadequate freezing controls on 19 Spanish tuna vessels**

DG SANTÉ reported on an audit of the Spanish official controls concerning the handling and freezing of tunas caught by its fleet of tuna freezing vessels. The audit included videoconferences and visits to vessels discharging in third countries to observe actual practices in situ. The mission found that one new freezer vessel was approved for operation without having submitted all of the documentary information required. With regard to two-stage freezing processes, the Spanish Competent Authority had issued guidance to the industry setting out a requirement to validate freezing processes to meet the legal requirement that frozen fish be "quick frozen to -18°C" even when brine freezing (at higher temperatures) is employed (with additional subsequent steps). However, operators from 19 vessels were allowed to continue to sell tuna for non-cannery markets even when they had not complied with this validation requirement. Furthermore, such products also entered the EU via non-Spanish border posts, which are unable (in law) to control for

validation studies. As a result, these operators were considered by the Commission to have been supplying tuna for consumption without full compliance with EU requirements. Furthermore, official histamine controls were applied in some Spanish tuna vessels only once every four five years, regardless of risk assessment. HACCP based operator checks for histamine were not required to use the official reference method. The mission also found that the laboratory network used by Spanish authorities and industry does not use the EU reference method for histamine, contrary to the provisions of EU regulations. The Spanish CA, the Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition - Agencia Española de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutrición - AESAN, was requested to correct the deficiencies, several of which had been identified in a previous 2019 Commission audit concerning controls over the tuna industry.

**Source:** Megapesca Lda FishFiles  
www.megapesca.com

### **EC: Exposes fraud in sturgeon products (caviar and meat): 21% illegal**

In the November edition of the food fraud newsletter, the European Commission published the results of a genetic study of sturgeon products (performed by isotope analysis and DNA testing) in Bulgaria and Romania. Samples were taken from local and online shops, restaurants, bars, local markets, intermediaries, aquaculture facilities, fishermen and undercover shoppers. Out of 149 samples of sturgeon products (caviar and meat): 21% were derived from illegal wild-caught fishes, 11 % were sold in violation of CITES and EU legislation and 32% were mis-labelled in terms of either the species or the production method. Fishing for sturgeons is no longer permitted in the Danube and the Black Sea, and all sturgeon species are now listed in the CITES.

**Source:** Megapesca Lda FishFiles  
www.megapesca.com

### **EC: Listeria infections kill 10 across EU**

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control published an article concerning an outbreak due to a genomic cluster of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections identified in the EU/EEA and the United Kingdom. In 2022-2023, contaminated fish products from these plants reached retail markets with 64 cases reported in five EU/EEA countries, including 10 fatal cases suspected between 2019 and 2023. The outbreak concerned isolates from 12 fish products potentially originating from two processing plants in Lithuania.

**Source:** Megapesca Lda FishFiles  
www.megapesca.com

## **NORTH AMERICAN NEWS**

### **FDA: Front-of-Package nutrition labeling**

The FDA is prioritizing its nutrition initiatives, and one goal is to help ensure that consumers in the U.S. have greater access to nutrition information and they can use to identify healthier food choices. Improving eating patterns can, in turn, improve everyone's health and wellness. The Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA hosted a meeting External on front-of-package labeling on November 16, 2023. In an earlier Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health on September 28, 2022, the White House released a National Strategy to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030, so that fewer consumers experience diet-related diseases like type 2 diabetes, obesity and hypertension. The strategy includes several FDA initiatives to help accelerate efforts to empower consumers with information and create a healthier food supply. The National Strategy highlights that the FDA will conduct research and propose a standardized front-of-package (FOP) system for food packages to help consumers, particularly those with lower nutrition knowledge, quickly and easily identify foods that can help them build a healthy eating pattern. FOP labeling would complement the Nutrition Facts label that is required on food packages by displaying simplified, at-a-glance nutrition information that gives consumers additional context to help them quickly make more informed food selections. (The Nutrition Facts label is typically on the back or side of food packages). The use of FOP nutrition labeling schemes has increased dramatically around the world in recent years. The FDA is now conducting consumer research to explore the development of a FOP nutrition labeling scheme and plans to issue a proposed rule for public comment. Find more information regarding data collections associated with the FOP consumer research: [here](#)

## **LATIN AMERICAN NEWS**

### **Peru: Satisfactory audit allows Peruvian products to continue to be exported**

The National Fisheries Health Agency (SANIPES) reported that the Korean Ministry of Food and Drugs (MFDS) was in the country carrying out a health audit of fish processing plants. The successful results allow Peru to continue exporting fishing products to the Korean market. The entity indicated that during the development of the audits, SANIPES specialists accompanied the Korean representatives, who rigorously evaluated compliance with health standards and production processes in the establishments located in Cañete, Chincha, Paíta and Talara. The companies provided details on the development of processing activities and documentation related to production controls. In this review, emphasis was placed on staff training, the plant's performance in health alert situations, the



storage and supply of water for process and other uses, the flow of personnel and the control of hydrobiological waste, among others. They also randomly required microbiological and physical-chemical controls carried out on products exported to the Korean market in the last three years. "This approval reinforces Peru's position as an important supplier of safe, high-quality seafood products in the global market, and is expected to open new export opportunities to Korea and other international destinations," said SANIPES. According to the Ministry of Production (PRODUCE), Peru exported more than 9300 tonnes of fishing products to Korea during 2022, through health certificates issued by SANIPES. Korea was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among the main economies that imported Peruvian fish species. Another piece of information provided is that more than 30 companies required health certificates to export fishing products intended for human consumption to Korea. The main plants where fishing products that are exported to Korea are processed are located in the regions of Piura, Tumbes, Lima, Callao, Moquegua, Tacna and Ica; and the main species exported are frozen squid (*Dosidicus gigas*) in various presentations, frozen flying fish eggs (*Cheilopogon heterurus*) and frozen prawns (*Penaeus vannamei*) from aquaculture.

Read more: [here](#)

## AFRICAN NEWS

### African Network on Fish Technology and Safety (ANFTS) 2024

ANFTS aims to provide up-to-date information, promote research and technical collaboration, and enhance national research capacity facilitate the exchange and transfer of technology as well as information geared to support the sustainable development of post-harvest activities in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains. This call for papers is a request to experts and professionals to share their recent knowledge and advances in line with ANFTS objectives. The selected papers will be presented at the physical meeting scheduled for 2024. The meeting offers a forum for sharing and discussing new technologies and innovations in fish technology, fish safety, trade, socioeconomics, as well as food and nutrition security.

The meeting will provide a forum for stakeholders in the post-harvest fisheries sector to:

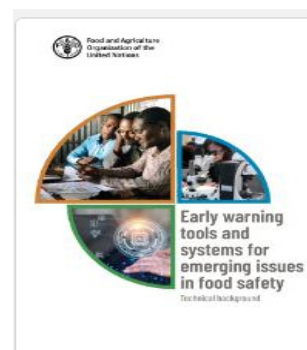
- a) Share research findings, technological innovations, and valuable insights.
- b) Address current constraints hindering effective contribution of post-harvest fisheries research to sustainable development.
- c) Develop successful synergies among actors within the post-harvest fisheries sector for fisheries development.

Find more information: [here](#)

## PUBLICATIONS

### Early warning tools and systems for emerging issues in food safety - Technical background

Early warning (EW) systems have a critical role in the reduction of risks from various hazards. The capability and capacity to identify early signals and emerging food safety risks, and to provide on-time EW that would allow for the mitigation of related upcoming risks have therefore become vital for national and international authorities and organizations dealing with food safety. The developments in early warning systems show a shift from reactive towards proactive systems. With the rapid development of modern systems fed by numerous, real-time and diverse data, as well as the advancements achieved in artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques, increasingly tested and validated digital methods and models have become available for food safety early warning and analysis. This technical background report enhances the awareness of the available evidence-based innovative digital tools and provides technical background information to support their use for proactive food safety early warning.



FAO. 2023. Early warning tools and systems for emerging issues in food safety – Technical background. Rome.

Download the full publication: [here](#)

The next issue of THE FISH INSPECTOR will be distributed in April 2024. Any information you may wish to have disseminated through this newsletter may be submitted through <http://e-newsletter.infofish.org/>

**Editor:** Sujit Krishna Das, INFOFISH, Malaysia

**Technical Editing:** Omar Riego Penarubia, FAO, Rome, Italy and Meaghan Dodd, IAFI

**Spanish Translation:** Graciela Pereira, INFOPECSA, Montevideo, Uruguay

**French Translation:** Digré Arriko Calice, INFOPÊCHE, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

**Portuguese Translation:** Uilians Emerson Ruivo, Ruivo Consultoria, Brazil