



Safe Seafood Project Develops Tools for Detection of Pharmaceutical Residues

Press Release: July 2014

Significant progress towards improving seafood safety in Europe is being made by the EC-funded **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project. The project is assessing food safety issues related to priority contaminants present in seafood as a result of environmental contamination (including those originating from harmful algal blooms and those associated with marine litter) and evaluating their impact on public health.

Progress has already been made by the project in monitoring selected priority contaminants in seafood species, and developing reliable and cost-effective detection tools for those contaminants. The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project held its fourth coordination meeting in Hirtshals, Denmark, from 18-20 June 2014 during which the advances made so far were presented.

Dr Antonio Marques, **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project coordinator, said: "The project is currently in a crucial stage and interesting outputs are beginning to emerge. The advances made so far are enormous. All partners are enthusiastic about accomplishing the objectives set for the project and several collaborations have also been established between the partners, which illustrate the excellent work environment in the project."

Outputs of the project include the recent results from a monitoring scheme which assessed the presence of contaminants in seafood in hotspot areas, enabling the partners to choose which relevant priority environmental contaminants to study further during the project. Contaminant monitoring is now being conducted for commercial seafood species.

Another output tackles public concern surrounding pharmaceuticals released into surface waters. This involved the development of an efficient method for detection of pharmaceutical residues from bivalves using low detection methods.

Further novel methods for screening, detection and extraction of different toxins are also being developed at this stage of the project. The optimisation of bioaccessibility and bioavailability tools for assessing the toxicological impact of contaminants is almost complete.

A recently conducted consumer survey is currently being analysed in order to understand consumer preferences and concerns with regard to seafood safety. The survey collected nearly 3,000 responses from Ireland, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Information gathered from the survey and the contaminants database is being combined with data from monitoring priority contaminants in seafood in order to implement realistic risk assessment using probabilistic tools. Mitigation strategies are also being addressed at this stage of the project.

In order to help consumers utilise the results of **ECsafeSEAFOOD**, preliminary trials of an online consumer tool have been made, which will ultimately allow consumers to access nutrient and contaminant profiles of seafood on demand.

For more information about the **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project, visit: www.ecsafeseafood.eu



Photo Caption: ECsafeSEAFOOD consortium members at a recent meeting in Hirtshals, Denmark

Notes for Editors

The Instituto Português do Mar e da Atmosfera (IPMA, I.P.) is coordinating the project. The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project was launched in February 2013 and is funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological development (FP7/2007-2013) under Grant Agreement n°311820.

The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** consortium comprises 18 partner organisations from 10 countries. The partnership includes SMEs in order to facilitate the transfer and uptake of research by interested parties. The project is divided into scientific work packages that will address the project's objectives. Additionally, there are work packages for project coordination and project dissemination.

Dr Antonio Marques, **ECsafeSEAFOOD** coordinator, is researcher at the Division of Aquaculture and Seafood Upgrading (DivAV) of IPMA. He has been involved in the coordination of several European and regional funded projects on seafood quality and safety (chemical contaminants and microbiology), and in the application of new technologies to improve seafood quality and safety.

For press queries, please contact the project communications officer:

Tanja Calis, AquaTT (email: tanja@aquatt.ie Tel: +353 1 644 9008).

AquaTT is the project dissemination partner.