



New Project Will Assess Level of Contaminants in Our Seafood

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ECsafeSEAFOOD is a new €5 million pioneering project that will address the challenge of assessing seafood safety issues relating to priority contaminants that may be present as a result of environmental contamination. The project will evaluate the impact the presence of these contaminants is having on public health, leading to improved seafood risk management and increased public awareness.

Pollution of the oceans and climate change are giving rise to concerns not just about the status of the marine environment, but also about their impact on seafood safety and public health. As there is rarely a well-defined quantitative links between levels of contaminants in the marine environment and levels in seafood, there is clearly a need for increased research on the transfer of contaminants from the marine environment to seafood. **ECsafeSEAFOOD** will tackle and redress this knowledge gap.

ECsafeSEAFOOD, or to give the project its official title, *Priority environmental contaminants in seafood: safety assessment, impact and public perception*, is funded by the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) of the European Union (EU) and led by the Instituto Português do Mar e da Atmosfera (IPMA, I.P.), Portugal, and will run for four years. **ECsafeSEAFOOD** brings together a multidisciplinary consortium of 18 institutions from nine EU countries and Norway. The project officially kicked-off with a partnership meeting in February 2013 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Dr Antonio Marques is the project's coordinator. "The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project will explore if there is a relationship between the contamination of the marine environment and the quality of the seafood we consume. The health benefits of eating seafood have been proved in many different ways and **ECsafeSEAFOOD** aims to develop tools to ensure these benefits will be the same in the future," he explains.

Dr Marques adds: "The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project will provide scientific evidence to serve as a basis for the further development of common food safety as well as public health and environmental policies and measures".

ECsafeSEAFOOD is an interdisciplinary project bringing together scientists from different food science disciplines, including: ecotoxicology; biochemistry; nutrition; risk assessment; seafood quality; and consumer behaviour and perceptions. The partnership also includes SMEs in order to facilitate the transfer and uptake of research to interested parties.

[Ends - Notes for Editors follows]

Notes for Editors

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

Dr Antonio Marques, **ECsafeSEAFOOD** coordinator, is researcher at the DivAV from 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 in the assessment of seafood quality and safety.

ECsafeSEAFOOD has several clear objectives:

1. Monitor the presence of priority environmental contaminants in the environment and seafood and prioritise those that are real hazards for human health.
2. Quantify the transfer of relevant priority environmental contaminants between the environment and seafood, taking into account the effect of climate change.
3. Optimise methods for the detection and quantification of emerging toxins from harmful algal blooms.
4. Study the effect of processing/cooking on the behaviour of priority contaminants in seafood.
5. Investigate what information is needed and how it should be disseminated to consumers in order to reduce public health risks from seafood consumption, taking into account the possible impact on public opinion, in coordination with risks managers.
6. Understand the public health impacts of these chemical hazards, through toxicological characterisation in realistic conditions.
7. Perform risk assessment to measure the potential impact of seafood contaminants on public health.
8. Develop mitigation measures for risk managers.
9. Develop, validate and provide new, easy and fast tools to assess the presence of environmental contaminants in seafood.
10. Confirm/refine the European Maximum Reference Levels in seafood for contaminants that are real hazards and for which no legislation exists or information is still insufficient.

To ensure the achievement of these objectives the **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project has been structured into eight different work packages.

WP1 is led by Johan Robbens from ILVO (Belgium), and will set up a database with information gathered from literature and monitoring programmes about priority contaminants.

WP2 is led by Michiel Kotterman from IMARES (Netherlands), and will monitor the priority contaminants identified in WP1 in seafood, understanding the role of marine litter in bioaccumulation and assessing the effect of processing and cooking.

WP3 is led by Wim Verbeke from UGent (Belgium), and will perform a risk assessment using targeted consumer survey, probabilistic tools, and mitigation strategies.

WP4 is led by Alejandro Barranco from AZTI (Spain), and will work on the development of new cost-effective fast screening methods for relevant contaminants.

WP5 is led by Tomaz Langerholc from UM (Slovenia), and will work on the toxicological impact of chemical contaminants in public health and will use innovative toxicological tools.

WP6 is led by Kit Granby from DTU (Denmark), and will establish the links between the level of contaminants in the environment and that in seafood.

WP7 is led by Federico Cardona from AquaTT (Ireland), and will work to increase consumer confidence through the communication of clear and practical information relating to the project as well as collaborating closely with food safety authorities.

WP8 is led by Antonio Marques (IPMA, I.P.), and will coordinate the project.



Photo caption: The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project partners at the kick-off meeting in Lisbon.

ECsafeSEAFOOD Project Partners

Belgium

Eigen Vermogen Van Het Instituut Voor Landbouw en Visserijonderzoek (ILVO)

Universiteit Gent (UGent)

Denmark

Danmarks Tekniske Universitet (DTU)

Dan Salmon As (Dan Salmon)

France

Agence Pour la recherche et la valorisation marine (ARVAM)

Polyintell SAS (Polyintell)

Ireland

AquaTT UETP (Aqua TT)

Italy

Aeiforia SRL (AEIFORIA)

Netherlands

Hortimare Projects & Consultancy BV (Hortimare)

Stichting Dienst Landbouwkundig Onderzoek (IMARES)

Norway

Veterinaerinstittet (NVI)

Portugal

Instituto de Ciências e Tecnologias Agrárias e Agro-alimentares (ICETA)

Intituto Portugues do mar e da Atmosfera (IPMA)

Slovenia

Univerza V Mariboru (UM)

Spain

Fundación AZTI (AZTI-Tecnalia)

Institut Català de Recerca de l' Aigua, Fundació Privada (ICRA)

Institut de Recerca i Tecnologia Agroalimentaries (IRTA)

Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

For press queries, please contact the project communications officer:

Federico Cardona Pons, AquaTT (email: federico@aquatt.ie Tel: +353 1 644 9008)

AquaTT staff members are available to respond to queries in English, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch.