



Safe Seafood Project Enters Second Year

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Availability of safe and high-quality food is a growing public concern and research plays an important role in ensuring consumer confidence in this sector. The challenge for the **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project is to assess food safety issues related to priority contaminants present in seafood as a result of environmental contamination and to evaluate their impact on public health. The progress made by the project in its first year was reviewed during its third coordination meeting in Sant Carles de la Ràpita, Spain, from 12-13 February 2014.

ECsafeSEAFOOD is an interdisciplinary project and the meeting brought together members of the project's consortium which incorporates expertise in a range of food science disciplines, including: ecotoxicology; biochemistry; nutrition; risk assessment; seafood quality; and consumer behaviour and perceptions.

Dr Antonio Marques, **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project coordinator, said: "There are a lot of scientists behind the **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project and the coordination meetings are a good opportunity to bring all the project participants together and to unite the efforts being made to achieve the project's objectives. These two-day meetings are extremely productive and allow the project participants to discuss results in more depth and plan future actions."

The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** partners have been working together to identify the main methodologies available to analyse priority contaminants, the effects they may have on seafood, and their potential risks for human consumption. Each of these methodologies requires a specific sampling protocol, and careful coordination is needed to ensure that the correct samples required for the each of the different methods are supplied to the partners in charge of the analyses. The analyses must also be carried out in the correct order to ensure that they can complement each other.

Other recent work carried out as part of **ECsafeSEAFOOD** includes a consumer survey, designed to help the partnership to understand consumer preferences and concerns with regard to seafood safety. The survey responses have enabled the partners to choose which relevant priority environmental contaminants to study further during the project.

Dr Isabelle Sioen (Ghent University, Belgium), **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project partner, said: "We have collected nearly 3,000 survey responses from Ireland, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Apart from helping us to decide the priority contaminants to be studied, the results of the survey will also contribute to defining what kind of information should be disseminated to the general public in order to reduce public health risks from seafood consumption."

The next challenge for the **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project is to define how to monitor the selected priority contaminants and to select the specific seafood species that will be examined under the scope of the project.

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



Photo caption: **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project partners at its third coordinating meeting in Sant Carles de la Ràpita, Spain.

[Ends - Notes for Editors follows]

Notes for Editors

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 Instituto Português do Mar e da Atmosfera (IPMA, I.P.) is coordinating the project. 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.

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AquaTT is the project dissemination partner. AquaTT staff members are available to respond to queries in English, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch.