



Irish Shellfish Association

June 2014

IFA Aquaculture

Biotoxins & Grant Aid

NEW BIOTOXIN SAMPLING ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE FROM JUNE

The Agencies who implement EU biotoxin legislation (FSAI/MI/SFPA) have agreed to change aspects of the sampling regime. This arises, according to the agencies, after reports of illness within Europe and in response to recommendations from the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission. The changes take effect from the 25th of May 2014 and will be incorporated into the national biotoxin Code of Practice. ISA welcomed any changes that give more confidence to consumers and producers and do not add extra burden of red tape for farmers already under significant pressure. The ISA points out that greater use of plankton monitoring has been a policy of the Association for many years.

Chairman of the MSSC, David Lyons, said, 'The MSSC supports the proposals put forward by the statutory authorities to improve the sampling regime, integrate plankton sampling more fully into the system and show a clear chain of responsibility for the data on which to base important decisions such as opening and closing bays. The ISA brings industry experience to the MSSC table and has shown a commitment to the consumer and producer in its response to these changes.'

Official Control Sampling

The SFPA will take one Official Control shellfish verification sample per month for species/areas on a weekly sampling frequency and quarterly for species/areas on a monthly sampling frequency. Each Senior Port Officer (SPO) will be responsible for the scheduling of the verification samples for the production areas within their region that are actively harvesting. A Sea Fisheries Protection Officer

(SFPO) shall inform the Shellfish Sampler in advance of taking the verification sample to avoid duplicate sampling.

The SFPO will take the verification sample but on occasions where the SFPO is unable to take the sample, a Shellfish Sampler may take the verification sample. This sampling will be under the supervision of the SFPO and the SFPO will supply the Shellfish Sampler with an SFPA Official Sample Advice Note to accompany the sample. The verification sample must be accompanied by an SFPA Official Sample Advice Note in all cases.

Sampling to Open a Production Area, after a toxic event

The SFPA will take an Official Control sample, when a production area is on Closed Pending, to open a production area following a toxic event. If the Official Sample is under the legal limits for toxins, then the area will be assigned an Open status.

An SFPO will take the shellfish sample to open a production area. On occasions where the SFPO is unable to, a Shellfish Sampler may take the sample to open the area. A Shellfish Sampler should not take a sample where the status of an area is Closed Pending unless they have been requested to do so by the SFPO and the SFPO has supplied them with an SFPA Sample Advice Note to accompany the sample. Samples to open an area, the MI will produce weekly reports, to identify areas that have been assigned a Closed Pending status following a toxic episode. These reports will be issued on Thursday of each week or earlier.

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Aquaculture must get share of EU fund

Spent wisely and backed by a pro-active state infrastructure that encourages entrepreneurs, SMEs and family aquaculture businesses around the coast, the EU's new fisheries fund can turn the tide in favour of Ireland's seafood industry, according to IFA.

IFA's Aquaculture Section has welcomed the announcement by Minister Simon Coveney that Ireland has secured €148 million in EU aid for the fisheries and seafood sector under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

"The European Commission has placed the development of sustainable aquaculture as its highest priority to address serious employment problems, reinvigorate the economies of coastal areas and displace the influx of imported fish, which now account for over two thirds of consumption by European Consumers," said IFA Aquaculture Executive, Richie Flynn.

"The clear EU commitment to aquaculture in monetary terms must be matched by Government with a renewed vigour at home to cut red tape and remove backlogs in licensing created over many years."

(Biotxin Sampling Arrangements cont'd) To assist with the scheduling of the Official Control

The Shellfish Sampler or a producer may wish to contact the SFPO about the Official Sample when an area is on a Closed Pending status if, for example, they are waiting to commence harvesting.

Phytoplankton Sampling

Every classified shellfish production area must collect weekly phytoplankton samples in order to remain on an open status. This requirement applies regardless of the sampling frequency for the shellfish species in the production area and will take effect from the 25th May 2014 (wk 22).

A minimum of three weekly samples will be required in every rolling 4 week period. If the frequency of sampling drops below this level the area will not be assigned an Open status on the next clear shellfish result. Dormant areas that wish to re-open, must send in 2 weekly samples of shellfish and phytoplankton in advance of their expected week of recommencing harvesting.

From the 31st of August 2014 (week 36) any production area not meeting the minimum of 3 out of 4 weekly phytoplankton samples will not be assigned an open status. There will be no management cell decisions for production areas where phytoplankton sampling is not at the minimum phytoplankton sampling frequency.

Areas that do not have an open status are not required to take weekly phytoplankton samples but if samples are sent to the MI they will be analysed. If an area is sending in shellfish samples then it must send in phytoplankton samples also.

Note: The changes do not include production areas within Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough which are sampled under agreement with the Loughs Agency.

An updated Advice Note will be issued to include space for the inclusion of the GPS position of sampling. The GPS position must be recorded in all cases on the SFPA Official Sample Advice Note from the 26th May 2014, otherwise the sample will be rejected.

LICENCING – PLOUGHING THROUGH THE BACKLOG

IFA has said it must see progress by the Minister in identifying where bottlenecks remain in the complex process of conservation objectives, appropriate assessments and licensing processing. The dependence on licencing for grant aid, planning and investment must drive efficiencies and faster decision making. Any unnecessary hold ups in Appropriate Assessments are completely unjustified seven years after the EU court ruling.

The Department's Coastal Zone Division has confirmed the situation at time of going to press:

"Inner Bantry bay has completed the licensing process

Ministerial determinations have been made in respect of Killary but a number have been appealed to ALAB, which process is ongoing

In relation to Natura areas the following applies: Castlemaine Harbour and Roaringwater Bay have completed the licensing process (including ALAB)

Appropriate Assessments (AAs) have been completed in respect of Lough Swilly, Donegal Bay, Dundalk (cockle fishery), Dungarvan Harbour and Clew Bay.

A key feature of the Appropriate Assessment process is the identification of prioritised bay, based on the number of aquaculture sites, the ready availability of scientific data and other factors. The prioritised list of bays is kept under continuous review by the Department so as to facilitate the use of scientific and other resources on a flexible basis across the full range of bays."

IFA's demands are clear:

Deadlines for more information or decisions from all agencies and consultees should be enforced as those on industry applicants.

Each applicant has access to up to date information on the status and realistic timeframe for a determination.

Any bottlenecks in any state agency or the department in the efficient processing of appropriate assessments must be identified and dealt with.

Development, licensing and grant aid must be led by the policy goals of Food Harvest 2020 with real national timelines outlining achievable objectives in fully clearing the licensing backlog and (b) be able to tell every applicant when their outstanding application will be dealt with or at what stage in the process it currently rests.

TRIPLOID/DIPLOID DISCUSSION

Following on from the ISA/BIM oyster workshop last March in Dungarvan and the constructive debate which took place, IFA, policy towards recommendations to oyster producers regarding stocking with either diploid or triploid is as follows:

Where cultivation of *C. Gigas* is being carried out in bays which have been identified in the scientific literature as providing potentially suitable conditions for spat settlement/ recruitment, a recommendation may be given as an appendix to a licence to use triploid where available to further minimise spat settlement risks. This shall be followed up by way of regular surveys to assess the success of such a policy in the bay;

Given the otherwise minimal to zero potential for *C. Gigas* to successfully recruit in Irish waters there should be no general policy for stocks to be exclusively of diploid or triploid origin on new or renewed licences;

Over time, the situation should be kept under review by way of monitoring the natural environment to change, including hydrography and water temperature. Surveys should be undertaken by BIM and the MI, in co-operation with the oyster industry, to ascertain if any significant spat settlement or recruitment of *C.gigas* has occurred in bays both within and outside of those identified currently as possible sites for spat settlement.

This approach provides a sound basis for transparent management of a potential risk. Where policies regarding farming practices, layout, stocks etc are being considered which may apply to the general industry or subsector, it would be constructive for all concerned that industry representatives be consulted in advance (for example through a round table discussion as happened in Dungarvan) to aid examination of the regulatory impact.

MUSSEL MORTALITIES

Following mortalities of over 12,000 tonnes recorded in March/April in mussel stocks on bouchot and rope in specific areas of western France, the European Mollusc Producers Association recommends immediate reporting of any unusual sightings of high mortalities in mussels. No pathogen or other cause has been identified in the French Case

For More Information

IFA Aquaculture

Home of The Irish Salmon Growers' Association, The Irish Shellfish Association

Irish Representative:

Federation of European Aquaculture Producers; European Mollusc Producers' Association; International Salmon Farmers' Association.

IFA Aquaculture

Irish Farmers' Association
Irish Farm Centre
Bluebell
Dublin 12

Ph + 353 (0) 1 4508755

Fax +353 (0) 1 4551043

Mob +353 (0) 86 2454402

Email richieflynn@ifa.ie

Web www.ifa.ie (Sectors: Aquaculture)

ISA ORGANISATION REVIEW

The ISA Executive has agreed on a review of communications, structures and operations at its May 2014 meeting. It is five years since the first published rules of the ISA were agreed by the membership.

YOUR ISA REPRESENTATIVE

Jerry Gallagher, (Chairman) New species (scallops)

Shay Harty, Oysters (Sth)

Kevin Lydon, Rope Mussels (Nth)

Edward Gallagher, Oysters (Nth)

Finbarr Daly, Rope Mussels(Sth)

Arthur McCarthy, Bottom Mussels (Sth)

Jack Sullivan, New Species (abalone)

Finian O'Sullivan, Shellfish Safety

