

Fish Health, Quality Assurance and Food Safety

Health, Food Safety & Quality Assurance

Fish and Shellfish Health

Each species of fish – like all farmed animals – are susceptible to specific diseases and parasites which must be monitored and controlled. Each farm has a fish health plan and takes advice from public and private veterinary professionals. Fish Health regulations in Ireland are overseen and monitored by the Marine Institute – all farms must be registered as authorised production sites and abide by EU and National law – full information is available from the MI's Fish Health Unit [here](#).

Sea Lice Monitoring

Since the early 1990s sea lice monitoring has been carried out 14 times per annum at every single salmon and trout site in the marine area. Reports generated by this monitoring are given wide publication and assist farmers in managing the problem. Ireland has the most transparent system for sea lice monitoring in the world (for instance, in Norway only regional levels are ever published). Appended to marine finfish licences is a protocol which sets out how farmers work with the monitoring system. It is important to note that when farmed fish are transferred to sea-water sites they are completely clean of any sea lice. The burden of lice comes from wild fish (which are increasing in numbers due to the closure of the commercial salmon fishery) transferring lice to the farms which they pass. Therefore no legal restriction is capable of implementation on this naturally occurring phenomenon (it would be akin to punishing potato farmers for catching blight on their crops). A “notice to treat” is issued when an arbitrary and very low level of lice per fish is detected and the farmer must follow this

up with treatment and further monitoring. The Marine Institute is responsible for independent lice monitoring and the circulation of the analysis [see here](#). In addition, the Department for Agriculture Fisheries and Food is responsible for co-ordinating the [National strategy for pest management](#) for Marine Finfish Farming.

Residue Monitoring

The Irish aquaculture industry is very proud of its record of having zero results from random audits of farms for both legal and illegal residues of medicines or any a host of other products. This legally required monitoring for all farmed species on land or on sea is overseen by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. The latest report can be viewed [here](#).

Monitoring for Harmful Metals and Other Contaminants in Irish Waters

Regular monitoring is carried out by the Marine Institute to comply with EU, international and national legislation on potentially harmful chemicals which may accumulate from many sources or occur naturally around the coast. All reports relating to aquaculture products in Ireland show can confidently show no risks associated with levels of these chemical compounds. For more information see [here](#).

Post-Harvest Food Safety

Food safety and traceability is of primary concern to fish and shellfish producers post-harvest. Non-farming processing companies who buy our raw material and add value before sale an export also have a key role to play. Food safety issues are the responsibility of the Seafood Protection Authority (SFPA) who monitor all seafood producers and premises to ensure full consumer confidence in our products – a full explanation of their role and the legal basis behind monitoring and enforcement can be

found [here](#).

Biotoxins in Shellfish

Shellfish safety issues arising from naturally occurring algal blooms, which can happen throughout the year, is a key issue for all shellfish farmers. Ireland has one of the most sophisticated monitoring systems for these “biotoxins” in the world and many other industries have visited us to see how we achieve such high standards. The core role of the management system is to have a real-time state of the art monitoring system which actively prevents harvesting of shellfish from potentially risky areas and ensures that no contaminated Irish shellfish ever reach the marketplace. Huge strides have been made in collaboration with IFA over the past decade to make this system as practical and watertight as possible. A national committee – the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee [MSSC](#), chaired by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, meets regularly to review the Codes of Practice for toxin monitoring and discuss EU legislation and best practice further information [here](#) and scientific information from the Marine Institute can be found [here](#). Monitoring of plankton is overseen by the Marine Institute on a weekly basis with more information [here](#).

Clean Waters

Clean water is essential for clean seafood. Under the auspices of the MSSC a subcommittee including IFA Aquaculture oversees the annual designation of the safety status of up to 80 different bays around the coast and assign a Classification to each one which sets out how shellfish are to be treated post processing according to a 3 year indicator database for each bay. Background information and the current bay status for 2012 is available [here](#). IFA wants to see this system refined to reflect the biotoxin system using real time information and is also demanding that county councils around the coast redouble their efforts to ensure that private and public water treatment systems are up to standard where

they have the potential to contaminate shellfish waters. IFA successfully took the Irish government to the European Court of Justice to ensure that bays would be protected and is monitoring discharge licences granted by the EPA ([see full background and individual licences from the EPA here](#)) to ensure that they protect shellfish safety and improve water quality.

National Quality Assurance Schemes

QA schemes and eco-labelling schemes for individual sectors have been developed by BIM ([see here](#)) and include logos and full traceability from farm to fork. Industry has invested a lot of time and resources into these schemes and highly commends all those businesses involved throughout the value chain that have signed up to the scheme conditions and qualified to use the logo. Much work needs to be done with retail multiples, fishmongers and particularly the catering sector in hotels, restaurants and pubs to ensure they promote Irish quality seafood and do not mislead consumers on the origin of their seafood. Both Bord Bia and BIM must play a crucial role in achieving this goal with industry.

Licensing

This vital area of regulation is overseen by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food centered in their Clonakilty offices. The system also involves the Aquaculture Licence Appeals Board and a range of state agencies. As discussed on our homepage there are serious obstacles to overcome in this area and IFA is constantly keeping the government under pressure in this area. IFA is dissatisfied with the level of information available to members and the public as outdated and unfit for practical purpose. The current information available is available [on the DAFF website here](#).