



Press Release March 2015

New Screening, Detection and Extraction Methods for Priority Contaminants in Seafood

The EU-funded **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project is improving seafood safety in Europe by assessing food safety issues related to contaminants present in seafood as a result of environmental contamination, and evaluating their impact on public health.

The project's multidisciplinary team has developed new, sensitive and rapid screening, detection and extraction methods for priority contaminants. **ECsafeSEAFOOD** specifically focuses on priority contaminants that have not yet been regulated in the EU, including those originating from harmful algal blooms and those associated with marine litter. These contaminants include microplastics, pharmaceuticals, endocrine (gland) disrupting compounds, personal care products (e.g. musks), marine biotoxins, and heavy metals (e.g. methylmercury).

Currently, **ECsafeSEAFOOD** partners are finalising optimisation tools for assessing the toxicological impact of the contaminants. These tools will provide a better indication of the adverse effects of contaminants on human health. **ECsafeSEAFOOD** researchers have also examined the benefits and risks associated with processing and cooking seafood, based on the potential for unregulated contaminants to be absorbed by marine organisms as well as the effects of global warming on bioaccumulation and elimination of contaminants.

An online consumer tool which provides details of the benefits and risks of consuming different species of seafood is currently in development. This will enable consumers, health professionals and seafood producers to utilise some of the results of **ECsafeSEAFOOD** directly.

Dr Antonio Marques, **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project coordinator, said: "We are now halfway through the project and have already had great success. The progress has been enormous and interesting outputs are beginning to emerge. All the project partners are enthusiastic and eager to begin sharing the project's unique results."

The advances made by the project so far were presented at the fifth **ECsafeSEAFOOD** coordination meeting, hosted by AZTI-Tecnalia in Bilbao, Spain, from 11-12 February 2015. The project's major results to date will also be detailed in an upcoming **ECsafeSEAFOOD** special issue of Environmental Research journal entitled: "Non-regulated environmental contaminants in seafood: contributions of the **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project".

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



Photo Caption: ECsafeSEAFOOD consortium members at a recent meeting in Bilbao, Spain

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.

AquaTT is responsible for the project's dissemination and knowledge transfer.

For press queries, please contact the project's communications officer:

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