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The ECsafeSEAFOOD International Stakeholder Event and Open Science Conference – A wealth of potential

The worlds of science, policy and industry gathered in Brussels, Belgium, from 25-26 January 2017 to discuss potential impacts of non-regulated contaminants in seafood at the ‘Seafood Safety: New Findings & Innovation Challenges’ conference.

Hosted by the EC FP7-funded ECsafeSEAFOOD project, an international stakeholder event and open science meeting brought together experts from across the globe to discuss how new research into seafood safety can help boost consumer confidence and address public concern about safe and high-quality food. The event was the culmination of the four-year ECsafeSEAFOOD project, which focused on seafood consumer needs and concerns, marine toxins in seafood and the environment, toxicity of seafood contaminants, evaluation of seafood monitoring data, and rapid detection tools for environmental contaminants.

This unique event was held at the Royal Flemish Academy of Science and the Arts (KVAB), Brussels, Belgium and brought together 94 attendees from around the world. The latest developments in the evolving field of seafood safety were examined through a variety of activities both formal and informal. Moderated panel discussions and a plenary programme with keynote speakers shared time with a theatrical “Science Slam” and other informal networking opportunities.

A dedicated half-day International Stakeholder Event addressed national and international policy makers in the fields of food safety, environment and public health, food safety authorities, the seafood industry and consumer organisations. There were presentations and discussions of novel research results and applications followed by interactive round tables allowing researchers to engage in detailed conversations about important questions relevant to their line of work, including potential end users and practical applications, ideas for transfer activities, possible barriers to transfer and eventual impact.

ECsafeSEAFOOD project coordinator, Dr António Marques said: “The brainstorming session with seafood safety experts and stakeholders gave participants the opportunity to discuss the relevance of key ECsafeSEAFOOD results for the field of seafood safety. Each group provided strategies to ensure wide societal application of the outcomes. The session also served as a platform to strengthen the links between science, policy, industry regulators and industrial organisations.”

Among the important results for consumers are the development of [FISHCHOICE](#), an interactive online tool that consumers can use to weigh up the benefits and risks associated with the seafood they eat, and a set of seafood safety guides for consumers, industry and policy makers, which are due to be published in March 2017.

Following the Stakeholder Event, a one-and-a-half-day Open Science Conference presented the latest scientific data on ECsafeSEAFOOD topics to a broad audience. Most attendees participated in both events, taking advantage of the excellent opportunity for industry and science stakeholders to

exchange experiences and generate new ideas to drive forward research vital to keeping seafood demonstrably safe. Some key scientific results discussed include the development of new contaminant detection methods as well as insight into the occurrence of unregulated contaminants in seafood, the effect of cooking on contaminant levels and the effect of microplastics on contaminant levels in fish.

Dr Marques said: “The ECsafeSEAFOOD final conference was a huge success. All attendees actively engaged in and enjoyed the conference, with participant feedback deeming it an enriching event. This event provided a platform for research and industry representatives to diversify their cross-sectorial knowledge, strengthen their existing partnerships and build new opportunities”.

For more information about ECsafeSEAFOOD and its final conference, please visit: www.ecsafeseafood.eu, or contact Tanja Calis, email: tanja@aquatt.ie. For all the latest updates from the project please follow ECsafeSEAFOOD on Twitter (@ECsafeSEAFOOD) and like the project conference page on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ECsafeSEAFOODConference).

Notes for Editors

The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** project was launched in February 2013 and was funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological development (FP7/2007-2013) under Grant Agreement n°311820. The Portuguese Institute for the Sea and Atmosphere (IPMA, I.P.) coordinated the project.

The **ECsafeSEAFOOD** consortium comprises 17 partner organisations from 10 countries. The partnership includes SMEs in order to facilitate the transfer and uptake of research by interested parties. The project was divided into six scientific work packages that addressed the project's objectives. There were additional work packages for project coordination and project dissemination.

AquaTT was the project dissemination and communication partner.

For press queries, please contact the project communications officer:

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FISHCHOICE: New Online Tool to Evaluate Risks and Benefits of Seafood Consumption:

ECsafeSEAFOOD project partners Universitat Rovira Virgili (URV) developed an online tool for consumers that balances the risks and benefits associated with seafood consumption, taking the exposure to contaminants into consideration. The tool is called FISHCHOICE and is available at: www.fishchoice.eu. Professional access can be requested on the website.

The ECsafeSEAFOOD Contaminants Database:

This database collates data on contaminants of emerging concern in seafood species and focuses on unregulated contaminants that give rise to concern from an environmental and public health point of view. This tool is useful for improving contaminant diagnostics and seafood risk assessment for food safety authorities, food diagnostic firms and aquaculture industries. The data can also be used by policy makers to help inform policy and advisory guidelines and by funding authorities to highlight the deficits in seafood contaminant research. Access to the database is free and all stakeholders are welcome to upload relevant new information and publications related to the topic.

The ECsafeSEAFOOD contaminants Database is available at: www.ecsafeseafooddbase.eu. For access, email johan.robbers@ilvo.vlaanderen.be with a request.



Figure 1 ECsafeSEAFOOD partners at the final project coordination meeting in Brussels, Belgium



Figure 2 ECsafeSEAFOOD International Stakeholder Event participants during the Knowledge Transfer brainstorming session, Brussels, Belgium