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Health & Welfare

Management of seafood safety and quality systems in Irish aquaculture

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An evening view of salmon cages in Ireland. In 2001, the volume of aquaculture output in Ireland stood at 60,935 tons, with a first-sale value of € 107,109,000 (\$105,224,500). Two key supports of the Irish aquaculture sector are provided by state agencies through the development of product quality and food safety programs.

Board Iascaigh Mhara

Board Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Irish seafood, fisheries, and aquaculture development agency, has a history of promoting the sustainable development of Ireland's marine fish and aquaculture industry. As part of its development of the aquaculture sector, BIM over the last three years established independent certified quality assurance programs for the industry. An EN45011-accredited certification body certifies program members. EN45011 (or its equivalent ISO65) is a "European norm" with established criteria for bodies that operate product certification.

Standards and certification



Over half the salmon producers in Ireland participate in the Irish Quality Salmon program. The Irish Quality Mussel program is now at pilot stage.

A technical advisory committee composed of representatives from industry, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, and other interested parties was formed to write the standards for the aquaculture quality program.

Applicants apply to be members of the program and then contact Irish Food Quality Certification Ltd., an independent third party, to be audited. The audit report is submitted to the technical committee, which makes the final decision as to whether applicants become certified, and hence can use the program mark on their products.

The Irish Quality Salmon program has been running since 2000. Its membership currently includes over 50 percent of the salmon producers in Ireland. The Irish Quality Mussel program is currently at the pilot stage.

Marine Institute

The Marine Institute was established in 1991 as the national agency to coordinate marine research and development. The institute is designated by the European Union as the national reference laboratory for marine biotoxins in Ireland.

In order to protect consumer safety and underpin exports of Irish shellfish, the Marine Institute built an integrated monitoring program that includes phytoplankton analyses, chemical testing by liquid chromatography – mass spectrometry and bioassays. More than 8,000 shellfish and plankton samples were tested as part of the biotoxin regime in 2001.

Phytoplankton samples are collected nationally and analyzed in a series of localized laboratories by the Marine Institute. The results are then issued to the industry and all interested parties.

Phytoplankton analysis has proved to be a very effective early-warning system for the Irish aquaculture industry in relation to potential algal blooms. Shellfish samples are collected from designated sampling points along the coast on a weekly basis during harvesting. The collection is coordinated by shellfish managers in the Department of Communication, Marine, and Natural Resources.

Aquaculture regulation

The Department of Communication, Marine and Natural Resources is responsible for regulating the aquaculture industry in Ireland. All its samples are sent to the Marine Institute or subcontracted laboratories for bioassay and chemical analysis. All results are centralized in a Marine Institute database and then issued nationally with the assistance of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

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