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CHOSAINT
IASCAIGH MHARA

SEA-FISHERIES
PROTECTION
AUTHORITY

Press Release

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SFPA Provides Guidance on Preventing Histamine in Fish during the Summer Months

As the warm summer weather continues, the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is advising fishers, consumers and food business operators on how to prevent histamine formation in certain fish. The SFPA has reviewed and re-issued the following leaflets titled: 'Histamine - Advice for Consumers and Recreational Fishers' and 'Histamine - Advice industry.'

Some fish species are more susceptible to histamine formation than others. Tuna, mackerel, mahi-mahi, and sardines are among the most histamine-prone species. Consuming fish with high levels of histamine can lead to histamine poisoning, also known as scombroid fish poisoning. As with all perishable foods, some basic but important precautions are required to ensure consumer safety, as mishandling of fish can result in the production of histamine in their flesh. Histamine in fish can cause scombroid poisoning (histamine poisoning) in humans, which is not an allergy but a type of food poisoning. Cooking, smoking, freezing, or canning does not destroy histamine.

Poor handling practices, particularly lack of proper chilling or icing of these fish can cause high levels of histamine to develop quite rapidly, especially in warm weather. Prevention relies on good hygiene practices and maintaining proper refrigeration or freezing from the time of catch until the fish is cooked or consumed.

Key considerations include choosing freshly caught or immediately frozen fish. Also, maintenance of the cold chain and proper refrigeration is crucial to prevent histamine formation.

Some basic precautions along the food chain can help ensure the safe enjoyment of these fish. The SFPA's leaflets detail precautions which will help minimise the risk of histamine formation and also result in a better quality of fish to be enjoyed.

The SFPA, as part of its official controls, conducts sampling of fish prone to histamine formation and carries out risk-based verification checks in fish processing establishments.

An SFPA spokesperson said:

“Fresh Irish seafood is both nutritious and delicious. Regulation underpins confidence in the safety of Irish seafood products, providing vital reassurance to retailers, hospitality businesses and consumers at home and abroad. Retaining Ireland’s growing reputation for producing superior seafood is essential. We hope the simple precautions outlined in the SFPA’s leaflets will ensure the safety of Irish seafood enjoyed by consumers.”

The SFPA is committed to supporting compliance with both new and existing legislation and is available to provide guidance. For assistance or further details on the leaflets, please contact: sfpafood&fisheriessupport@sfpa.ie

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Note to Editor

The leaflets can be accessed on the SFPA website via the following links:

[Consumer & Recreational Fishers Advice Histamine in Seafood](#)

[Industry Advice Histamine in Seafood](#)

Further Information

About the SFPA

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of the sea-fisheries and the sea-food production sectors. It promotes compliance with the EU Common Fisheries Policy, sea-fisheries law and food safety law relating to fish and fish products, verifies compliance and, where necessary, enforces it. Its mandate covers all fishing vessels operating within Ireland’s 200-mile limit, over 2,000 Irish registered fishing vessels wherever they operate, and all seafood produced in Ireland’s seafood processing companies. The SFPA operates through a network of regional port offices situated at Ireland’s main fishery harbours. For further information visit: www.sfpa.ie