

Seafood Market Access Services

The SARDI Food Safety Research Program was developed in recognition of the increasing need for the application of transparent, scientifically objective risk assessment approaches.

One of the core capabilities of the Food Safety Program is the provision of a **Seafood Market Access Service**. This service assists the seafood industry to better understand the origins and significance of residues and contaminants in their product and how they relate to technical trade barriers. The service has been developed to enable existing and emerging seafood industries to effectively manage food safety and related market access issues. Services provided include:

- Technical advice on sampling plans for product integrity verification
- Provision of residue data for product promotion
- Technical advice on frontier border inspection methodologies
- Technical resource for selection of residue test methods
- R&D to establish the equivalence of sampling approaches
- R&D to inform public health policy and standards setting

Need

The Seafood industry is facing an increasing demand to:

- Keep abreast with changing export market access standards.
- Provide evidence to ensure domestic regulatory requirements match food safety risk.
- Differentiate product to capture premium export markets.

While Australia has promoted its “Clean and Green” status, industries increasingly require rigorous independent data to verify production systems to underpin these claims. Provision of data through the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is required to meet overseas country requirements.

Background to SARDI involvement

Assisting industries meet their regulatory market access obligations was an early priority in the development of the SARDI Food Safety Research Program established in 2001.

SARDI has developed a national residue control plan which meets the requirements of European Council Directive 96/23/EC to enable industry to continue exporting to the EU. This Directive applies to farmed animal products including aquaculture but not to wild caught fisheries products.

What are residues and contaminants?

Residue is the term used to describe a small amount of an agricultural or veterinary chemical, or its breakdown products, which remain in or on a product. In the context of food safety, the term residue can also include natural environmental contaminants such as metals eg mercury, or other chemicals such as dioxins.

Residue Standards or Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are limits set to protect public health and facilitate trade. Some residues, such as banned veterinary drugs, do not have MRLs and no amount is permitted in food. In Australia MRLs are set by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

SARDI residue testing services available:

- **EU seafood market access program**
Official access, governed by AQIS, enabling export of seafood products to the European market.
- **EU and other international market access program**
Official access to the European and Asian markets.
- **Individual commercial programs**
Non-official testing for mineral content, FSANZ dietary information, National Health Medical Research Council or Heart Foundation dietary guidelines.

Industry Outcomes

Highlighted below are examples of trade and public health outcomes that reflect how the SARDI program has met industry's needs.

Regulatory Market Access Guide

Seafood Services Australia has funded SARDI to develop a database of MRLs, sampling and testing protocols, limits of detection etc required by Australia's major seafood export markets. This is a key resource for seafood exporters and regulators.

Public Health Standards

Based on data provided by SARDI, industry was able to negotiate with FSANZ to remove Southern Bluefin Tuna from the Australian public mercury advisory statement.

Similarly, the Japanese authorities have differentiated health advisories between Southern and Northern Bluefin Tuna.

Market Access

Farmed Southern Bluefin Tuna residue data collected by SARDI for the national dioxins program has been formally recognised (through NRS) by Japanese import agencies.

Assistance has been provided to the Australian Government for development of technical phytosanitary platforms for negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the People's Republic of China.

Technical advice from SARDI assisted Australian finfish exporters to gain market access to non-traditional markets in China and Europe.

Sampling Methods

A comparative study by SARDI of filleted and loined Southern Bluefin Tuna portions, based on Japanese retail cuts, demonstrated full compliance with the Japanese *Food Sanitation Law* and the new *Positive List System* of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs).

SARDI has characterised hazards present in farmed-SBT using a variety of sampling methods from Japan and the EU. Based on findings, sampling methods reported internationally by SARDI have been endorsed for official Japanese and EU testing programs.

Emerging Markets

Product integrity information, including MRLs, sampling methods and through-chain studies, can be used to negotiate access to new overseas markets or enhance market access in existing markets.

Provision of mercury data for canned tuna products allowed a SA food processor to label their products "low in mercury" for a major US supermarket chain. This was secured under the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement.

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