

NEWS RELEASE

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How safe is seafood to eat?

New "Seafood Safe" testing program and label answers U.S. consumers' health concerns

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. (Feb. 22, 2005) — Doctors, dietitians and even the revised U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* tout seafood as part of a healthy diet,¹ yet disturbing reports about toxins and contaminants in seafood permeate the news.² What is a health- and safety-conscious consumer to do?

There is finally a trustworthy solution that distills critical information into one easy-to-read label. The new **"Seafood Safe" program and label**, unveiled today, will help consumers make informed choices when purchasing seafood at the supermarket or in restaurants.

Launched by Henry Lovejoy, founder and president of EcoFish — a distributor of seafood exclusively from environmentally sustainable fisheries — **Seafood Safe** is a comprehensive testing program for mercury and PCBs in seafood, conducted by independent laboratories under strict scientific regimes and the guidance of academic scientific advisers. To carry the Seafood Safe label, samples must meet strict quality assurance guidelines per seafood species and be tested randomly and in perpetuity. EcoFish will be the first adopter of the Seafood Safe program. In the fall of 2005, the Seafood Safe program will be made available to the entire seafood industry.



"Mercury and PCB contamination in seafood is a serious public health issue, and all consumers deserve access to a credible testing program. For this reason, we plan on sharing this program with all those members of the seafood industry that are interested in participating," said Lovejoy.

Products from a variety of seafood species that meet the program's rigorous criteria may use the Seafood Safe label on their packaging and on point-of-sale materials.

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¹ The newly updated 2005 *Dietary Guidelines*, released January 2005, recommends adults consume two 4-ounce servings of seafood per week as part of a balanced and healthy diet.

² A March 2004 Environmental Protection Agency report found 55 percent of fish samples tested were contaminated with mercury levels above a safe limit for women of average weight who eat fish twice a week. Seventy-six percent of samples exceeded a safe limit of mercury for children of average weight who eat fish twice a week. Available from www.epa.gov/ost/fish; "E.P.A. Says Mercury Taints Fish Across U.S.," *New York Times*, Late Edition, Aug. 25, 2004, and "Who'll Stop the Mercury Rain?" *U.S. News & World Report*, April 5, 2004.

EcoFish's entire line of seafood, seven species in all, has qualified for the Seafood Safe label, and the company will soon begin labeling its frozen products with the easy-to-read black, white and red label.

The new **Seafood Safe label** guides consumers on safe consumption levels for 4-ounce servings of a variety of seafood per month. The serving recommendation is derived from the Environmental Protection Agency's *Guidance for Assessing Chemical Contaminant Data for Use in Fish Advisories*, which contains the most stringent government guidelines today for safe seafood consumption.

The consumer-focused label takes an extremely conservative approach to consumption levels by basing its recommendations on adults who are at highest risk: women of childbearing age (18-45). The red number on the Seafood Safe label represents the serving recommendation. For example, the Seafood Safe label on EcoFish's Wild Alaskan Salmon with Asian Ginger Marinade states 16+ 4-ounce servings per month as safe consumption for all adults, while the Wild Sashimi Grade Oregon Tuna Seafood Safe label recommends six 4-ounce servings per month. Seafood Safe recommends that consumers keep track of their cumulative consumption, especially if consuming more than one species.

For children (ages 6 to 12) the recommended servings are about half the adult consumption levels. The Seafood Safe Web site (www.seafoodsafes.com) provides meal recommendations for adults and children based on varying body weights and other factors.

"Many consumers are looking for seafood that's both good for them and the environment, but this often can be overwhelming," said Environmental Defense senior scientist Dr. Rebecca Goldberg. "Environmental Defense hopes Seafood Safe will help the many consumers who are eager to have more health information on which to base their seafood purchases."

While today's consumers often experience label "vertigo" in the marketplace, especially with food safety concerns, the Seafood Safe label is the first of its kind in the United States and the only third-party verified label that has the following:

1. **Scientific Advisory Panel** of renowned scientists, each with a strong background in seafood contaminants and public health. They will advise on policy and review and verify laboratory methodology and testing procedures.
2. **Environmental Defense**, a national nonprofit organization, will advise Seafood Safe on program methodology and consumer recommendations. Environmental Defense is dedicated to finding equitable and cost-effective solutions to society's pressing environmental problems, and has taken a lead in educating consumers about contaminant levels in seafood and how to consume seafood safely with their Seafood Selector – www.oceansalive.org.
3. **Two Independent Laboratories** specializing in testing for specific contaminants, one for mercury and the other for PCBs. Each laboratory's testing regime will be regularly reviewed by the scientific advisory panel. The two laboratories are Brooks Rand LLC and Axys Analytical Services Ltd., which operate completely independent of the other.
4. **Independent Quality Assurance** companies contracted for random seafood sample procurement for the laboratory testing.

"It is the consumer's right to know where to find safe seafood. They also deserve a convenient solution that is based on credible science and testing so they can enjoy seafood with sound peace of mind and as part of an overall healthy diet," said Lovejoy.

Seafood Safe is an independent corporation. Its mission is to provide consumers, restaurants and retailers with a scientifically credible means for determining which seafood is safe to eat and at what levels of consumption. Additionally, the company's vision is to educate the public regarding the issues of industrial pollution and how it negatively affects the food supply so that concerned consumers will demand practices that promote a cleaner environment for all.

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About EcoFish

Founded in 1999, and based in Portsmouth, N.H., EcoFish is the world's first distributor of seafood exclusively from environmentally sustainable fisheries. EcoFish was established with the conviction that increasingly man's ability to remove fish from the ocean far outstrips the ocean's ability to replenish itself. Today, EcoFish brand seafood can be found in more than 1,200 gourmet and natural food stores and over 125 fine restaurants nationwide. All selections are recommended and approved by an independent Seafood Advisory Board, made up of some of the world's leading marine conservation scientists. Working with conservation and fishing communities, EcoFish seeks a sustainable solution for the oceans, consumers and the seafood industry, believing that ultimately the consumer is the force for change in marine conservation. Visit www.ecofish.com for more information.

Digital photo of Eco-fish products and sustainable fishing practices available upon request.