



forestry, fisheries  
& the environment

Department:  
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

# Standard Operating Procedure: Reporting on Contingency Measures Implemented

Branch: Fisheries Management  
Chief Directorate: Aquaculture Development and Freshwater Fisheries  
Directorate: Sustainable Aquaculture Management

Issue 2: July 2024

**TITLE**

Standard Operating Procedure: Reporting on Contingency Measures Implemented

**COMMENCEMENT**

This Standard Operating Procedure comes into force on 1 August 2024.

**REVOCATION**

This programme issue revokes and replaces Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Reporting on Contingency Measures Implemented (Issue 1).

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES ISSUED**

Issue	Date of issue
1	December 2023

**ISSUING AUTHORITY**

This Standard Operating Procedure is issued by the Environmental Officer Specialised Production of the Directorate Sustainable Aquaculture Management of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in terms of the Aquacultured Marine Fish Food Safety Programme.



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Environmental Officer Specialised Production

DATE: 15/07/2024

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## **1. DOCUMENT CONTROL**

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Reporting on Contingency Measures Implemented was compiled by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment: Food Safety Office (FSO) of the Directorate Sustainable Aquaculture Management. The SOP is administered by the FSO and will be reviewed and updated as relevant new information becomes available.

A detailed record of all amendments shall be maintained, and the latest version will be made available at the FSO and will be loaded onto the DFFE website. Suggestions for alterations that would significantly improve the document are welcomed. These should be forwarded to the coordinator, Mr John Foord and enquiries can be directed to Mr Mayizole Majangaza (Appendix 1).

## 2. SCOPE

This document covers the procedures for the reporting of investigations and outcomes during the implementation of contingency measures implemented following food safety test results of cultured marine fish that exceed regulatory limits during routine monitoring as required in terms of the Aquacultured Marine Fish Food Safety Programme (AMFFSP). Sampling of the cultured fish takes place at various production areas located between Port Nolloth in the Northern Cape and Haga Haga in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) is the managing and regulatory authority for the undertaking of aquaculture activities that include farming, harvesting and transporting of fish for wholesale trading stipulated in the permit conditions issued in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 (Act No. 18 of 1998) and associated regulations. The Directorate: Sustainable Aquaculture Management (D: SAM) of the Fisheries Branch of DFFE is responsible for the development, management and regulation of a sustainable aquaculture industry that contributes towards job creation, food security, rural development and economic growth. D: SAM aims to achieve the above-mentioned strategic objectives through the development and implementation of relevant enabling legislation, policies and programmes as well as be responsive and compliant to international obligations and agreed standards. The Food Safety Office (FSO) within D: SAM is responsible for the development and management of food safety programmes stipulated in the permit conditions issued in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 (Act No. 18 of 1998) including the AMFFSP and the associated National Residue Control Programme (NRCP). The objectives of the food safety programmes include providing guarantees to domestic and international markets and consumers that South African cultured fish products are safe for human consumption.

The risks to food safety of cultured fish include environmental residues (heavy metals, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyl, dioxins, perfluoroalkyl substances, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and radionuclides) and veterinary medicine residues (hormones, antibiotics and anthelmintics), the accumulation of biotoxins (Paralytic Shellfish Toxins (PST), Lipophilic Shellfish Toxins (LST) and Amnesic Shellfish Toxins (AST)) and microbiological contamination in shellfish indicated by the presence of *E. coli*.

The DFFE has appointed National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) to officially sample the production facilities. The samples are taken and transported to the relevant laboratories in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): The Sampling and Transport of Aquacultured Marine Fish. The samples are sent to laboratories approved by the FSO for testing (Appendix 1).

The testing of samples is undertaken as outlined in the AMFFSP and the regulatory limits are indicated in the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972) regulations, the National Residue Control Plan (NRCP) and the AMFFSP. The results from the laboratories are emailed to the Food Safety Office (Email: SAMSanitation@dffe.gov.za) within 24 hours of completing the analysis.

The investigation of food safety monitoring results of fish production areas that exceed the regulatory limit is required to determine the food safety risks to the relevant production areas. Aquaculture farms are monitored for food safety compliance routinely. Should the food safety results exceed the regulatory limits as prescribed in the food safety programmes and relevant legislation, appropriate contingency measures are applied to the affected production area.

## 4. NON-COMPLIANT FOOD SAFETY RESULTS INVESTIGATION

Should the food safety results not comply with the regulatory limits as prescribed in the food safety programmes and relevant legislation, an investigation of the causes of the non-compliance shall be

initiated by the Department to ensure that appropriate contingency measures are applied. The following steps shall be undertaken during the investigation and the drafting of the report:

1. An introduction outlining the food safety risk being investigated including relevant sampling stations and test results.
2. Description of the area under investigation
  - The information can be sourced from the Sanitary Survey Reports, relevant stakeholders, and desktop studies.
3. A description of the investigations undertaken including:
  - Contingency measures that were implemented.
  - Interviews with relevant role-players and requesting of additional information from the role-player where relevant.
4. Presentation and evaluation of the information obtained during the investigations including:
  - Test results from the contingency measures implemented.
  - Information obtained from other investigations conducted where relevant.
  - Consideration of circumstantial evidence based on the description of the production area, particularly those characteristics that may have a bearing on the potential causes of the risk e.g., currents, wind direction, bathymetry, tidal range, position of production area relative to potential sources of the contaminants.
5. Recommendations including:
  - Current and future contingency measures implemented in the production area, as is appropriate, based on the results of the investigation.
  - Reclassification of the production area based on the results of the investigation if required.
  - Food safety monitoring of the production area going forward.
6. The reopening procedure followed when the food safety results of the investigation were compliant.
7. Conclusion summarising the outcomes of the investigation and the way forward.

## **5. REFERENCES**

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. 2024 Aquacultured Marine Fish Food Safety Programme. Cape Town. Issue 8, 1-67.

National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications. 2024. Procedure: Sampling and Transport of Aquacultured Marine Fish. Cape Town. Issue 2, 1-18.

**Appendix 1: Contact Information**

Food Safety Office

Directorate: Sustainable Aquaculture Management

Chief Directorate: Aquaculture Development & Freshwater Fisheries

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