

The President

Dr Bernhard Url
Executive Director
European Food Safety Authority

D 200945 14.05.2024

Subject: Request for a scientific opinion on the specific hygiene requirements for fishery products, namely the impact of stiffening and thawing procedures on the survival and growth of biological hazards

Dear Director,

By letter dated 26 April 2024, Mr Pascal Canfin, Chair of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), requested the European Parliament to ask the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for a scientific opinion on the specific hygiene requirements for fishery products, namely on the impact of stiffening and thawing procedures on the survival and growth of biological hazards.

The scientific opinion should focus on the impact of stiffening and thawing procedures on fishery products, particularly concerning the possible risk of survival and growth of *Listeria monocytogenes* and other possible microbiological hazards. More specifically, the opinion should address the health risk assessment of various stiffening procedures used by EU fish processors for smoked salmon, which require different timeframes and temperatures. The assessment should also address the impact of using different stiffening and thawing methods as regards the survival and growth of biological hazards, as compared to the currently authorised practices, based on a review of existing literature.

The request relates to *Commission delegated regulation (EU) 2024/1141 amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards specific hygiene requirements for certain meat, fishery products, dairy products and eggs (C(2023)8519 – 2023/3040(DEA))*¹, which was recently submitted to the European Parliament for scrutiny. In particular, the scientific opinion should analyse the following limitations set out in the Commission delegated regulation:

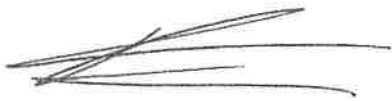
- 1) The limitation of 96 hours to maintain processed fishery products needed to be at a temperature lower than that of melting ice (specifically a higher range -3/-4°C) to permit the use of machines that slice or cut fishery products;
- 2) The limitation of 96 hours to maintain processed fishery products needed to be at a temperature lower than that of melting ice (specifically a lower range -10/-14°C) to permit the use of machines that slice or cut fishery products;
- 3) The limitation of 96 hours to maintain processed fishery products needed to be at a temperature higher than -18°C to permit the use of machines that slice or cut fishery products.

¹ OJ L, 2024/1141, 19.4.2024.

Moreover, the scientific opinion should analyse the availability of scientific literature on the adequacy and justification of a 14-day time limit for maintaining processed fishery products before slicing at -10/-14°C, and the impact on food safety of processed fishery products stored at temperatures -10/-14°C for longer periods: 7, 14, 21, 30 and 60 days, taking into account international rules and standards and existing and alternative testing methods, including at national level.

The European Parliament requests this scientific opinion in accordance with Article 29 of Regulation 178/2002. We would appreciate if the opinion could be delivered by the first quarter of 2025.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, fluid strokes that form a cursive name.

Roberta Metsola

Copy: Mr Pascal Canfin, Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety