



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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FAO eLearning  
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## Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation for growing areas

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### Questions and Answers

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### 1) How are plastics, micro and nano considered?

Contamination of bivalves with plastics is not specifically covered by the eLearning course (or the guidance document it is based on) which is primarily focused on management of microbiological hazards within bivalve production areas. However, where plastic contamination is considered a particularly serious hazard in a bivalve production area this should be considered alongside other microbiological, biotoxin and chemical hazards at all stages of the establishment and monitoring of the production area.

### 2) On what we can base ourselves on to classify the picking areas

Classification of approved production areas should be based on monitoring (regular microbiological testing) of relevant samples. Samples of seawater and/or bivalve molluscs should be tested for faecal indicator bacteria (faecal coliforms or *E. coli*). Results from primary monitoring should be considered when determining the initial classification for the area, and results of ongoing monitoring should be used to determine whether the initial classification remains appropriate or should be changed. This is covered in depth in modules 3 and 4 of the eLearning course.

### 3) Can this training be offered on a regional basis - this will ensure trade across the region and ensure biosecurity risks are mitigated at regional level

The eLearning course is freely available at [Course: Course series Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation | FAO eLearning Academy](#), and the guidance document that the course is based on is available at [Technical guidance for the development of the growing area aspects of Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation Programmes \(fao.org\)](#). Separately, FAO and Cefas (acting as the FAO Reference Centre for Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation) have in recent years hosted regional training workshops on Bivalve Mollusc Sanitation for FAO Member Nations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and continue to offer targeted training opportunities for Member Nations.

### 4) Does this have direct positive impacts on public health

Proper application of bivalve sanitation principles and approaches explained in the eLearning course ensures that the human health risks presented by bivalves (produced for domestic consumption or international trade) are effectively minimised.

### 5) What is the procedure to follow to reclassify a shellfish production area after it has been declassified to have registered a drop in cadmium rates beyond the standards?

The eLearning course (and the guidance document it is based on) is primarily designed to provide guidance on management of microbiological hazards within bivalve production areas. However, monitoring of bivalve production areas for chemical contaminants is required in the EU, and a maximum acceptable level for cadmium in bivalve flesh of 1 mg/kg (1 ppm) is set. Where the results of the monitoring exceed this level the production area should be closed; re-opening is allowed if the shellfish no



longer present a risk to human health. This would include demonstration by monitoring (regular testing of samples) that the levels of cadmium had returned to an acceptable level. In other regions of the world an equivalent approach would be appropriate.

**6) Can this be linked to regional monitoring programmes like the Sargassum monitoring programme?**

Monitoring of bivalves for sanitary classification requires the taking of samples for microbiological testing. Samplers should receive specific training relevant to the type of sample and the subsequent analysis to be performed, and sampling should be carried out according to specific protocols. Where appropriate it may be possible to combine bivalve sampling with additional field activities carried out for e.g. the Sargassum monitoring programme.

**7) What are the general thoughts on the issues in the UK around dumping sewage in sea lowering the quality of LBMs?**

Sewage is the major source of contamination of bivalve molluscs with hazards including human pathogenic bacteria and viruses. The risks posed may be reduced by effective sewage treatment, however where untreated sewage is discharged into the environment risks are particularly acute. The eLearning course and the guidance it is based on are focused on mitigation of these risks through application of effective systems for approval, classification and management of bivalve production areas. However, efforts to improve sewage treatment and reduce sewage contamination of the environment, taken at local, national or international level, can effectively reduce the baseline risks to consumers of shellfish from sewage contamination.

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