

Conclusions

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47. The FSA is reviewing its current advice and monitoring programme for marine biotoxins to determine whether updates to existing legislative standards are necessary. To support this, the views of the COT were sought to ascertain the potential risks posed by emerging marine biotoxins to human health. The COT recommended using a numerical risk ranking method to provide the FSA with robust evidence to help inform any decisions on revising legislative standards.

48. The risk ranking, numerical scores provided alongside a narrative, successfully managed to distinguish higher risk biotoxins, notably TTX and PITX, and lower risk biotoxins such as BTX, SPX and GYM. Data on human case reports was prioritised over other data to distinguish the scores for BTX from SPX.

49. There are a number of uncertainties underlying the risk ranking: (1) the absence of routine monitoring means it is unclear whether emerging biotoxins are already present in UK waters or shellfish; (2) potential underreporting of human intoxications, especially in cases with only mild to moderate symptoms

such as gastrointestinal effects; (3) a lack of detail on human reports such as complicating factors, cooccurrence of biotoxins or persistent symptoms; (4) LD50s used to distinguish toxicity profiles are based on a limited number of studies (5) limited toxicological data prevented derivation of HBGVs thus estimated exposures cannot be compared to a standard level of known risk preventing clear conclusions on current risk to public health.

50. Despite these uncertainties the risk ranking alongside the narrative provides a current priority list of emerging biotoxin groups to assist policy in their decision making. It is important to note that the risk ranking is based on limited knowledge and that as more information becomes available the potential risk to these marine biotoxins could change.

COT

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