

GULF OF MEXICO SEAFOOD AGAIN SHOWN SAFE TO CONSUME BY FDA & NOAA SCIENTISTS.

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01 November, 2010 - U.S. scientists with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Food & Drug Administration (FDA) on Friday said that all Gulf of Mexico seafood samples tested for chemical dispersants are clean and safe to consume.

The federal agencies are using a new chemical test to detect dispersants used to combat the Deepwater Horizon-BP oil spill on 1,735 seafood tissue samples. The samples, collected from June through September, are from a range of species, including grouper, tuna, wahoo, swordfish, gray snapper, butterfish, red drum, croaker, shrimp, crabs and oysters.

Dr. Vicki Seyfert-Margolis, FDA's senior advisor for science and innovation, said the federal and state governments' precautionary approach "gave us and continues to give us confidence in the safety of seafood from the Gulf."

Tests are ongoing in closed areas, as well as areas that have been reopened to fishing.

Only 13 samples showed trace amounts of dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate, known as DOSS. DOSS is FDA-approved for use in various household products and over-the-counter medications at very low levels. According to the agencies' research, DOSS does not build up in fish tissue.

DOSS is a "major component" or "marker" of the widely used dispersant Corexit, said Dr. John Stein, seafood safety program director for NOAA. DOSS is a surfactant, or detergent. Stein added that the percentage of DOSS in Corexit is "proprietary information."

The agencies aim to ensure consumers that they can trust Gulf seafood. Trace amounts of chemicals used in oil dispersants are common, said the agencies, and levels for safety have been previously set. The safety threshold is 100 parts per million (ppm) for finfish and 500 ppm for shrimp, crabs and oysters.

"The rigorous testing we have done from the very beginning gives us confidence in the safety of seafood being brought to market from the Gulf," said NOAA Administrator

Jane Lubchenco. “This test adds another layer of information, reinforcing our findings to date that seafood from the Gulf remains safe.”

“This new test should help strengthen consumer confidence in Gulf seafood,” said FDA Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg. “The overwhelming majority of the seafood tested shows no detectable residue, and not one of the samples shows a residue level that would be harmful for humans. There is no question Gulf seafood coming to market is safe from oil or dispersant residue.”

Nearly 9,444 square miles, or about 4 percent of the federal Gulf waters, are still closed to commercial and recreational fishing.

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