



Surefish

The Seafood Quality Specialists

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Reduce Claims and Extend Shelf Life

How Shelf Life Testing Can Benefit Your Firm - Danny Burns, Bart Lovejoy

One of the most common reasons for performing shelf life testing is to determine the legitimacy of a claim from a customer. However, there are a multitude of other reasons to consider.

Shelf life studies can be performed to evaluate any number of parameters. Evaluation criteria are generally tailored to a specific product and process in addition to the desired end result. Extending shelf life is a common goal for many processors. Whether a product is frozen or refrigerated, the benefit of extending shelf life is like putting money in the bank.

A few of the parameters that are commonly tested during the course of shelf life studies are: functionality, microbial growth, organoleptic (sensory) properties, packaging condition, tissue degradation, and moisture loss. Shelf life studies can also be used to measure product performance against competitor or foreign market products that are the same or similar in nature.

Shelf life testing can also assist in identifying problems with existing process steps, practices, or storage conditions that would otherwise go unnoticed until a claim is filed. This testing also allows companies to accurately represent their product on the market.

When shelf life testing is performed regularly, the data that is generated can provide timely and valuable information regarding a product's condition over time in cold storage. Additionally, the data that is generated can be used as a preventative measure,



i.e. the information can be used to mitigate the risk of a claim being filed. Forewarned is forearmed. The benefits of avoiding the hassles and costs associated with the processing of claims are innumerable!

In order to evaluate the functionality or effectiveness of a new ingredient, altered process steps, or packaging changes, shelf life studies will often compare a control set of samples against a set of test samples. The study is performed over a predetermined period of time. The information generated from this type of study is extremely valuable in helping companies to make smart, informed business decisions that have a positive effect on their products and their bottom lines.

For more information on determining how shelf life testing options can benefit your firm, please contact our Seattle laboratory at surelab@surefish.com or our main office at: surefish@surefish.com



Surefish HACCP Training:

- Surefish offers FDA Required HACCP Training
- March 9 & 10, 2005

Please contact us for more details at 206-284-2686 or at surefish@surefish.com



Visit us at the Boston Seafood Show/ Seafood Processing America Booth # 2236

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Surefish Quality News

The Seafood Quality Specialists

Winter 2005 Issue

Cause for Celebration...www.surefish.com

- Lisa Goche'

Well, it has been in the construction phase for quite some time, but we are now finally able to say: Please visit our completely new, improved, and updated website: www.surefish.com



Actually, when you see it, I think you will understand why it took a while. I am extremely pleased with the results, and I hope you will be too. There are many things about our new site that I'd like to mention:

1. Our full range of services are now all there, and easy to find
2. There is a search function to help you navigate
3. The home page will feature regular updates on services, classes, and workshops
4. The entire site will be updated and improved regularly each year



New Surefish Website

We hope that you will enjoy our new site and will visit it often.

Any suggestions you have about our website or services are welcome! Please contact me any time at (206) 284-2686 or lisa@surefish.com

Shrimp Anti-Dumping Update

- Bart Cox

The U.S. Commerce Department has ruled that shrimp imported from Brazil, Ecuador, India and Thailand was dumped on the U.S. market.



In a late December 2004 final determination, the U.S. Commerce Department stated that they feel frozen and canned warm-water shrimp from the four countries was sold at less than fair value, with margins ranging from 2.35 percent to 67.8 percent.

The department found that critical circumstances do not exist for imports from any of the countries.

In 2003, shrimp imports from the four countries amounted to \$1.66 billion, of which around \$1 billion's worth came mostly from Thailand. In November 2004, the department issued a final affirmative ruling on similar imports from China and Vietnam. Those two countries were considered separately because the department regards them as "non-market economies."

In a final determination, the department fixed punitive anti-dumping duties in a range of 4.13 to 25.76 percent for Vietnamese imports, a significant reduction from the upper 93 percent bracket it had set in July.

It also slapped hefty duties ranging from 27.89 to 112.81 percent on shrimp imports from China.

Together, all six countries provide about 75 percent of the shrimp consumed in the U.S. market.

An alliance of shrimp producers from eight U.S. states that requested the investigation alleged that the six countries are dumping excess production on the U.S. market to expand their market share. The alliance demanded imposition of tariffs ranging up to 267 percent.

U.S. companies that market, distribute and sell seafood said that imposition of duties would hurt consumers of the United States' most popular seafood by pushing shrimp prices up. For more information on shrimp anti-dumping, please contact Bart Cox at bart@surefish.com

A Tool for Success

- Bart Lovejoy

Microorganisms are always associated with the raw materials of the food industry. Except for foods that are heat processed to the degree that they are sterilized, microorganisms are usually associated with food products. Some of these microorganisms may cause spoilage, others may cause food borne disease, and still others may bring about desirable changes as a result of growth in foods with which they are associated (think yogurt).

There are two broad categories of foods, i.e. those that are shelf-stable and those that are perishable. The factors responsible for the stability of shelf-stable products must be properly controlled. Most seafood products fall into the perishable category. With perishable foods, processing and storage conditions must be controlled to achieve maximum shelf-life consistent with product safety.

Approaches to the assurance of control of microorganisms in seafood have varied. Among these have been (1) education and training, (2) inspection of facilities and operations, and (3) microbiological testing.

Regardless of the category that your products fall into, addressing the presence and control of microorganisms in your facilities and products can be a major undertaking. Although any one of the above mentioned approaches to controlling bacteria can assist in assuring a wholesome product, the combination of employee education and training, facility and operational inspection, and product and environmental testing will provide your firm with the best opportunity for reducing and monitoring microbial loads and manufacturing wholesome food products.

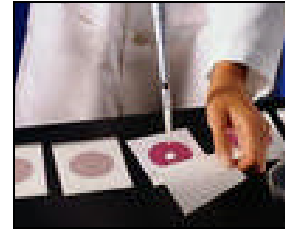
Education and training of employees in food safety and sanitation is one of the best ways to mitigate the risks associated with

cross-contamination of products through human contact. Proper inspection of production facilities and operations can aid in identifying potential hot spots or practices where harborage of microorganisms may create an unnecessary means of product adulteration. Following up with microbiological testing in the plant environment and on finished product will serve as verification that your efforts to produce safe food products are effective.

Food microbiology is a tool that can be used for success. A microbiology program can be tailored and integrated into existing programs for maximum benefit. This will broaden the scope and effectiveness of food safety, sanitation, regulatory compliance, risk mitigation, and vendor approval programs.

With a well rounded and effective program in place, your firm will have scientifically based proof that its products and process environments are wholesome and food safe. In addition, the effectiveness of sanitation, GMP, and similar programs can be verified. The knowledge gained from a well-rounded program that encompasses food safety training and education, the inspection of facilities and operations, and a microbiological testing regimen is invaluable.

Let us assist you in developing or redesigning a complete food safety program. If you'd like more information on any or all of these services, please contact our Seattle laboratory or main office. We offer a broad range of training, inspection, and testing services that can be tailored to fit the needs of any firm.



Do you need Supplier Audits?

- Gertrud Gastel

Experienced Surefish auditors can travel the globe for your company, assessing your suppliers against the standards you set. These audits will not only assess the supplier's food safety, security and sanitation practices, but also examine existing QA programs and procedures. Surefish can perform our standard Supplier Audit or customize the scope of the audit to meet your company's individual needs. The final report and suggestions will provide to management, quality control, and production personnel with a thorough assessment of your suppliers.



- Accuracy of Importer Verification plan if applicable
- Accuracy of Allergen plan if applicable
- Food Security policy review
- Product Rework policy review
- Adequacy of Pest Control Program
- Check adequacy of overall Sanitation/GMP in the facility
- Crisis Management policy review

Did you know about our Pre-Audit Assessment Services?

This evaluation helps prepare a company for customer audits. We can identify the strengths and weakness of your system. We can come to your plant and perform a Pre-Audit-Assessment. We will show how to make improvements that will increase the likelihood of passing the official audit on the first attempt, saving you time, money and reputation.

Surefish auditors are among the most highly trained in the industry. Our Supplier Audit program and Pre-Audit Assessment Services can be tailored to suit your needs. For more information you can contact Gertrud Gastel or Bart Cox at 206-284-2686 or write us at surefish@surefish.com.

Check out our new website: www.surefish.com

Surefish Employee Bio: Allison Corcoran - Consultant - Surefish Seattle

Name: Allison Corcoran
Title: Consultant
Years with Surefish: 3

Where did you grow up?
Northern California, in the east San Francisco Bay area.

What was your first job?

My first real job, aside from the usual babysitting, was an office job I inherited at age 15 from my older sister. It was a general office assistant sort of thing, & when she went off to college, they just said "So when are you going to start?" I stayed there until I went off to college, so I was lucky and managed to avoid the typical high school trauma of working at a fast food restaurant or some other retail place.

How did you become involved in the seafood industry?

The salmon industry had advertised in the school newspaper for summer jobs, and I had talked a few times about doing it, but never actually did anything. Then about 6 months after graduating, as I was sitting around wondering what I was going to do with my degree, a friend living in Seattle called me. She had just gotten laid off & was going to check out the fishing industry, and since she knew I had talked about it, wanted to know if I wanted to apply with her. Sounded like as good an idea as any to me at the time. We ended up working for one of the (now defunct) trawling companies, on different boats of course. I remember thinking during more than one shift while stuck at the candling tables "This is a good argument for graduate school". Of course I never did. The company offered me a position as a purser/quality control technician, and that was that.....

Why Surefish?

I was ready to have a job where I wasn't away from home seven months of the year, and I of course had been aware of Surefish once I started as QC since the vessels used their inspection services. When a friend told me they were hiring for the consultant position it seemed like a great opportunity. It was wonderful to be able to apply my work experience from the vessels to what my parents called a 'real job'.

What is the best aspect of your job?

I love that I've stayed connected to the fishing industry, and that I'm able to see so many more aspects of it now than I did when I was just on the vessels. We work with so many different types of companies, from primary processors to distributors to retailers, that it seems like there's always something different coming along.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy playing around in my yard and gardening. I'm also working on what's turned into a long-term project to redecorate/re-do our house (we bought it 5 years ago, & I'm still working on it). I enjoy horseback riding too, but haven't been able to do much of that the last few years.

What is your favorite seafood dish?

My favorite seafood has always been halibut, & my favorite specific dish would have to be crab-stuffed halibut. I first had it at the Grand Aleutian in Dutch Harbor & have loved it ever since.



Allison Corcoran

Regulatory Update

- Allison Corcoran

Bioterrorism Act

On December 6, 2004 the FDA issued the final regulations for Section 306 - Maintenance and Inspection of Records for Foods - of the 'Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002'. This is the fourth and final regulation of the Bioterrorism Act. The regulation requires that the establishment maintain records that identify the immediate previous source of all food received, as well as, the immediate subsequent recipient of all food released. The record retention period for human foods ranges from six months to two years depending on the shelf life of the food. Records must be retained at the establishment where the activities covered in the records occurred or at a reasonably accessible location. Companies may keep the required information in any



format, paper or electronic. All businesses covered by the rule must comply within 12 months from the date the rule is published in the Federal Register (December 6), except small and very small businesses. Small businesses

must comply within 18 months from this date, and very small within 24 months.

Additional information can be found on the FDA's Bioterrorism Act webpage: www.fda.gov/oc/bioterrorism/bioact.html