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Seafood safety is not affected by the current coronavirus pandemic

The Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST) would like to clarify that salmon and seafood products from Iceland is safe to consume. This statement follows the recent announcement of coronavirus on cutting boards for imported salmon at a wholesale market in Beijing, China.

Current evidence indicates that COVID-19 is mainly transmitted via large respiratory droplets containing the SARS-CoV-2 virus, between an infected individual and a healthy one. The virus is known to be transmitted via direct contact (contact with an infected individual) and indirect contact (via contaminated fomites/surfaces to the mouth, nose or eyes).

Currently there is no evidence to suggest that the SARS-CoV-2 virus can be transmitted via food, and therefore the risk of infection via this route is considered unlikely. For further information please visit:

<https://www.covid.is/sub-categories/food-pets-and-animals>

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/coronavirus-no-evidence-food-source-or-transmission-route>

The current situation in Iceland regarding COVID-19 is good, with a very low transmission rate and very few cases have been identified last few weeks. Most of the seafood is processed in remote areas with a very small population, lowering the risk of transmission. Food operators, including those handling seafood, must abide by strict hygiene rules when handling food, minimizing the risk of infection.

Furthermore, the length of time needed for sea transport between Iceland and China, makes it very unlikely for any virus to remain viable by the time the goods enter China.

As per a recent statement from the World Health organization, “....imported food should be subjected to the same import controls as before the pandemic” <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/questions-relating-to-food-safety-authorities>

Icelandic law stipulates that anyone involved in the handling of food, including seafood, must be free from any infectious disease. Furthermore, full pay is granted for sick leave, therefore there is no motivation for people to work while ill.

The Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority, is working closely with the Ministry of Health to ensure the safety of the general public and of any products of animal or non-animal origin to be consumed within the country or abroad. We would like, once again, to emphasize that seafood safety is in no way compromised throughout this pandemic.