



## STATEMENT

### EXPORT OF SALMONS TO THE CHINESE MARKET

#### Background

In relation to recent publications, including the article "Chinese Business Strategy Batu Hai", on the detection of coronaviruses in a Beijing market last Friday, June 12, which would have been found on a cutting board for salmon, and presumes a possible relationship with the new positive cases in the population, through fishery and aquaculture products, SERNAPESCA states that to date there is no evidence to suggest that SARS-CoV-2 can infect aquatic animals and, therefore, these animals do not play an epidemiological role in spreading COVID-19 to humans.

According to the information resulting from the investigations carried out by the FDA, WHO and FAO, it is possible to point out:

- The SARS-CoV-2 virus that leads to COVID-19 disease is transmitted primarily through droplet transmission, when the virus is transmitted from the respiratory tract of an infected person to a healthy person.
- The virus can be transmitted by indirect contact through objects or surfaces (for example, door handles, keyboards, telephones, etc.) by sneezing or coughing, or by sick people who have the virus on their hands. Aquatic animal feeds and products, like any other surface, can potentially become contaminated with SARS-CoV-2, especially when handled by people infected with the virus. However, with proper food and sanitation management, the likelihood of contamination of aquatic animals or their products with SARS-CoV-2 must be negligible.
- In the case of refrigerated fresh salmon, although the virus can remain active at low temperatures, the probability of contamination is very low, considering transport times to the final consumer that exceed 96 hours.
- Currently, there are no known cases reported of infection by contaminated food, imported food or water. Based on current knowledge of coronaviruses, food and water infection is considered unlikely.

It should be noted that since the start of the pandemic, concern has been expressed about the maintenance of the food supply chain worldwide, given the isolation and quarantine measures that have been imposed in the countries, in order to decrease the virus spread. In

this scenario, the additional biosecurity measures and controls implemented by the salmon industry have made it possible to maintain the continuity of its operation, for the safe supply of food for consumers, despite all logistical difficulties.

### **Control actions**

Within the framework of the HACCP programs of the processing plants, controlled by SERNAPESCA, the establishments have operational sanitation procedures that guarantee the adequate cleaning and disinfection of equipment and facilities, control of operators, control of water and ice, among others. Additionally, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, companies have implemented additional biosafety protocols, in order to reduce or avoid contagion among operators and ensure that there is no contamination of the products made, in accordance with [WHO](#) and the [Chilean Ministry of Health](#).

These protocols consider measures of distance between people, temperature control of operators, permanent hand washing and disinfection, random controls of COVID to personnel, among others, in order to ensure that there is no contamination of the products manufactured in the establishments. The supervisions developed by SERNAPESCA have evidenced the correct application of the different measures applied by the companies, thus guaranteeing the safety of the products that are exported.

The Ministry of Health has established strict biosecurity protocols, including quarantines and social distancing. The wide coverage of PCR analysis in Chile has allowed the control measures in the establishments to have been effective, detecting and isolating the positive cases in a timely manner.

The regional health authorities have also established strict controls for the transfer of people from one region to another. Measures include, the mandatory PCR test with negative results of all those admitted, and the mandatory preventive quarantine upon arrival.

Additionally, the salmon industry has established a COVID control program that includes:

- COVID tests through rapid tests and PCR for salmon workers every 15 days.
- Mandatory quarantine for suspected and confirmed cases and their network of contacts. Negative PCR is a requirement to return to work from quarantine.
- Total traceability of workers. Contact networks, including health surveys and temperature control.
- Decrease in staffing to achieve an active social distancing in operations within process plants and in means of transportation.
- Reinforcement of biosecurity measures and continuous disinfection of operations, equipment and people who handle the product.
- Segregation areas to ensure complete traceability and rapid isolation response.
- High-risk workers (over 60, pregnant and with a history of chronic diseases) must remain at home (compulsory work permit)

SERNAPESCA has incorporated in the regular supervision of process plants, control of compliance with all protocols and biosecurity measures, and the review of daily records and means of verification. Verification includes the online inspection, through electronic means.

**References:**

Conclusions FDA report: <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/industry-faqs-animal-food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

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OMS <https://www.who.int/es/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

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