

# Food Business Operators supplementary sampling results for the Official Control microbiological monitoring of classified production areas in England and Wales

## SUMMARY FACT SHEET

Shellfish harvesters can now submit samples to supplement the Official Control Microbiological Monitoring Programme for shellfish classification. The Food Standards Agency as competent authority has the overall responsibility for the programme. This factsheet contains summary information for a quick overview of the supplementary sampling scheme. There is more substantial guidance available in the full [Guide](#), including templates and forms. Shellfish harvesters wishing to take part in the scheme should read through the whole Guide before committing themselves.

Benefits of taking part in the scheme are that supplementary industry samples are used alongside the official samples taken by the Local Food Authority (LFA) to determine the microbiological status and classification of the relevant production area. In addition the amount of available environmental data for the harvesting area(s) will be maximised, thus stabilising the area's classification and providing earlier warning of variations in water quality.

Harvesters will be required to arrange and bear the cost of testing supplementary samples. The Agency will not reimburse the costs associated with these samples. Harvesters are obliged to adhere to the rules of official sampling so that samples are comparable to those taken by the LFA.

Before sampling can start:

- harvesters should inform their LFA in writing that they would like to submit supplementary samples
- harvesters and analysing laboratories should enter into an agreement with the relevant LFA for the provision of results to the microbiological monitoring programme (template MoU in the Guide, Schedule 1)

Once a harvester has joined the scheme:

- the harvester should sample according to the rules for official control sampling (see the Guide, Schedule 3 )
- the harvester should sample according to an agreed sampling plan which can be modified to accommodate operational or market constraints that prevent harvesting
- the harvester's samples should be analysed by the laboratory included in the MoU. **NB. Only laboratories designated by the FSA accredited for, and using, the official reference method (Most Probable Number, ISO TS 16649, part 3) or alternative methods accepted by the FSA (including the impedance method for the enumeration of *E. coli* in live shellfish using the BacTrac 4300 Analyser) with respect to bivalve molluscan shellfish may provide this service for official control purposes**
- results from supplementary sampling will feed into the microbiological monitoring programme and will be assessed in the same way as results from LFA's official control sampling to decide on the classification, and opening and closing of production areas.