



**DET KONGELIGE  
FISKERI- OG KYSTDEPARTEMENT**

*Royal Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs  
The Minister*

Andrea Kavanagh  
Pure Salmon Campaign  
National Environmental Trust  
1200 18th Street, NW  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036

Your ref.

Our ref.  
200600018- /LJ

Date

**07 FEB. 2006**

Dear Ms. Kavanagh,

Reference is made to your enquiry dated 10 January 2006.

You request information regarding the Norwegian Government's mechanism to ensure safe and healthy food to the consumers – including safe and healthy aquaculture products such as Norwegian salmon. I will therefore explain the Norwegian food safety system. Answers to your detailed questions related to the specific case have been provided by the responsible competent Norwegian authorities, and can be found as enclosures to this letter.

**The Norwegian system for official food control to ensure safe and healthy food**

On 1 January 2004 the official food control system of Norway was totally reformed. Two major features of the reform were the establishment of a new authority: the Norwegian Food Safety Authority; and reorganized scientific support through the establishment of an independent risk assessment body: The Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety (VKM). The new system has a clear separation between the scientists performing risk assessment and the managers with risk management tasks.

The Food Safety Authority was created by merging 5 former control bodies to establish a single governmental body responsible for official controls along the entire food chain, from primary production to product delivery. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is the administratively responsible ministry for the new authority, but the authority is also subordinate to both Ministry of Health and Care Services and Ministry of Fish and Coastal Affairs. The constitutional responsibility for food safety lies, however, with the

Minister of Health and Care Services.

A recent survey conducted by MMI, one of Norway's largest and most respected market research agencies, shows that 86 percent of Norwegian consumers have great confidence in the information they receive from the Norwegian Food Safety Authority in health-related issues concerning food.

Many international food and animal health crises during the last years have focused on the need to have a clear separation of tasks between risk assessors and risk managers. In the Norwegian reform, this signal has been followed up through the establishment of a Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety, set up both to serve the Food Safety Authority, but also with competence to communicate its scientific opinions independently of the authorities' risk management choices. The structure of the scientific committee mirrors the structure chosen by the European Union in the establishment of European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The Minister of Health and Care Services is administratively responsible for the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety.

A secretariat serves 8 independent scientific panels consisting of 71 members, all highly qualified scientists from various research/academic institutions. The participants of the panels are chosen every three years based on their scientific merits in the appropriate field covered by the panel.

In addition to the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety several research institutions provide the Norwegian Food Safety Authority with scientific advice in their day to day work. National Institute of Nutrition and Seafood Research (NIFES) is one of several such institutions. NIFES is specialised in contaminants related to seafood production.

### **Response of the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety on their risk assessment**

In your enquiry you refer to a person at NIFES who disagree with the Scientific Committee for Food Safety. You will find enclosed as annex 1 the response of the Scientific Committee for Food Safety. Furthermore, the Director of NIFES has publicly announced that the view of this employee on this matter does not reflect the scientific views of NIFES, and should be considered her own personal opinion. It has been brought to my attention that this employee has neither been involved in research, nor in surveillance activities, related to the issue in question through her work at NIFES.

### **Response of Norwegian Food Safety Authority to your specific questions**

Concerning the seven specific questions of your letter, I enclose as annex 2 the answer provided by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority.

**Comments from NIFES on the 6 scientific articles referred to in your enquiry.**

I also enclose the comments from NIFES on the 6 articles referred to in your enquiry as annex 3.

I would appreciate that your organization publishes this letter including the annexes on the same web-sites that you have published your enquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Helga Pedersen

Enclosure:

Comments from the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety (VKM)

Comments from the Norwegian Food Safety Authority

Comments from National Institute of Nutrition and Seafood Research (NIFES)