

FSA confirms Lough Neagh fish remain safe to eat following latest testing results

Following the onset of a significant algal bloom in Lough Neagh during summer 2023, the FSA has conducted a sampling programme testing various species of fish from the lough, to determine the levels and types of toxins that may be present in fish as a result of the blue-green algae.

“The latest results show that some toxins have been detected in the viscera of the fish and, for the first time, in the flesh of some fish. These results, compared to the Tolerable Daily Intake (TDI) levels set by the World Health Organisation, are not a health concern.

“Our toxicologists have confirmed that fish – like bream, trout, perch, pollan and eel – remain safe to eat. As with previous findings, levels of toxins were higher in the gut and liver than in the flesh of fish exposed to the algal bloom. This is why our existing advice to recreational anglers still stands – they should ensure that they only eat edible flesh of fish that have been properly gutted, and that the fillets are rinsed with clean water to remove any contamination from the gutting process.

“We will continue to sample and test during this year and next and, as ever, will keep our advice under review if the evidence changes.”

Professor Robin May, Chief Scientific Advisor for the FSA

Food businesses, such as commercial fisheries, are being reminded to follow good processing procedures such as proper evisceration to remove intestines, liver and gills where cyanotoxins can accumulate.

Advice to recreational anglers:

Recreational anglers can enjoy eating the fish they catch but they should take care when handling and gutting the fish to prevent contamination of the edible flesh of the fish with toxins that may be present in internal organs.

Before cooking or freezing the fish, fillets should be rinsed with clean water to remove any contaminants from the gutting process.

Advice remains that recreational fishing should not take place in areas of visible algal bloom and fish that are displaying abnormal behaviours, are dead or dying should not be eaten.