

## Galicia, ready to apply chemical toxin control method

The director of the Technological Institute for the Control of Marine Environment(Intecmar), Covadonga Salgado, says Galicia is ready to apply the chemical method to control lipophilic toxins in shellfish.

This methodology established by the European Union (EU) coexisted with the bioassay method for controlling these toxins until 31 December 2014, but it will be replaced by the former starting this year.

Despite reservations about this method, the Xunta de Galicia complies with European legislation and has worked hard through the Institute to implement it.

The chemical method employs liquid chromatography with LC-MS/MS mass spectrometry detector but in Galician government's opinion, it is slower than the bioassay and does not provide greater safety for consumers. In addition, it also stressed that has a higher level of uncertainty and is more expensive.

Salgado said that to apply this analytical method, the centre has three units.

Since February 2013 (when it received use validation) until the end of 2014, Intecmar conducted 3,886 analytical tests, demonstrating that it is able to take control of lipophilic toxins with this system "with the utmost rigor," the official said.

The Centre for Marine Research (CIMA) collaborated with Intecmar between October 2009 and December 2010, to implement a control program of this method for lipophilic toxins.

At that time, the Institute assumed the selection and channelling of samples, and CIMA focused on the analysis.

From June 2011, the process of technique validation and sample analysis of the routine monitoring program started, in parallel with the bioassay method.

In February 2013, Intecmar received the accreditation from the National Accreditation Body (ENAC) for using the chemical method, becoming the first Spanish centre of official control in having validated the chemical method for analyzing marine biotoxins.

The director of Intecmar recalled that in 2009 the regional government expressed its opposition to change the method of biotoxin detection. To express its rejection, it met with successive commissioners of EU Fisheries and several members of the sector, and representatives of the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition (AECOSAN) and the Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health.

In addition, the Galician Government sent letters to the General Directorate for Health and Consumer Protection (DG Sanco).

Later, after the publication of the regulation, the Central Management filed a petition for its cancellation before the European Court of Justice. However, there has been no sentence so far, the Xunta informed.