

Devon and Severn IFCA News

D&S IFCA assists with classification sampling of Lyme Bay mussels

D&S IFCA officers are assisting the food and safety team at Torbay Council by witnessing mussel and water samples being taken.



The offshore rope cultured mussel farm in Lyme Bay was established by Offshore Shellfish Limited in 2014. It is the largest farm of its type in Europe which cultivates the blue mussel, *Mytilus edulis*. The farm is split between three sites which cover a total area of 15.4 square km and can harvest an amount of 10,000 tonnes per year.

What are the samples for?

Shellfish farms require authorisation in order to prevent the introduction and spread of infectious diseases. Inspection of any new site will be carried out and authorisation must be granted prior to any production. Once authorisation has been granted, certain standards and bio-security measures must be met (details of which can be found here) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fish-shellfish-or-crustacean-farm-authorisation>.

Mussels are filter feeders that can accumulate and concentrate bacteria or viruses which can be a risk to human health. Under the European Hygiene Regulations 2006, shellfish business operators are responsible for ensuring that bivalve molluscs meet strict food safety standards. In order to meet these required standards, mussel and water samples must be periodically taken from the site at Lyme Bay. These samples are then tested by the environmental health team at Torbay council to establish the level of *E. coli* present in the mussel flesh. The harvesting areas of the farm are then classified based on the level of *E. coli* present, as per the regulations under the Food Standards Agency. The mussels are also tested for the presence of toxin producing plankton in the water and biotoxins in the flesh. D&S IFCA are scheduled to assist on three more sampling trips. Details on Bivalve mollusc safety can be found here <https://www.seafish.org/article/bivalve-mollusc-safety>.

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