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MEMORANDUM FOR: All U.S. Seafood Establishments Shipping  
Product to the European Union

FROM: Timothy Hansen  
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SUBJECT: Interim Guidelines for Receiving EU Health Certificates for  
Seafood Product Destined for the European Union

On January 15, 2009, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a Federal Register Notice announcing that after February 17, 2009, FDA will no longer issue health certificates required by the European Union (EU) for export of fish or fishery products to the EU or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). 74 FR 2600 (January 15, 2009). By subsequent notice in the Federal Register on February 11, 2009, FDA announced a 120-day delay in the effective date of the January 15, 2009 notice. FDA now intends to cease issuing EU Health Certificates on June 17, 2009. The U. S. Department of Commerce Seafood Inspection Program (SIP) will continue to issue these certificates upon request on a fee-for-service basis. Due to the large volume of demand for these certificates and the need for expedient service, SIP, through this Notice, is announcing a change from current practices, for providing Health Certificates for the EU and EFTA. This interim guidance will be effective for the period February 17, 2009 until June 17, 2009 and will be updated with final guidelines prior to June 17, 2009.

### **Background**

In 1993, the EU began requiring health certificates for fish and fishery products that entered the EU. Both the FDA and SIP were recognized by EU as competent U.S. Government authorities and acceptable sources for EU health certificates. The EU also required that shippers to EU be on a list of firms that demonstrated compliance with the U.S. food safety laws and regulations. Since 1993, FDA has issued health certificates for seafood processing firms appearing on the EU Export Certificate List free of charge. By contrast, SIP examined the product and labeling, confirmed all the shipping information and issued health certificates on a fee for service basis. FDA initially issued approximately 3000 certificates per year, but as European demand for U.S. fishery products increased over the years, the number of certificates issued annually by FDA has grown ten-fold to over 30,000. FDA currently issues about 80% of all EU health certificates. The increased volume of certificates issued and concomitant decrease in agency resources has made FDA reassess its involvement in the issuance of EU health certificates.



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