KYMA
sea conservation
& research

Seafood is healthy – really?

Pollutants in popular seafood such as tuna or salmon can compromise human health.

Pollutants on our plate

The oceans are contaminated with numerous pollutants that are considered to be persistent and harmful to health. For example dioxins, PCBs, DDT and mercury. These pollutants accumulate particularly in marine animals that are at the end of the food chain and are rich in fatty tissues. This includes popular large edible fishes such as tuna, swordfish and salmon. Sardines are also polluted; they are mainly used as fish feeds for farmed species in aquaculture. The pollutants can thus be transferred to the farmed animals.

Pesticides and antibiotics in shrimps

The demand for shrimps is high.[1] A large proportion of the species consumed today come from conventional shrimp farms. In addition to pesticides, these farms use large quantities of antibiotics to prevent disease outbreaks in the densely populated ponds. The substances end up in the environment and in the shrimps we eventually consume.[2] This truly cannot be healthy.

Plastic particles in mussels

In recent years, more and more studies show that marine animals are contaminated with microplastics. It is still largely unclear how much of this and the associated chemicals we consume when eating seafood.[3] The situation is different with mussels. It has been proven that we take in 90 plastic particles from an average portion of mussels and 50 from oysters.[4,5] So we eat plastic when we consume these sea animals. Yummy sounds different, even though the consequences for human health have not yet been sufficiently clarified.

Healthy without fish and other sea animals

Regular consumption of fish is considered healthy because they contain many proteins and essential omega-3 fatty acids. But if the pollutants are considered, it is better to switch to other foods that contain these same important healthy ingredients. For example nuts (walnuts, almonds), oils (rapeseed oil, hemp oil) and vegetables (Brussels sprouts, spinach, beans). This is sufficient to meet human needs.

Plastic, mercury and other harmful substances in the stomach, you don‘t want that, do you? Then you should refrain from eating edible fish, crustaceans and mussels.

[1] FAO 2018
[2] https://www.ecowatch.com/why-you-may-never-want-to-eat-shrimp-again-1881839381.html
[3] https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/aug/31/fish-plastic-pollution-ocean-environment-seafood
[4] https://www.brunel.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/Significant-and-widespread-microplastics-found-in-mussels-from-UK-waters
[5] Van Cauwenberghe & Janssen 2014

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