

<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>		<b>Sector Information Minute</b>	
<b>Agriculture and Food Sector</b>		<b>SIM 01/2002/60</b> (formerly 05/2002/25)	
<b>Cancellation Date</b>	26/11/2006	<b>Open Government Status</b>	Fully Open
<b>Version No &amp; Date</b>	1: 26/11/2002	<b>Author Unit/Section</b>	Food Section

Target Audience  
FOD Inspectors responsible for the food industries  
Specialist Inspectors (Occupational Hygiene)

## **AEROSOL PROTEINS IN PRAWN PROCESSING**

This SIM gives advice on current methods for processing prawns and the risk of respiratory sensitisation.

### BACKGROUND

- 1 It has been known for some time that aerosol proteins in fish processing are respiratory sensitisers.
- 2 Some years ago HSE investigated the prawn processing industry for evidence of this problem. At the time, prawns were separated from their shells by impaling them on lances with air or water jets. This method, particularly air blowing, produced a lot of aerosol.

### CURRENT PROCESSING METHODS

- 3 Big improvements have been made at most plants in recent years and water jetting has become the norm with separate booths and curtaining to reduce exposure. However, there remains a hazard if these control measures are not properly maintained.
- 4 An alternative to prawn blowing is the use of de-shelling machines. These machines use a completely different technique, one which largely eliminates airborne proteins. Consisting of a simple mechanism which mechanically separates prawn and shell under the head of the machine, it reduces the operators task to simply ensuring the prawns are laid lengthwise on the conveyor infeed and removing product at the other side.
- 5 Another part of the process involves removing the intestinal tract - the little black line along the back of the prawn. This can now be removed at the factory by highly skilled operators using an extraction system. This comes in the form of hand-held stylus equipment that sucks out the tract contents.

### ACTION BY INSPECTORS

- 6 No special action is required. However inspectors will wish to be aware of the respiratory sensitisation issue when inspecting prawn processing factories.

Date first issued: 26 November 2002