

Response provided to journalist
12 December 2017

Question

Could you please supply me with the PFAS contamination test results for fish life around Katherine and Tindal, NT.

And specifically, which species of "other fish" had 67 times the acceptable value, as was recently reported.

Response

Defence has developed an Interim Human Health Risk Assessment (IHHRA) to evaluate potential PFAS exposure risks that may present to people living within the RAAF Base Tindal investigation area. Defence has been working closely with the Northern Territory Government throughout the investigation and will continue to do so.

Samples collected from water, soil, plants, fish and animal products were used to inform the IHHRA. Most of the samples were collected during the dry season and further sampling will be conducted during the wet season. Defence will release a final HHRA which will look at potential PFAS exposures in greater detail. A summary of the fish samples, by fish type, and results used to compile the advice is shown below. The Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) trigger value for fish is 5.2 ug/kg.

FSANZ trigger values are the maximum concentration level of chemicals that could be present in foods so even high consumers of these foods would not exceed the relevant tolerable daily intake (TDI).

FSANZ trigger values can be used by State and Territory authorities with food advisory accountabilities when undertaking further analysis of PFAS in foods to identify when levels in foods exceed these values and require more research.

Species	n samples (individuals)	Range of PFOS+PFHxS concentrations in flesh (ug/kg)
Barramundi	12	12 - 42
Catfish	9 (13)	6.2 - 35
Archerfish	3 (5)	19 - 130
Bony Bream	5	76 - 190
Grunters	13	9.5 – 120
Mullet	7	48 - 350
Cod	4	32 – 88
Spangled Perch	3 (11)	110 - 160

The detailed information regarding results fish types, sizes and locations taken will be included in the Detailed Site Investigation Report and the Interim Human Health Risk Assessment (details of these reports are contained later in this response).

Samples of fish from potentially affected areas will continue to be taken and analysed in December 2017. These samples will be used to fill data gaps in the investigation and contribute to a better understanding of the interim findings.

The IHHRA is currently being reviewed by relevant Territory agencies and is expected to be finalised and released to the public in the coming weeks.

Defence is committed to providing the community with prompt advice on the progress and findings of the investigation. In order to keep the community informed, Defence presented the key findings of the IHHRA at a community walk-in session in Katherine on 04 December 2017. A factsheet outlining these findings is available on the Defence Tindal PFAS investigation website.