

# Anisakis in Fish is Natural Phenomenon

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The finding of *Anisakis* sp. worm in a number of canned mackerel products recently has stirred anxiety among society. Lecturer in fisheries science from UGM, Dr. Eko Setyobudi, said the emergence of *anisakis* in sea fish was a normal thing. Reportedly, the Food and Drugs Agency has released the finding of 27 brands of canned mackerel products positive to contain parasitic *Anisakis* sp. worms. The Agency has since withdrawn such brands from across Indonesia.

“The presence of *anisakis* in sea fish is a normal phenomenon that happens naturally,” he said in his office of Fisheries Department at UGM on Tuesday (3/4).

Eko said *anisakis* was nematodes in *Anisakidae* family that is often found as parasite in sea fish around the world. Its spread involves crustaceans, fish, squid, or marine mammals as hosts.

Eko explained *anisakis* infection in marine organisms had been studied before and a great number of fish species and cephalopod are vulnerable to such infection.

“The research done by Fisheries Department also showed that some fish species in the Indian Ocean



have also been infected by the nematode,” he said.

Anisakis consists of many species while some are distributed in limited areas.

Eko revealed that in developed countries such as Canada, the fish that is known to have high prevalence of anisakis larvae would be examined for the existence of nematodes during processing. Heavy infection level will cause the fish to be dumped.

To minimise the risk of anisakis emergence in canned food, Eko emphasised the need to ensure that the fish did not come from certain areas and during harvest season that is free from anisakis infection. Sampling is also required for the raw material to check possible nematode infection as well as operational procedure standard for handling raw material suspected to get infected.

Meanwhile, food safety expert, Prof. Endang Sutrisnawati Rahayu, who was contacted separately said that anisakis worms in canned mackerel were already dead and not harmful if consumed because the worms were already killed after several standard processes were done. “The consumption of food containing dead parasite is not harmful to human body, but aesthetically the worms should not be in the fish,” she said.

She explained the process requires thermal prerequisites to ensure all the microorganism in the food has been killed. So, in standard processing, the food is safe to consume even until the expiration date.

The Agricultural Technology professor of UGM called on the people not to panic or fear to consume sea fish.

“What’s important is the processing and cooking of fish,” she said.

But people should pay attention to the fish that is consumed rare or half-done. Control is needed on the raw fish because cooking sea fish without heat or half-cooked will not kill the worm larvae and may cause a disease.

She also called on the industry to update product operational standards in Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) or Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HCCP) and validate the heat.

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