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Intelligence

FAO issues 'roadmap' for early harmful algal bloom warning systems

28 April 2023

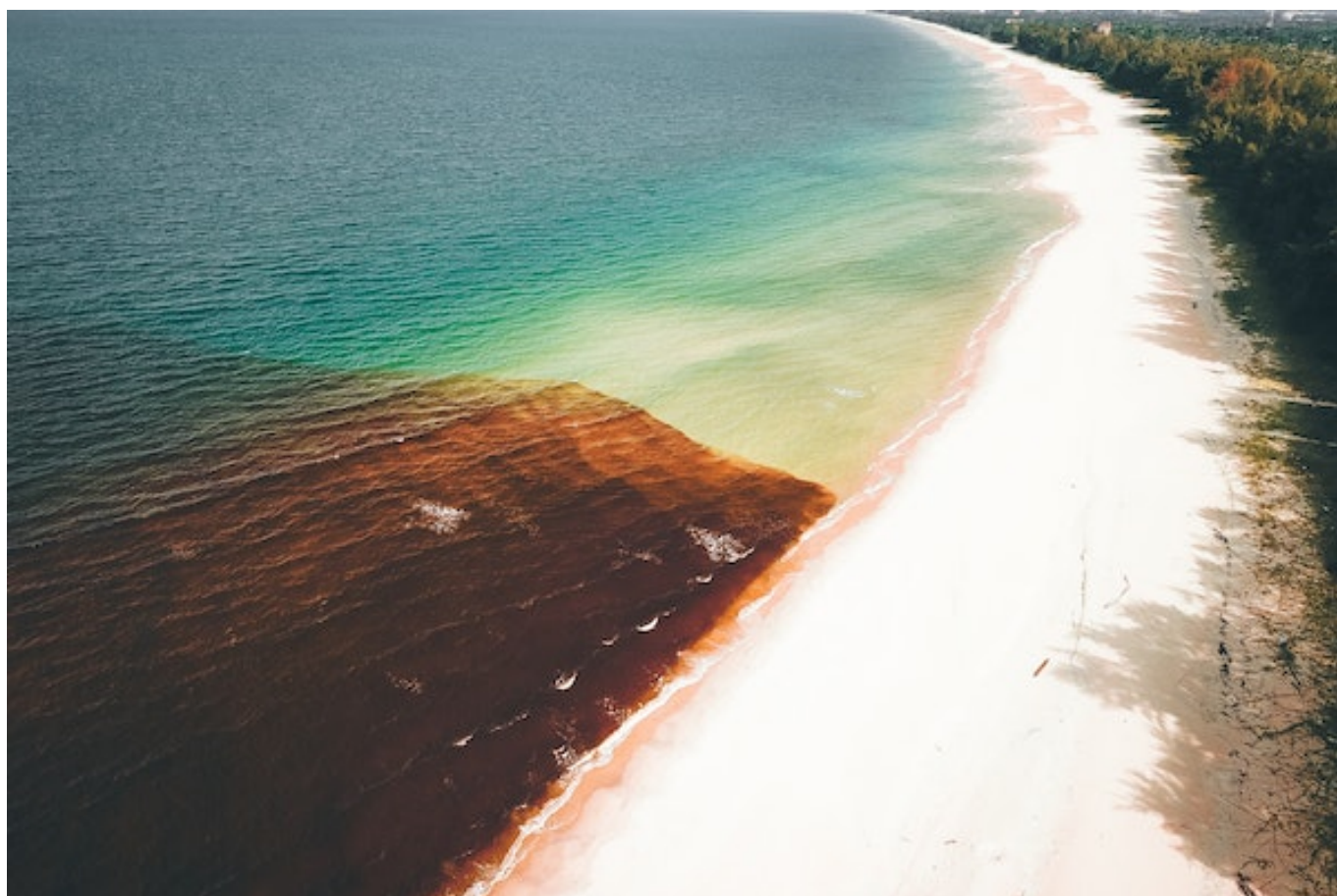
By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Aim is to mitigate the impact of harmful algal blooms and reduce occurrences

An international team of researchers and managers have published Joint FAO-IOC-IAEA technical guidance to help improve harmful algal bloom (HAB) monitoring and forecasting of harmful algal blooms around the globe. The document provides authorities with a roadmap on how to implement or improve early warning systems for harmful algal blooms (HABs) that can contaminate seafood and threaten public health.

Globally, there are 3,400 to 4,000 described species of marine microalgae, of which only one to two percent are considered harmful. However, there is growing concern that HAB events will become more frequent as ocean temperatures rise and human-caused nutrient inputs to oceans increase. Surveillance systems have been developed to monitor HABs in many countries, but the lead time or adequacy of the data (e.g., determination of toxicity) may not be sufficient to ensure seafood safety.

“Having early warning systems could help mitigate the impact of HABs and reduce the occurrence of HAB events,” wrote the authors. “The Joint FAO-IOC-IAEA technical guidance for the implementation of early warning systems (EWS) for HABs will guide competent authorities and relevant institutions involved in consumer protection or environmental monitoring to implement early warning systems for



A new FAO document provides guidance to implement or improve early warning systems for harmful algal blooms that threaten seafood and public health. Photo by [Pok Rie](https://www.pexels.com/photo/coastline-with-algal-bloom-water-5006877/) (<https://www.pexels.com/photo/coastline-with-algal-bloom-water-5006877/>).

HABs present in their areas (marine and brackish waters), specifically those affecting food safety or food security (benthic HABs, fish-killing HABs, pelagic toxic HABs, and cyanobacteria HABs)."

The report describes several HAB early warning systems around the world, including NOAA's many ecological forecasting products for different regions of the U.S. However, the report recognizes that not all countries and institutions can implement the same level of early warning systems for HABs, and states that "this guidance is intended mainly for those who seek to broaden existing early warning systems, or who are just beginning to consider putting a system in place."

An advertisement banner for Devi Seafoods. On the left and right sides, there are images of fresh, cooked shrimp on a plate with garnishes. In the center, the text reads "SHRIMP SUPPLY SOLUTIONS FROM THE SOURCE" in bold, black, uppercase letters. To the right of the text is the Devi Seafoods logo, which consists of a stylized blue and orange flame-like shape above the text "Devi Seafoods" and "contact@deviseafoods.com" below it.

(<https://www.deviseafoods.com>).

[Read the full report here \(https://www.fao.org/3/cc4794en/cc4794en.pdf\)](https://www.fao.org/3/cc4794en/cc4794en.pdf).

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