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Preface

This publication presents the contributions made, conclusions reached and the consensus statement agreed upon at a workshop on safe management of shellfish and harvest waters held 30 November–2 December 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The workshop was organised by the Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health Unit of the World Health Organization, in cooperation with the US Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development. This publication is one in a series of expert workshops, reports and monographs on Emerging Issues in Water and Infectious Disease managed by the two organizations. Other titles in the series include:

- Heterotrophic Plate-Counts and Drinking-Water Supply
- H₂S Method for Detection of Faecal Contamination
- Water Recreation and Disease
- Toxic Cyanobacteria in Water
- Waterborne Zoonoses: Identification, Causes and Controls
- Pathogenic Mycobacteria in Water
- *Legionella* and the Prevention of Legionellosis.

All publications are available from the World Health Organization website (www.int/water_sanitation_health/) or from the International Water Association (www.iwapublishing.com).

Invaluable support for the workshop was provided by the University of Malaya. A total of 22 experts from 10 different countries representing a wide range of academic disciplines, ranging from clinical and aquatic microbiology, hygiene and public health, food safety, risk assessment, epidemiology to bivalve shellfishery management attended the workshop. Meeting participants jointly examined the issues of sewage contamination of bivalve shellfish and their harvest waters. The meeting did not address biotoxins or naturally-occurring microbial contamination of shellfish.

At the workshop participants were asked to produce key technical inputs on the range of issues affecting the sewage contamination of bivalve shellfish and their harvest waters and the resultant infectious diseases. The participants were

also tasked with determining whether the existing management and control measures could, if necessary, be improved.

The global bivalve shellfish industry is a multimillion dollar industry, varying from highly commercial organizations in countries such as New Zealand to small scale, locally organized and artisanal collections in many other countries. In the latter case there are often no established methods of safeguarding the health of consumers.

This publication reflects the technical inputs made to the Kuala Lumpur workshop, associated deliberations at the workshop which may have amended those inputs and the revisions made to those amended inputs at the suggestion of the expert technical reviewers, to whom the editors are extremely grateful. A small number of additional contributions were commissioned after the Kuala Lumpur workshop from experts in additional fields and with varying perspectives to ensure the comprehensive and topical nature of the monograph – and these too were subject to external expert technical review.

This publication aims to provide relevant guidance to the appropriate agencies and stakeholders in the bivalve shellfish industry in an effort to ensure that the risks to health from consumption of shellfish associated with possible sewage contamination are minimized.

We earnestly hope that practitioners in the field will find this topical and exhaustive coverage of the subject of value to them as they strive to ensure that human health is adequately protected. We also hope that this publication will facilitate a new approach to the management of bivalve shellfish and harvest waters so that shellfish consumption is as safe and as risk-free as possible.

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