



proper food labelling benefits everyone

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A national campaign to highlight the importance of correct food product labelling and a new report on food labelling in Ireland were simultaneously launched in October. The national radio and print campaign highlights the difference between 'Use By' and 'Best Before' dates, as well as stressing the onus on the industry for honesty and truth in labelling.

The function of food labelling is to inform purchasers of the properties, ingredients, nature and characteristics of the food they buy and labelling should not mislead consumers. The information contained in food labels should be clear, unambiguous and must not make misleading or false claims. It should provide sufficient information, accurately and clearly, to enable consumers to select products according to their needs; to store and prepare them appropriately and to consume them safely.

Our advice-line has received numerous queries in relation to durability date labels and there is significant confusion over the difference between the two types of dates and which should apply to particular products. It is alarming that some businesses are ignorant about this most basic, but critical labelling requirement - the shelflife of the product. The advertising campaign simply explains that a 'Use By' date is used on products that are highly perishable and if they are consumed after their 'Use By' date they could cause illness. 'Best Before' dates refer to a period that a product remains at its best condition and whilst people can eat products after the 'Best Before' date has passed, they may disappoint in terms of quality but they should not pose a food safety risk.

See over for details of the food labelling report.

Pictured at the launch of the labelling report are Ms Vivienne Connolly, model and Dr John O'Brien, CEO, FSAI.



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the labelling of food in ireland

The recent FSAI report *'The Labelling of Food in Ireland 2007'*, produced in response to extensive queries, aims to dispel confusion as to what a food label should contain. It will ultimately assist food businesses ensure correct labelling and benefit consumers by enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions based on accurate, clear food labelling information.

The 140-page report, developed following extensive consultation with official agencies, brings together in detail all Irish and European law governing the labelling of food. It provides specific information and guidelines relating to the labelling of food with regard to ingredients, additives, storage instructions, nutritional labelling, novel foods and genetically modified foods. In addition, special sections cover organic food labelling, and the specific requirements of commodities such as beef, chocolate, fruit juices, milk and sugar products. It is designed to benefit consumers, manufacturers and the regulatory authorities alike, to act as a guide on the labelling of foods and what it means in practical terms. A summary leaflet *'General Food Labelling of Pre-Packed Food'* is also available.

The FSAI has investigated a number of labelling breaches to date. These included a survey of the honey market where 25% of the honey was labelled Irish when in fact it was of foreign origin. A study of 55 noodles for irradiation found that around 25% of products had irradiated ingredients which legally must be stated and were not declared on the label. Other examples include a breakfast cereal labelled as 'gluten free' that contained high levels of gluten, fish being sold as cod when it was pollock and 'Cumbrian Crisps' made in Ireland. Problems with pizza labelling have been found including 'cheese toppings' with mostly cheese substitute rather than cheese and pictures/maps of Italy but origin being Ireland. Whilst they may not be life threatening, they are misleading and potentially fraudulent.

It is unacceptable that consumers may be purchasing foodstuffs where the labelling is incorrect, lacking clarity or is simply portraying the product as something it is not. With the newly launched report,

food businesses have no excuse for mischievous, misleading or illegal labelling and cannot claim ignorance of the legal requirements. Consumers should be provided with honest, accurate labelling. Manufacturers should not mislead the consumer by using marketing images that could be misinterpreted, omit significant information or put undue emphasis on certain words.

Consumers who have concerns and wish to report apparently incorrect food labelling should contact either the Health Service Executive or the FSAI.

The report and summary leaflet are available on our website, www.fsai.ie, or by calling our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77.

compulsory labelling requirements

The following mandatory information must appear on the packaging of the pre-packaged foodstuff or on a label attached, however, it must be noted that there are exemptions to every rule:

- The name under which the product is sold
- The list of ingredients
- The quantity of certain ingredients
- The net quantity
- The date of minimum durability
- Any special storage instructions or conditions of use
- The name or business name and address of the manufacturer or packager, or of a seller within the European Union
- Place of origin of the foodstuff if its absence might mislead the consumer to a material degree
- Instructions for use where necessary
- Beverages with more than 1.2% alcohol by volume must declare their actual alcoholic strength.



report on zoonoses in Ireland, 2005

2007 has seen the publication of two zoonoses reports by the FSAI; the 2004 report was published earlier in the year and the 2005 report has just been published. These reports are a useful means of providing feedback to regulatory bodies, official agencies and industry while also being a gauge for assessing the effectiveness of the controls currently in place.

Zoonoses are diseases or infections transmissible from animals to humans that can be acquired directly from animals, or through ingestion of contaminated foodstuffs. The zoonoses of major concern are those transmitted through food and water and are responsible for the majority of reported and unreported foodborne illnesses. The modern methods of food production and the huge distribution networks for food products mean that large numbers of people can be potentially exposed to pathogens from a single source. The most common zoonoses include campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis, verotoxigenic producing *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) infection and more recently, cryptosporidiosis.

Every year, a number of Government Departments, official agencies and laboratories collect and analyse thousands of samples for the presence of zoonotic agents in humans, animals, food and feed. The data generated is submitted to the European Commission and forms part of an EU-wide report.

Campylobacteriosis was the predominant human zoonosis reported in 2005 with 1,803 incidents reported (46 per 100,000 population). The incidence of campylobacteriosis in Ireland has been increasing since 2001 with children under five years appearing to be most vulnerable (Figure 1).

Cryptosporidiosis has emerged as a significant zoonotic threat to public health in Ireland in recent years, as reflected by the increased incidence in 2004 and 2005. In total, 570 cases of cryptosporidiosis were reported in 2005 (14.6 per 100,000 population), compared to 432 cases notified in 2004 (11 per 100,000 population). Of the cases reported 62% (351) were in children under five years of age (See Figure 2).

The incidence rate of human salmonellosis in Ireland continued to decline in 2005, reaching its lowest level since 1993. A total

of 349 cases of salmonellosis were reported to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in 2005, down from 415 reported in 2004. As in previous years, children under five years of age appeared to be the most vulnerable group.

In 2005, there were 125 cases of VTEC reported, 32% higher than the number reported in 2003 (the highest year prior to this) and over twice the number reported in 2004. This suggests that the decline in the incidence rate observed in 2004 may have been temporary and that this disease continues to be a serious health threat, particularly for vulnerable groups. A significant portion of the human disease in 2005 was as a result of 19 outbreaks that affected 65 people. The largest VTEC outbreak in Ireland to date occurred in the Mid Western Health Service Executive (HSE) area. The outbreak involved 18 cases where two children were hospitalised with Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome and one required peritoneal dialysis.

For the first time in Ireland, three cases of sorbitol fermenting VTEC O157 were reported in 2005, two of which were linked to foreign travel. The 17 cases of non-O157 VTEC reported in 2005 showed a continued increase, possibly reflecting more awareness of non-O157 VTEC and improved diagnosis and reporting.

While it is possible for anybody to become infected with a zoonotic agent, certain sub-populations such as the very young or elderly and immuno-compromised people are particularly vulnerable with potentially more serious consequences. While the eradication of zoonoses in humans and animals is a desirable goal, in practice it is difficult if not impossible to achieve. However, the impact of zoonoses on the health of humans and animals can be limited by monitoring the reservoirs of infectious zoonotic agents with a view to understanding and controlling their modes of transfer, while simultaneously educating the public about the risk of infection and how it can best be avoided or at least restricted.

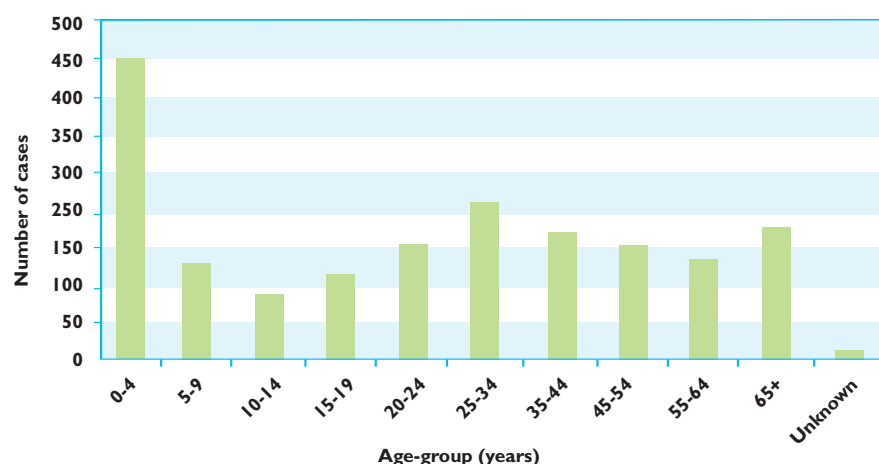


Figure 1: Number of campylobacteriosis notifications by age-group in 2005 (Source: HPSC)

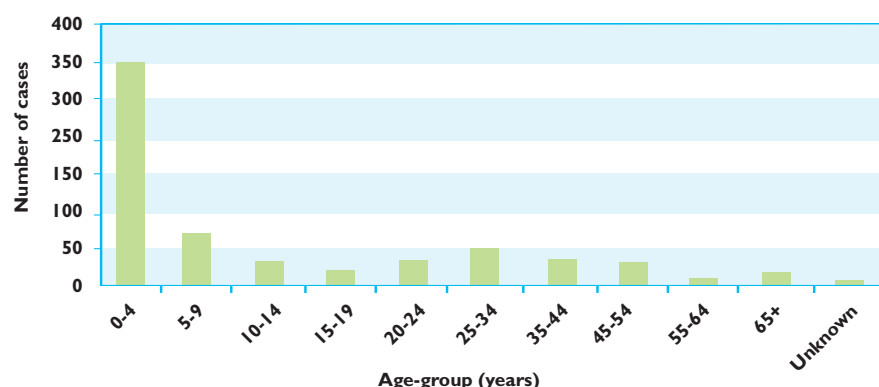


Figure 2: Number of cryptosporidiosis notifications by age-group in 2005 (Source: HPSC)



withdrawal and recall seminar

The FSAI hosted a seminar on 17 October last to outline the specific actions required by food businesses in the event of a safety issue with a food product.

The seminar provided specific details of how to manage food alerts and recalls.

'Withdrawal' is the process by which a product is removed from the supply chain, but the product has not reached the consumer. 'Recall' means the process by which a product is removed from the supply chain and where consumers are advised to take appropriate action, for example to return or destroy food they have bought.

In essence, food businesses, in compliance with the law must:

- withdraw unsafe food from the market and notify an official agency or the FSAI
- recall unsafe products from the consumer if they have been sold
- co-operate with withdrawals/recalls initiated by other food businesses and the authorities.

A wide representation from the food industry attended the FSAI seminar which stressed that the onus was firmly on them to ensure critical recall procedures are in place for swiftly removing unsafe food from the marketplace, when deemed necessary in the interest of consumer health. The food business operators were warned that there is no excuse for failing to act to recall unsafe food.

From January to the end of September this year alone, the FSAI has investigated a possible 80 individual food incidents, 57 of which required action. The majority, 35%, related to chemical hazards in food products, while 26% were microbiological in nature. 11% of the incidents related to labelling and 4% to foreign bodies in food products.

In addition, there were 22 food product recalls initiated by food business operators in Ireland during the period. For the same period, across Europe there were 687 food alerts notified to the Commission by EU Member States where regulatory agencies identified potentially unsafe food on the market, some of which could also be have been imported into Ireland.

Food businesses are legally obliged to comply with strict procedures for withdrawing and recalling unsafe food from the marketplace, as well as informing consumers publicly about any potential health hazards relating to food they may have purchased.

The FSAI is the lead authority and contact point for information and communications relating to all food incidents, and is responsible for co-ordinating investigations relating to large scale recalls and withdrawals. It is the national contact point for the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) which provides information on and operates and maintains a pan European food alert system. Through the RASFF, the FSAI is rapidly informed if there is an issue with a food product available in any other EU country which could also have implications for Ireland. Food business operators must inform the FSAI, and it, in turn, alerts the European Commission if the unsafe food product has the potential to be available in other parts of Europe.



Pictured at the withdrawal and recall seminar were Dr Mary Friel, Technical Executive, FSAI and Mr Joe Dunne, Kerry Foods.

Every food business operator must be aware of their responsibility to not only remove product from the market that could be a health risk and to inform the general public of the issue through public notices, but also to inform the FSAI immediately.

Consumers and the regulatory authorities must be fully informed immediately if there is a withdrawal or recall of food and be told the reasons why. Food businesses should also be aware of how the national and international rapid alert systems operate so that they can react to any potential health hazard posed quickly and effectively.

Lack of knowledge of these procedures will not be accepted as an excuse; the industry is legally obligated to be fully up to speed on current procedures. Similarly, food businesses that attempt to conceal potential health hazards will face severe penalties.

a pillar of the european food safety system

As Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), I am honoured to head up an organisation mandated to play a key role in helping improve EU food safety and contributing to a high level of protection for European consumers.

EFSA was formally set up in 2002 as an independent source of scientific advice and communication on risks associated with the food chain, with a remit to help rebuild consumer confidence following a series of food crises in the 1990's. The Authority operates in a legal framework where risk assessment is done separately from risk management. Our job is to provide impartial advice to risk managers - the European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament - while at the same time communicating about our findings to all interested parties.

EFSA's tasks cover not only food and feed safety but also nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health. We have already delivered over 485 scientific opinions on issues as diverse as BSE/TSE, food additives, pesticides and Avian Influenza, and in 2007 our activities extend to fields such as nanotechnology and animal cloning.

It is fundamental to the success of the EU food safety system that EFSA's advice is independent and impartial. That is why we are governed by an independent Management Board whose members are not answerable to any government, organisation or sector. All our opinions are based purely on science and not influenced by political considerations. The added value of our expert advice is that it offers a sound scientific basis for European policies and legislation, allowing decision makers to develop proportionate and appropriate risk management measures.

With our headquarters in Parma, Italy, we work closely with a network of national food safety authorities across the EU, such as the FSAI, who provide scientific advice to national governments. European and national level activities are co-ordinated by means of close co-operation through EFSA's Advisory Forum. This structure allows us to work together to exchange scientific information and data, co-ordinate work programmes, pool resources and co-operate on joint projects. Strengthening this co-operation has been a top priority for

EFSA, and we are currently implementing a strategy to facilitate information and data exchange. This helps to boost our collective ability to support risk managers in developing co-ordinated risk management strategies, avoiding duplication and ensuring consistent communications across the EU.

Since its early days, EFSA has sought to open its doors to stakeholders, the media and the public, consulting outside parties and encouraging feedback. We have put in place structures to hold open, structured dialogue with stakeholders including those who are our strongest critics. Our Management Board meetings are held in public and we web cast these meetings and other important events to ensure transparency. We believe that this approach is the right way to build confidence in EFSA's work and can help EFSA understand the concerns of others.

Communications is one of EFSA's core responsibilities. In developing public communications, EFSA strives to translate scientific evidence into accessible and meaningful messages, addressing the different needs of key audiences. EFSA works with national authorities such as the FSAI as well as organisations in close contact with consumers in different countries who know how to craft messages regarding complex scientific issues to address national concerns. Developing greater consistency in messages communicated to different audiences across Europe is one of the objectives EFSA is seeking to achieve by working with the FSAI and its European counterparts through the Advisory Forum.

EFSA's work is only possible through the involvement of leading experts from across Europe, including the scientists on our Scientific Committee and Panels who undertake EFSA's risk assessment work. The strength of Ireland's contribution to EFSA speaks for itself. Professor Patrick Wall (Associate Professor of Public Health at University College Dublin) is Chair of EFSA's Management Board since 2006 following his election by fellow Board Members. A number of Irish experts are key members of EFSA bodies, such as Professor

Albert Flynn (Professor of Nutritional Sciences at University College Cork) who chairs our Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies and is a member of EFSA's Scientific Committee, and Professor John Daniel Collins (Emeritus Professor of Farm Animal Clinical Studies at University College Dublin), Chair of EFSA's TSE Sub-committee and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee. I would also like to mention Alan Reilly from the FSAI who has shown Ireland to be a keen and constructive partner in EFSA's Advisory Forum.

I would like to invite you to find out more about EFSA by visiting our website (available in English, Italian, French and German) at: www.efsa.europa.eu.



Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle
EFSA Executive Director

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, pictured outside the Palazzo Ducale in Parma.



ireland's contribution to efsa

management board

EFSA's Management Board is chaired by Professor Patrick Wall. Professor Wall is Associate Professor of Public Health in the School of Public Health and Population Sciences in University College Dublin where his research interests cover lifestyle related diseases and health damaging behaviour. Prior to his current position, he was the

Chief Executive of the FSAI, involved in establishing it as a science based consumer protection agency. As a veterinary surgeon and a medical doctor Patrick Wall has been working in areas related to food safety and protection of the public's health since 1979.

The EFSA Management Board ensures that the Authority functions effectively and

efficiently, delivers its mandate and meets the expectations of European and National institutions, stakeholders and the public. As Chair of the Management Board, Professor Wall has a major influence on EFSA's strategy and future direction and on monitoring and implementation of its work programmes.

scientific committee and panels

EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels are composed of highly qualified experts in scientific risk assessment, with a breadth of expertise allowing EFSA to address all aspects of its remit: from food and feed safety to nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health. Members of EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels are appointed through a rigorous selection procedure on the basis of proven scientific excellence. The scientists, most of whom work for research institutes, academia and public authorities across Europe, work for EFSA in an independent capacity bringing their expertise and experience from a diverse range of backgrounds together in a joint assessment result.

The Irish members of EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels are as follows:

Dr Iona Pratt, Consultant Toxicologist, FSAI, is a member of the Scientific Panel on Food Additives, Flavourings, Processing Aids and Materials in Contact with Food.

Professor Albert Flynn, Professor of Nutritional Sciences, Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, University College Cork, is Chair of the Scientific Panel on

Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies and a member of the EFSA Scientific Committee.

Professor John Daniel Collins, Emeritus Professor of Farm Animal Clinical Studies, College of Life Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, University College Dublin is chair of the EFSA TSE Sub-committee and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee.

Dr James William Choiseul, Agricultural Inspector, Plant Health Division, Department of Agriculture and Food, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, is a member of the Panel on Plant Health.

Dr John Griffin, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector, Department of Agriculture and Food, Dublin, is a member of the Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards.

The Scientific Committee and Panels also form working groups to deal with specific issues, in which many additional scientists participate. Dr John Sean Strain, University of Ulster, Coleraine and Dr Trevor Stewart Hastings, FRS Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen, Scotland, contribute significantly to these working groups.



Pictured are members of the EFSA Scientific Committee.

national focal point

The national focal points are considered EFSA's 'ambassadors' in the Member States. In Ireland, the FSAI is named as the national focal point. They serve as relay contacts between risk managers, national authorities, research institutes, stakeholders and consumers in the Member States and ensure the adequate and timely two-way exchange of all relevant information. The role of such focal points is also to keep EFSA and Advisory Forum members informed of national risk assessment and science developments. The network of focal points will coordinate communications with risk assessment institutes in the Member States and will be closely involved in work programmes conducted by EFSA and by national authorities.

advisory forum

EFSA's Advisory Forum connects EFSA with the national food safety authorities of all 27 EU Member States. Its members represent each national body responsible for risk assessment in the EU. Alan Reilly, Deputy CEO, FSAI represents Ireland on the Advisory Forum.

The Forum is at the heart of EFSA's collaborative approach to working with the EU Member States. Through it, EFSA and the Member States can join forces in addressing European risk assessment and risk communications issues. Members use the Forum to advise EFSA on scientific matters, its work programme and priorities, and to address emerging risk issues as early as possible.

Pictured during a meeting in Parma are members of the EFSA Advisory Forum.



efsa at work

assessing the safety of food additives

Food additives are substances added intentionally to foodstuffs to perform certain technological functions, for example to colour, to sweeten or to preserve.

EFSA has three main activities in the area of food additives:

- EFSA carries out safety evaluations of new food additives before they can be authorised for use in the EU
- EFSA responds to ad-hoc requests from the European Commission to review certain food additives in the light of significant new scientific information and/or changing conditions
- EFSA has begun to carry out a systematic re-evaluation of all authorised food additives in the EU.

All food additives must pass a safety evaluation in order to be authorised to be used in foods at European level. Since 2003, EFSA has evaluated around 30 food additives (excluding nutritional substances and flavourings) and also assessed the implications of newly available scientific information on authorised additives. For example, EFSA has evaluated the sweetener aspartame and the food colour Red 2G.

assessing the risks of pesticides

The term “pesticides” is often used as a synonym for plant protection products, which are mainly used in agriculture to keep crops healthy and prevent them being destroyed as a consequence of disease and infestation. Plant protection products are the most important group of pesticides dealt with by EFSA and have the longest history of legislation.

EFSA provides independent scientific advice on pesticides to the European Commission and EU Member States. It examines information on the safety of the active substances used in pesticides and their residues, with respect to users, consumers and the environment. EFSA's work includes co-ordinating a complete review of all active substances used in pesticides in the EU.

The European Commission and EU Member States take account of EFSA's scientific advice when taking management decisions to regulate pesticides, including authorisation decisions and setting maximum legal levels for pesticide residues in food and feed.

assessing the scientific soundness of nutrition and health claims

An increasing number of foods marketed and sold in the EU bear nutrition and health claims. A nutrition claim states or suggests that a food has beneficial nutritional properties - typical examples include “low fat”, “no added sugar” and “high in fibre”. A health claim, on the other hand, is a statement that health benefits can result from consuming a given food, for instance the role of calcium in helping to build strong bones.

The EU has adopted a Regulation on nutrition and health claims made on foods. One of its key objectives is to ensure that consumers will be able to rely on the truth and accuracy of information by making sure that health and nutrition claims are based on sound scientific evidence.

EFSA is strongly associated with implementing the new Regulation, as the Authority's role is to assess whether claims about the health benefits of foods are scientifically reliable and justified.

supporting the control of bse

The BSE crisis was a major trigger for the overhaul of EU food safety policy and the setting up of EFSA. There is now a large body of EU legislation in place (EC 999/2001) to protect animals from BSE and humans from vCJD.

The results of the analysis of scientific information delivered to risk managers by EFSA is essential input for the process of understanding and monitoring the risks of BSE as well as for controlling and reducing those risks through appropriate measures. EFSA's scientific advice helps ensure that risk managers have a comprehensive scientific basis for proposing new measures or modifying existing legislation. Current evidence indicates that BSE is declining in the EU (See Figure 1).

A recent example concerns the compulsory removal and destruction of Specified Risk Material (SRM) from cattle carcasses over a certain age. SRM are the tissues most at risk of carrying the infective agent causing BSE such as brain, spinal cord and vertebral column. EFSA's advice in 2005 provided the scientific basis for risk managers to raise the legal age above which SRM must be removed. Following a raising of the age limit of slaughtered animals to 24 months, the T-bone steak (which is part of the vertebral column) was re-introduced in the EU. EFSA recently updated its scientific advice on SRM in May 2007.

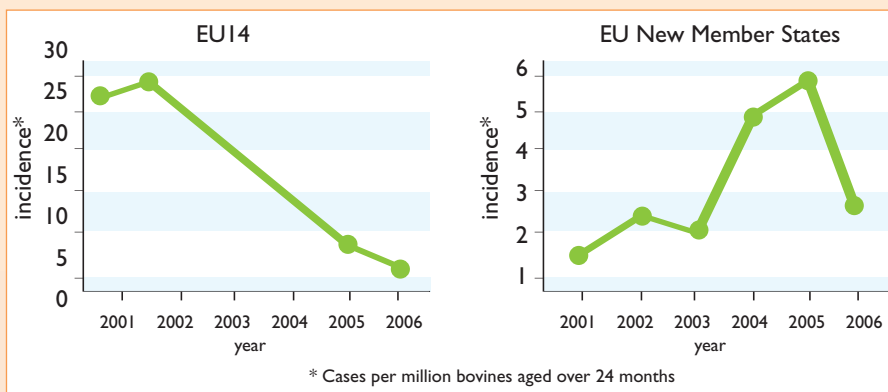


Figure 1: Incidence Trends for BSE, 2001-2006



scientific forum and food safety summit

To celebrate EFSA's Five Year Anniversary in 2007, various programmes of events were organised to present EFSA and its work to decision-makers, stakeholders and the general public. The celebrations culminated in Brussels in the week of 19-23 November, when EFSA hosted a Scientific Forum and Food Safety Summit.

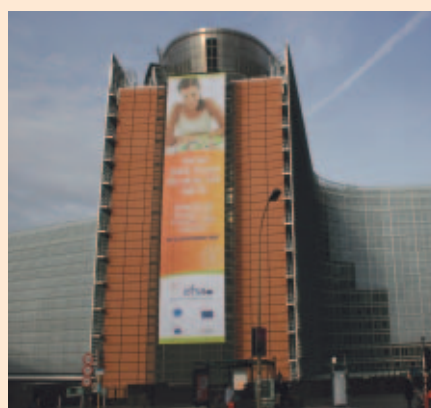
The Scientific Forum, entitled 'From Safe Food to Healthy Diets: EU Risk Assessment Past, Present And Future' was attended by over 400 delegates, including Alan Reilly and Raymond Ellard, FSAI, from the EU and beyond to debate issues with EFSA. Such issues included nanotechnology, animal cloning, chemical and microbiological risks, zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks, BSE and TSEs and nutrition. Professor Albert Flynn, University College Cork, presented a session on nutrient profiles, while Dr Iona Pratt, Consultant Toxicologist, FSAI, chaired a parallel session on food additives and flavourings.

The Food Safety Summit was attended by high level decision-makers from the Member States, EU institutions, international organisations and non-EU partner countries, to consider jointly the future of food and feed risk assessment in Europe. The major challenges identified in

the food safety area going forward included the need for a 'farm to fork' approach; food safety issues associated with nanotechnology, antimicrobial resistance, nutrition with a particular focus on obesity, global warming and changing environments for food production and animal cloning, to name but a few.

There was also an EFSA exhibition and events in the European Parliament throughout the week.

A recording of the events is available on the EFSA website, www.efsa.europa.eu.



The exterior of the Berlaymont Building, Brussels, during the Scientific Forum and Food Safety Summit.



European Food Safety Summit



setting up of efsa

origins

- Succession of food scares in 1990s (e.g. BSE, dioxins)
- Loss of consumer confidence in food safety
- Need to re-cast EU food safety system and policy.

farm to fork approach to ensure safety of the food chain

EFSA was set up as a part of a commitment to ensuring a high level of food and feed safety and consumer protection in Europe. Legally established by Regulation No 178/2002.

three main goals

- Improving EU food safety
- Re-building consumer confidence in EU food safety
- Re-building confidence of trading partners in the EU food supply.

independent scientific advice on food safety at EU level

EFSA is part of a system in which risk assessment is done separately from risk management. Policies and decisions to manage risks with regard to the food chain are made by the European Commission, European Parliament and governments of the EU Member States. At EU level, decisions are informed by independent risk assessments delivered by EFSA.

Pictured at the Scientific Forum in November were (l-r): Professor Patrick Wall, Chair, EFSA Management Board, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, EFSA Executive Director and Alan Reilly, Deputy CEO, FSAI.



trans fatty acids

There are four major types of fat found in food: saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and trans fatty acids (TFA). Consumption of fat has many beneficial effects. It allows the human body to store energy, absorb fat-soluble vitamins and supplies essential fatty acids such as omega-3 and omega-6, which the human body cannot make. However, it is important to control the overall fat intake in the diet, as well as controlling the intake of specific fats such as saturated fat and TFA.

Trans fatty acids are a specific type of fat, artificially formed when vegetable oils are converted into solid fats such as margarine and shortenings by an industrial process known as hydrogenation. As such, TFA are found in foods made with hydrogenated oils. TFA are also found naturally in foods from ruminant animals such as beef, lamb and dairy products and in small amounts during the refining of liquid vegetable oils.

At present, in the European Union (EU), it is not mandatory for the presence of TFA in food products to be mentioned on the label. However, the law does state that all pre-packaged food must have its ingredients listed on the packaging. If hydrogenated oil

or partially hydrogenated oil is listed in the ingredients, this may suggest the presence of TFA. Also, as ingredients are listed in order of decreasing amount, TFA levels are likely to be higher in a product where hydrogenated oil is listed as the first ingredient rather than a product where it is listed last.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has indicated that evidence from many controlled human intervention studies has shown that consumption of diets containing TFA, like diets containing mixtures of saturated fatty acids, consistently results in increased serum Low Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol (LDL-C), compared with consumption of diets containing cis-monounsaturated or cis-polyunsaturated fatty acids. The effect shows a linear dose response with serum LDL-C indicating that effects are proportional to the amounts of TFA consumed.

Elevated LDL-C has been causally linked to coronary heart disease (CHD), thus, higher intakes of TFA may increase risk for CHD. However, the available evidence does not provide a definitive answer to the question of whether TFA have an effect on LDL-C

different to a mixture of saturated fatty acids on a gram-for-gram basis. It is also not clear if TFA that occur naturally (e.g. ruminant animal products) have the same effect on LDL-C and CHD as those produced by hydrogenating vegetable oils. Ruminant animal products contain different TFA and proportions of specific TFA than hydrogenated vegetable oils.

In light of further evidence becoming available, the FSAI is establishing data on levels of TFA in food products available on the Irish market. In a recent FSAI survey, 100 retail food products were collected for analysis of fat content and fatty acid profile including TFA. The samples comprised a randomly selected cross-section of retail products which would be expected to naturally contain TFA, and those which may contain TFA as a result of the manufacturing processes or ingredients. Products which made a particular claim as regards TFA or the presence/absence of hydrogenated oil were also sampled in the survey. Results from this survey will be published shortly.

For further information on TFA please see our website at www.fsai.ie or contact our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77.

food safety consultative council: open meeting

The Food Safety Consultative Council will hold an open meeting on Wednesday 30 January 2008 in Dublin. It will provide the opportunity for interested parties to observe the workings of the Council and also to participate in an open floor discussion at the end of the meeting.

The main topic for discussion on the day is:
Organic food - fact or fiction?

The Consultative Council welcomes the views and opinions of consumers and interested parties and there will be a

number of opportunities to participate in the discussions.

As part of the event's agenda, there will be presentations from:

- Ms Clodagh McKenna - Chef, Media Presenter, Food Consultant
- Ms Siobhan Morris - Organic Food Consultant
- Dr Con O'Rourke - plant scientist
- Dr Mary Flynn - Food Safety Authority of Ireland

The meeting will take place at 10:30am, with registration and coffee from 10:00am, and will be held at the Davenport Hotel, Merrion Square, Dublin 2. To secure admittance, booking is essential. Those wishing to reserve a place at the open meeting should contact Miriam McDonald, FSAI on 01 8171341 or mmcdonald@fsai.ie

Due to the limited spaces available, entry can only be permitted to those who have reserved places in advance.

engl membership for cork laboratory

The FSAI has been in discussion with the Public Analyst Laboratory (PAL), Cork, with a view to carrying out GM food analysis. Currently, laboratory analysis for the FSAI GM food surveys is carried out by a commercial laboratory, though the State Laboratory has had some involvement. However, the Cork Public Analyst Laboratory now has the equipment and expertise that enables it to carry out routine analysis of general foodstuffs for the presence of GM ingredients. As well as this routine analysis, the laboratory may also be in a position to use this technology to explore other techniques that could be useful, for example, in monitoring the labelling integrity of both meat and non-meat products.

To assist with its new function, the FSAI, as Competent Authority for GM food in Ireland, has nominated the Cork Public Analyst Laboratory for membership of the European Network of GMO Laboratories (ENGL). Run by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, ENGL is made up of more than 100 national enforcement laboratories that play an eminent role in the development, harmonisation and standardisation of GM testing. The nomination has been accepted by ENGL which means the Cork laboratory will now have access to the most up to date materials and methods available to all Member State enforcement laboratories.

conference

- nanotechnology and its implications

On 2 November last, the FSAI, together with the Irish Society of Toxicology and the Dublin Institute of Technology, hosted a conference entitled 'Nanotechnology: Implications for human health, the environment and food safety'.

The emerging discipline of nanotoxicology and its implications for health and the environment were discussed while the conference focused on aspects such as indicators of nanoparticle toxicity, environmental and health impacts of nanotechnologies, nano and micro techniques for the food industry, nanotechnology and food safety, nanomaterials in food products and packages, nano-medicine and risk communication and public dialogue.

The conference brought together a number of international leaders in the area of nanotoxicology and was the first conference on this topic to be held in Ireland.



Pictured are the speakers at the nanotechnology conference. Back row (l-r): Prof Kenneth Donaldson, Dr Alan Casey, Prof Stephen Klaine, Mr Alan Reilly, Dr Qasim Chaudhry, Dr Iseult Lynch. Front row (l-r): Prof Valerian Kagan, Dr Iona Pratt. (Prof Marek W Radomski also spoke at the conference but is not pictured here.)

revision of current labelling legislation

The European Commission (EC), in consultation with Member States, is at present undertaking a revision of the current labelling legislation. The EC will present the proposal to the European Parliament for consultation before the end of the year.

Some of the issues likely to be addressed in the proposed Regulation are: compulsory nutrition labelling, front of pack labelling, origin labelling, legibility and responsibility/liability for labelling across the food chain.

The consultation process may be lengthy and the actual coming into force of new labelling legislation is not expected for at least another year. The proposal will revise the General Labelling Directive as amended (2000/13/EC) and the Nutrition Labelling Directive as amended (90/496/EC), incorporating them into one Regulation.



The following Regulations have been introduced over the last few months in Ireland:

S.I. No. 685 of 2007 European Communities (Pesticide Residues) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 2007

S.I. No. 686 of 2007 European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007

S.I. No. 698 of 2007 European Communities (Organic Farming) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007

S.I. No. 704 of 2007 European Communities (Protection of Geographical Indications and Designations of Origin for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2007

S.I. No. 721 of 2007 European Communities (Foot and Mouth Disease) (Restriction on Imports from the United Kingdom) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007

S.I. No. 747 of 2007 European Communities (General Food Law) Regulations, 2007

legislation update

irish legislation

foodstuffs intended for particular nutritional uses

The Department of Health and Children has published the European Communities (Foodstuffs Intended for Particular Nutritional Uses) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 554 of 2007). This amending Regulation transposes Commission Directive 2007/26/EC which extends a derogation granted in Directive 2004/6/EC to 31 December 2009.

At the time of the adoption of Commission Directive 2001/15/EC on Substances That may be Added for Specific Nutritional Purposes in Foods for Particular Nutritional Uses a number of chemical substances added for specific nutritional purposes to some foods, which are marketed in some Member States, could not be included in the Annex to that Directive because they had not been evaluated by the European Scientific Committee on Food. Pending the completion of the evaluation of those substances by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Commission Directive 2004/6/EC allowed for the trade in products containing the substances concerned, in so far as certain conditions are fulfilled regarding their safety, until 31 December 2006. However, as complete evaluations and associated administrative actions were not completed prior to this date, Commission Directive 2007/26/EC has now extended the period of application of Directive 2004/6/EC to 31 December 2009.

labelling and marketing standards for poultrymeat

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has published the European Communities (Labelling and Marketing Standards for Poultrymeat) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 546 of 2007). This Statutory Instrument grants a derogation from the Labelling and Marketing Standards for Poultrymeat Regulations (S.I. No. 42 of 2004) for the direct supply of small quantities of poultrymeat in accordance with Article 1(3)(d) of Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 by a producer with an annual production of under 10,000 birds.

natural mineral waters, spring waters and other waters in bottles or containers

The Department of Health and Children has published the European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 686 of 2007). These Regulations amend the existing Regulations (S.I. No. 225 of 2007) by introducing indictable offences and increased penalty provisions in line with the European Communities Act, 2007 (No. 18 of 2007).

Under the amendment a person who is found guilty on conviction on indictment, is liable to a fine not exceeding €500,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or both. The introduction of this amendment brings S.I. No. 225 of 2007 in line with the provisions included in S.I. No. 278 of 2007 (the European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations, 2007 introduced by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) which transposes Directive 98/83/EC in respect of all waters other than those in bottles or containers.

The Statutory Instruments can be accessed on our website at: www.fsai.ie/legislation

european legislation

prescribed quantities for pre-packed products

Directive 2007/45/EC of 5 September 2007 laying down rules on nominal quantities for pre-packed products, repealing Council Directives 75/106/EEC and 80/232/EEC, and amending Council Directive 76/211/EEC was published in the Official Journal of the EU (OJ L247, p17, 21/09/2007).

The Directive shall apply from the 11 April 2009 and will lead to the deregulation of all prescribed quantities for pre-packaged foods, except for wines and spirits. However, there is an extended transitional periods for milk, butter, dried pasta, coffee and white sugar, with Member States permitted to retain their existing restrictions on butter, milk, coffee and dried pasta until October 2012 and those for white sugar until October 2013.

permanent exemptions of allergen labelling

Commission Directive 2007/68/EC of 27 November 2007, amending Annex IIIa to Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards certain food ingredients was published recently in the official journal of the EU (OJ L310, p11, 28/11/2007).

Annex IIIa to Directive 2000/13/EC on the labelling, advertising and presentation of foods lists the food ingredients and substances that are known to be the cause of allergies and intolerances and requires that they are indicated on the label. However, the Directive also provides for the possibility of excluding from the labelling requirement ingredients or substances derived from ingredients listed in Annex IIIa for which it has been scientifically established that they are not likely, under specific circumstances, to trigger adverse reactions.

Temporary exemptions were granted until 25 November 2007 in Directive 2005/26/EC. This Directive was repealed by Commission Directive 2007/68/EC on the 26 November 2007. Commission Directive 2007/68/EC contains a list of those substances that must be indicated on the label as well those substances that may be excluded from the 'allergen' labelling requirement. This Directive requires that Member States must allow foodstuffs placed on the market or labelled before 31 May 2009 that comply with the provisions of Directive 2005/26/EC to be marketed until stocks are exhausted and they must bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with Commission Directive 2007/68/EC by 31 May 2008 at the latest.

The Directive can be accessed on our website at: <http://tinyurl.com/2ewfkz>



mailing list

fsainews is a resource for all public health professionals, researchers, food scientists, food hygienists and quality control personnel working in food safety.

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The FSAI wish you a very merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year!



fsai christmas card competition



Congratulations to Ciara Claffey, age seven, who won the FSAI Christmas card competition.

recent publications

The following publications have recently been produced by the FSAI:

- Report on Zoonoses in Ireland, 2005
- The Labelling of Food in Ireland, 2007

The publications are available on our website at www.fsai.ie/publications.

open consultation

There are currently no open consultations on our website. To view details of any closed consultations, please see our website at www.fsai.ie/consultations.

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