



## e. coli O157

# fsai news

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Due to the risks associated with the dangerous bacteria *E. coli* O157 in childcare facilities and crèches, the FSAI recently launched an information leaflet directly targeting childcare professionals. The leaflet, entitled *E. coli* O157: *Protecting the Children in your Care*, highlights the health risks associated with the potentially fatal bacteria, and outlines the simple, but crucial measures that should be implemented in all childcare facilities to prevent the spread of human infection.

Infants and children show the highest incidence rates of infection with *E. coli* O157 and they are particularly vulnerable to

serious and sometimes life threatening consequences as a result.

The leaflet contains some very simple and easy-to-follow food safety and hygiene practices that can play a major role in preventing the spread of *E. coli* O157 in childcare facilities. We are asking childcare operators to read the leaflet, distribute it to staff and to ensure that the recommendations are implemented in order to prevent the spread of *E. coli* O157 amongst children.

The leaflet is available by contacting our advice-line on 1890 336677 or on our website at [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie).

*Pictured at the launch of the leaflet at the Kids Inc. crèche, Marlborough Street, Dublin were Daragh MacRiocaird, age 3, from Artane, James O'Flionn, age 4, from Broadstone, Jack Lane Barry, age 3, from Ranelagh, Dylan Brady, age 3, from Finglas and Gemma Staunton, age 2, from Lucan.*



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# war over water

Many experts say future wars will be fought not over territory or oil but over access to fresh water. Competition for dwindling fresh water supplies is already causing conflict in many parts of the world. It is a notable source of tension in relations among Middle Eastern and African countries. Western Europe is not untouched by water supply problems: hose-pipe bans were introduced in some regions of the south of England as early as March this year. Concerns about water are amplified by the ever expanding world population (now approaching 6.5 billion people) and climate change (some regions are suffering prolonged drought while high rainfall and flooding afflicts others).

The global impact of lack of access to water is staggering: affecting up to 40% of the world's population and costing almost €500 billion per year. The problem is not uniquely a problem of the developing world or of arid regions; water shortages also cost billions annually in Europe and the USA. It concerns not just access to drinking water but the water needed for agriculture, food processing and sanitation. We may well have our own water wars in Ireland as more and more ground and surface water becomes contaminated with zoonotic pathogens. It is notable that most cases of VTEC infection in Ireland are now not thought to be foodborne, leaving water as the main suspect in many cases. This should also concern food preparers as water is a major ingredient in food manufacture and preparation. Most of the problems centre on private group water schemes of which there are several thousand in Ireland.

Up until recently, Irish people were not used to thinking of water as a potential source of hazards to health. However, increasing demands placed by new housing schemes and the contamination of hitherto clean water supplies has led to increasing

concerns about the safety of potable water supplies, especially those from small schemes. In response to such concerns and considering the importance of water used in food preparation and sanitation, the FSAI has prepared a report, *The Safety of Potable Water in Ireland*, which will be published shortly.

Food business operators should always factor water supplies into their hazard identification and ideally include water in their HACCP plan. The application of HACCP to drinking/potable water safety would be a laudable goal, but undoubtedly is some years away yet. There is a legislative anomaly here. There is currently a legal obligation on food businesses to have a HACCP plan for their operations; the only exception among suppliers of food ingredients to the food industry is water companies for which there is no such legal requirement.

**The implementation of sustainable water-use policies, coupled with the goal of assuring effective risk management, is changing the way water is used in food production and manufacturing.**

There has been heavy investment in upgrading small group water schemes in Ireland in recent years. However, the problem is not one that can be addressed by investment in water treatment alone. Any risk reduction measures should attempt to minimise risk by removing hazards at source where possible. This requires a multi-agency approach to the protection of water supplies.



Traditionally, the food and beverage industries are recognised heavy users of potable water. They also produce heavily polluted waste-water streams which require expensive water treatment prior to discharge. The implementation of sustainable water-use policies, coupled with the goal of assuring effective risk management, is changing the way water is used in food production and manufacturing. This is leading to changes in the following areas

which could profitably be rolled out to other areas of water policy:

- Improved water storage and distribution
- Decreased water consumption
- Increased water recycling
- Treatment to a level appropriate for the intended use
- Improved waste-water management
- Lower environmental inputs

In addition, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has proposed guidelines for the hygienic reuse of processing water in food plants which offers useful advice for sustainable and safe use of water in food preparation and processing.

As Ireland was never heavily industrialised, it should be relatively easy to remediate our water quality problems which are for the most part due to contamination by biological hazards. As clean water becomes more scarce internationally, there is undoubtedly a golden opportunity to conserve a very valuable and unique natural resource.

Dr John O'Brien, CEO

# functional food



An information leaflet entitled *Functional Food* has recently been published by the FSAI. The leaflet is aimed primarily at the food industry and provides information on the regulatory environment surrounding functional foods, while reinforcing the legal requirement for these foods to have accurate and legitimate labelling. The leaflet addresses this relatively new development in the food sector in Ireland and the EU. In recent years, there has been a rapid expansion in the range and availability of functional foods, for example those with cholesterol

lowering properties and probiotics. Functional foods are broadly defined as foods that, in addition to providing basic nutrition, possess characteristics that can help achieve or maintain good health.

The functional food market is big in Japan and the US and there is currently a strong emphasis in Ireland on research and development

into value added foods, such as functional foods. It is estimated that the functional food market is growing by some 20% a year, a trend that is expected to continue.

Whilst a balanced and varied diet should provide sufficient nutrition for the average person, functional foods are promoted as helping to limit or reduce the impact of a number of disease risk factors and are thus proving popular with many consumers seeking to achieve or maintain good health. The FSAI's role is to ensure that the labelling is correct and that any health claims made do not mislead consumers.

Many food companies are investing considerable resources in developing functional food products, but are largely unaware of the significant regulatory hurdles that must be overcome before a new food product can be placed on the market. All products that bear a health or nutrition claim must be supported by appropriate scientific/clinical evidence.

New legislation is currently being developed at EU level to harmonise the rules governing the nature and extent of nutrition and health claims associated with food. This pending legislation will clarify many issues to do with health and nutrition claims, but in the meantime, this area is governed by existing food legislation.

The leaflet is available by contacting our advice-line on 1890 336677 or on our website at [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie).

## seminar: food packaging traceability

On 23rd March last, GSI Ireland, supported by the FSAI, held a seminar on the topic 'Food Packaging Traceability'. GSI is a global, not-for-profit supply chain standards organisation, which develops and promotes open standards, known as the GSI system (formerly known as EAN). These standards are used in bar codes and other technologies in order to improve traceability.

The seminar, held in Dublin, was designed to assist attendees understand the new requirements for traceability of food packaging legislation and how to implement packaging traceability to ensure compliance. Regulation (EC) No. 1935/2004, the Framework Regulation for Food Contact Materials (FCMs) including Packaging, introduced a new requirement for FCMs to be traceable at all stages of their production and use. Because it was a new requirement, a two-year delay for its coming into effect was granted; this expires on 27th October 2006. The traceability requirement echoes that of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002, the General Food Law, and for food companies, the implication is that packaging must be traceable in the same way as other components or ingredients of their food. Food



packaging manufacturers must be able to identify where the substances used to manufacture the packaging were sourced.

The programme included a presentation by Dr Bernard Hegarty, Contracts Manager, FSAI, on the legislation, outlining its rationale and the details of the new law. Other presentations looked at case studies of applications of GSI based traceability systems in the food and other industrial sectors.



# presence of ITX in food

In September 2005, the Italian food control authorities reported the occurrence of a relatively unknown chemical contaminant, ITX (2-isopropyl thioxanthone), in liquid baby milk packaged in cartons. This initial report was followed by reports of ITX in other milk products and cloudy fruit juices. The source of the contamination was found to be the printing ink applied to the outside of cartons used as food packaging, since one use of ITX is as a photoinitiator in UV-cured inks, enhancing the drying of the ink. The chemical has been shown to migrate from the packaging and into the food contained in it. The opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was sought regarding possible safety issues, and EFSA concluded that the presence of ITX in food, whilst undesirable, did not raise health concerns at the levels reported.

At the time of these reports, industry undertook to immediately stop the use of packaging containing ITX for baby food products, and several of the major suppliers

of cartons used in food packaging committed to phasing out the use of this substance in packaging for milk, fatty liquids and juices by end January 2006. Because of the signaled withdrawal of packaging containing ITX, no regulatory controls, such as the introduction of a maximum level for ITX, have been introduced at European level. Nonetheless, various foodstuffs containing ITX have continued to be notified via the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), and have been withdrawn from the market in certain Member States. This has led to a distortion of marketing practices across Europe.

One reason for the continuing presence of ITX in food products is probably the continuing existence of stocks of ITX-containing packaging, even if the substance is no longer used in the printing of food packaging material. It appears likely that the European Commission will therefore propose a maximum level for ITX

in food in the coming months, in order to control levels until such time as all ITX-containing packaging has been used up or withdrawn from the market. To avoid similar contamination incidents in the future, the Commission has also drafted a Regulation detailing the requirements for good manufacturing practice which the packaging industry should apply. This measure is currently being debated by Member States as an implementing measure under the legislation on food contact materials in the European Union.

The FSAI agrees with the EFSA view, that the presence of ITX in food, whilst undesirable, does not raise health concerns at the levels reported. It considers however, that the ITX incident is a reminder to the food and food packaging industry of the importance of thoroughly assessing the potential for migration of all food packaging prior to use.

## fsai and daf regional meeting

A service contract regional meeting between the FSAI and the Department of Agriculture and Food's Dairy Product Inspectorate (DPI) and Dairy Science Laboratory (DSL) was held in Portlaoise on 8th March last. The DPI is responsible for carrying out enforcement in milk processing plants and milk cold stores, to include cheese and yogurt producers and infant formula milk manufacturers. The three dairy science laboratories, located in Backweston (Celbridge), Cork and Limerick, are responsible for microbial and chemical analysis of milk and milk product samples to ensure compliance with legislation.

The aim of the meeting was to provide a forum for discussion on specific issues relevant to the inspectorate and the laboratories and to provide updates on broader issues relating to their work.

Three presentations were given by FSAI staff to include updates on the new service contracts and relevant FSAI initiatives in the

last year, enforcement and laboratory service contract returns for the farmhouse cheese sector; and goat milk production and public health implications. There were also presentations from Ms Sara McSweeney on her work as a technical advisor to the farmhouse cheese industry, from Mr Simon More of UCD on milk quality issues and from Mr Niall Mullane, also from UCD,

on *Enterobacter sakazakii* in infant milk formula.

Overall, the meeting proved beneficial with positive feedback from the attendees. These regional meetings with FSAI, the DPI and DSL typically take place once each year and are considered to be useful training, information and networking opportunities.



*Pictured are attendees at the FSAI/DAF regional meeting.*



# benzene is detected in soft drinks

In mid-February, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reported the results of tests showing that some soft drinks were contaminated with the chemical benzene at levels above the World Health Organization (WHO) legal limit for drinking water of 10 parts per billion (ppb). The problem had originally been identified in the early 1990's, and scientific research carried out at that time showed that benzene could be produced in laboratory trials on soft drinks containing the preservative sodium benzoate and ascorbic acid (Vitamin C).

This report has attracted widespread media attention, as exposure to benzene has been associated with leukaemia and other blood disorders. Benzene is a solvent that was widely used in the past and is still used in industry and in other applications including its use as an additive in unleaded petrol. It is found in air, particularly in urban areas, as a result of emissions from motor vehicle exhaust, service stations and industrial emissions. Benzene also occurs naturally at a low level in some foodstuffs of plant origin. People are therefore exposed routinely to it via their environment. It has been estimated by the UK Department of Health that people in an urban environment may be exposed to approximately 400 ppb of benzene per day just by inhaling traffic fumes. This results in an exposure level which is equivalent to drinking about 40 litres of water containing approximately 10 ppb benzene per litre. In recent weeks, the European Beverages Association (UNESDA) has estimated that exposure to benzene via air is 220 ppb per day. Cigarettes have also been found to release between 50 and 150 ppb of benzene per cigarette, making smoking and second-hand smoke sources of benzene exposure.

## Industry Response

The European soft drinks industry, represented by UNESDA, has been working with regulatory authorities to reduce, and where possible, to completely eliminate the formation of benzene in soft drinks, whilst still ensuring the microbiological stability of the drinks. The soft drinks industry has produced a guidance document to mitigate the formation of benzene in soft drinks. This document was presented at the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health, Toxicological Safety, held in Brussels at the end of March. Industry reported that levels in soft drinks are typically at the limit of detection (1-5 ppb) and always below 10 ppb. There are currently no legal limits for benzene that apply directly to finished soft drinks. However, there are several regulatory guidelines and limits set for drinking water and bottled water ranging from the already mentioned WHO limit of 10 ppb to the US Environmental Protection Agency/Food and Drug Administration level of 5 ppb and the EU level of 1 ppb. As a result of discussions at the Standing Committee meeting, a consensus among the Member States was that a general approach should be taken and a limit for control and enforcement purposes should be set for benzene. The majority of Member States favoured setting the action limit at 10 ppb.



## Monitoring Surveillance

A number of surveys have since been carried out by food safety agencies and the soft drinks industry across the EU. These included a survey by UK industry on benzene in 230 soft drinks available on the UK market. The results of this survey showed that where benzene levels were detected they were very low and are not a concern for the public. Since then, further testing of 150 products has been carried out by the Food Standards Agency, UK, and the results showed that benzene was either not detectable or between 1 and 10 ppb in the majority of products (146 out of 150). There were however, four products which exceeded 10 ppb and these were recalled. Testing is also ongoing in other EU Member States including Ireland. The FSAI is currently carrying out a study in conjunction with the Galway Public Analysts Laboratory, on the levels of benzene in 76 soft drinks available on the Irish market and is also working with the industry to address the problem. The results of the FSAI survey are anticipated to be available by the end of April.

The FSAI will continue to closely monitor the developments on benzene in these products and endorses the view that the levels reported in soft drinks are generally very low, resulting in a low risk to health. However, the levels of benzene should be maintained below 10 ppb and beverages with higher levels should be subject to withdrawal or recall based on risk assessment.



# open consultation: food labelling

Food labelling issues have generated much debate in recent times and as the EU has scheduled certain aspects of labelling legislation for review in 2006-2008, there is a need to identify as far as possible a coherent overall approach to labelling. With this in mind, the FSAI has opened a consultation on its website on the EU consultation document - 'Labelling: Competitiveness, Consumer Information and Better Regulation for the EU'.

This consultation addresses a number of areas of labelling that were identified by the EU as issues on which to focus modernisation of labelling legislation. It will remain open until Wednesday, 31st May 2006.

## General Food Labelling and Nutrition Labelling

Common labelling requirements applicable to all foodstuffs are laid down in horizontal legislation (Directive 2000/13/EC and related texts), whilst specific provisions for some foods are included in vertical legislation (e.g. cocoa and chocolate products, coffee and chicory etc).

### Structure of the Legislation

- What is the most appropriate legislative instrument to implement these laws more homogeneously in the European market - should it be an EU Regulation instead of a directive?
- How should the labelling provisions be brought together? It would be very difficult to compile all specific information requirements applicable from fish to chocolate for example, in the same legislative package.
- Is it more feasible to recast all horizontal provisions in a single proposal, i.e. present, simplify and clarify the provisions currently spread across the horizontal legislation and bring them together in an Annex?

### Scope of the Legislation

- Several key points will require clarification with regard to the scope of existing labelling legislation, for example, could the legislation distinguish the 'information' that must be provided from that which should be available for the purchaser of the foodstuff, this purchaser being the final consumer, regardless of the place of consumption (home or restaurant)?

- Could the legislation have general rules for how the information is to be provided, depending on whether it is mandatory information or information that would be useful to have available also taking into consideration whether the products are pre-packaged or sold loose?
- Could the legislation then stipulate that Member States decide on the detailed arrangements at national level where no implication arises on the single market?

### Provisions Concerning Some Compulsory Information

- Should the approach concerning the information on durability be modified?

### Alcoholic Beverages

The EU states that research shows that consumers have little interest in having information on all ingredients in alcoholic beverages but that they do express a desire to have information in cases where ingredients are added to 'natural products'.

- What should be meant by 'natural' in the case of alcoholic beverages?
- What ingredients should be labelled on alcoholic beverages? (Should all ingredients be listed (currently an exemption exists for products with an alcoholic strength of more than 1.2%) or just those substances which are likely to have an adverse effect in certain groups of consumers, e.g. sulphites? Should food improvement agents be labelled also?)
- Should mixed drinks like alcopops be treated like all other foodstuffs regarding ingredient listing?

### Voluntary Information

- Should the legislation provide for requirements to be fulfilled, or guidance to be followed with a view to preventing risk of misleading consumers where voluntary information takes place?

### Clear and Readable Labelling

- Should the legislation be more prescriptive on format, size of the text, or could the objective be achieved through voluntary or soft legislation?

### Nutrition Labelling

Nutrition labelling of food is currently regulated by Directive 90/496/EEC, under which nutrition labelling is optional; it becomes compulsory when a nutrition

claim is made in the labelling, presentation or advertising of a foodstuff. The Directive also lays down a standardised format in which nutrition labelling must be presented i.e. nutrition information must be presented in either Group 1 or Group 2 format, depending on the nutrient that the claim is being made for.

Nutrition labelling in Group 1 format must declare the following where a nutritional claim is made for one or more of these nutrients:

- Energy value (specified numerically in kilo joules and kilo calories)
- Amount of protein, carbohydrate and fat (specified numerically in grams).


Group 2 format requires nutrition information to be given on a more extensive list of eight nutrients where a nutrition claim is made for sugars, saturates, fibre or sodium. Nutrition labelling in Group 2 format must declare the following:

- Energy value (specified numerically in kilo joules and kilo calories)
- Amount of protein, carbohydrate, sugars, fat, saturates, fibre and sodium (specified numerically in grams).

There is a general consensus that the current system of nutrition labelling is not working and that it needs to be changed, however, there is no agreement on the best way forward. The major issues to be addressed, many of which were covered in an EU consultation in 2003, include the following:

- Should nutrition labelling be mandatory? It is felt that while mandatory labelling is useful, its introduction could adversely affect some businesses, especially smaller ones, who would find it hard to bear the costs. However, ways of minimising these, such as longer implementation dates, derogations for short production runs or low turnover businesses, providing tools or guidance to help implementation, could be considered.
- How much information is required? Providing too much information may be counterproductive, leading to consumer confusion about what is important and how the label should be used. Is there an optimum number of elements, i.e. energy and nutrients, that should be declared and, if so, what these should be?



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- c) Should information on salt content be mandatory?
  - d) Should information on trans fatty acids be mandatory?
  - e) Are there alternative formats for providing nutrition information? If the consumer finds difficulties in using the current numerical format, are there alternative, better ways of providing nutritional information on labels?
  - f) Where should the nutrition label be put? Simplified front of pack labelling ('signposting') may increase consumer use. How can this be taken forward in any revision of the legislation?
  - g) Is there any benefit in having dual labelling i.e. the 'traditional' label on the back of the pack with a 'signpost' on the front?
  - h) How important is presentation of the information? Consumers often complain that nutrition labels are poorly presented, making them difficult to use. In particular, concern is expressed that the labels contain too much information and the type size is too small (especially when multi-lingual labels are used on products). Whilst it might be difficult to set down prescriptive rules on presentation, because of the many different types of packaging used, is this something that should be considered? Alternatively, would this be an opportunity for best practice to be developed by industry?

## Other Food Issues - Origin/Welfare/GMOs/Health

### Origin Labelling

Common labelling requirements (name, composition, durability, etc.) applicable to all foodstuffs are laid down in horizontal legislation (Directive 2000/13/EC and related texts). In that framework, origin or provenance must be indicated in cases where consumers could be misled to a material degree on the true origin of the product. Specific labelling provisions detailing rules for the mandatory indication of origin/provenance are included in vertical legislation applicable to products ranging from fruits and vegetables to meat, eggs, fish, wine, honey and chocolate.

- a) Should there be a general mandatory indication of 'Member State'/'EU'/'third country' origin applicable to all foodstuffs? However, how could the difficulties which could arise with products which include raw materials and ingredients from different origins be dealt with?
- b) Should there be a general mandatory indication or either 'EU'/'third country' origin applicable to all foodstuffs?
- c) Should new rules be introduced to prevent misleading consumers on the true origin of foodstuffs or raw material? For example, rules for situations where labels suggest or indicate a given origin but the information, though not false, is potentially misleading or deceptive (e.g. ham manufactured in a given country from meat from another).
- d) Should such rules be laid down in legislation or through guidelines?

### Welfare Labelling

The Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals, adopted in January 2006, foresees as one of the five main areas of action the introduction of standardised animal welfare indicators to classify the hierarchy of welfare standards applied (from minimum to higher standards). On this basis, options for labelling will be explored in a systematic manner.

### GMO Labelling

The labelling related to all genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is currently regulated by Directive 2001/18/EC. In addition, specific labelling for food containing, consisting of, or produced from GMOs is provided for in Regulation (EC) No. 1829/2003. A detailed report on the implementation of the GMO labelling provisions for food and feed will be provided in the forthcoming EU report on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No. 1829/2003.

## Health Warnings on Alcoholic Beverages

Some Member States (France, Finland and Sweden) are planning to introduce health warning labels on alcoholic beverage containers to raise awareness of alcohol's negative health impact on the foetus. Such a labelling measure proposed by France is viewed by the EU as an obstacle to the free movement of goods, but that the measure is justified and proportionate and therefore in accordance with Article 30 of the Treaty.

Facing this development in some Member States, views on the feasibility and viability of using warning labels on the containers of alcoholic beverages are welcome. The EU plan to publish an EU Alcohol Strategy later in 2006.

**This consultation is currently open on our website at [www.fsai.ie/consultation](http://www.fsai.ie/consultation). Further details are also available on the site.**

**Comments and views on this consultation should be submitted by 5pm on Wednesday, 31st May 2006** as follows - email: [consultation@fsai.ie](mailto:consultation@fsai.ie); fax: +353 1 8171301; or post: Consultations, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.



# irish shellfish association annual conference

The Irish Shellfish Association's (ISA) annual conference was held in Ennis on 24th March last. One of the key items on the conference agenda was the launch of the report on the future direction of the Irish rope mussel industry. The report *'The Review of the Rope Mussel Industry in Ireland'* commissioned jointly by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and Enterprise Ireland (EI), and undertaken by consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), was presented at the conference to Mr John Browne TD, Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR).

The conference programme also included a presentation by Mr Peter Whelan, Director of Service Contracts, FSAI, on *Developments in the*

*Management Cell and Biotoxin Regime*. Presentations were given by the Marine Institute on recent plankton blooms in the west coast and proposed developments in shellfish microbiological status monitoring in the EU. The programme also covered topics such as the European fisheries fund and national development plan prospects; developments in dealing with waste and fouling for shellfish operators; the shellfish market in Europe and the role of the European Mollusc Producers Association.

*Pictured are (l-r): Mr Tom Geoghegan, Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association, Mr John Browne TD, Minister of State, DCMNR, receiving the report 'The Review of the Rope Mussel Industry in Ireland', Mr Jim Mulcahy, EI, Mr Sean Molloy, PwC, Mr Donal Maguire, BIM and Mr Richie Flynn, ISA.*



## ucc's new food product development showcase

Dr John O'Brien, CEO, FSAI, recently attended the 2006 University College Cork (UCC) Undergraduate New Food Product Development Showcase. Held on 3rd March, the event featured seven innovative food products developed by final year students in the BSc Food Business and BSc Food Science and Technology degree programmes at UCC. The overall winning project, entitled 'Imagine' was centred on the development of a fruit based product that promised health benefits to consumers. Dr O'Brien noted the opportunities for both consumers and manufacturers of innovative new products entering the Irish market. However, he emphasised the importance of being able to support health claims with clinical evidence and the need to develop a HACCP plan during the product development process. He was pleased to learn that all teams produced a HACCP plan as part of their project. The event was organised by Dr Alan Kelly and Dr Joe Bogue of UCC's Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences.

*Pictured at the showcase were Dr John O'Brien, CEO, FSAI, with Professor Micheál Dowling, former Secretary General, Department of Agriculture and Food and visiting Professor at UCC, and Dr Alan Kelly, Senior Lecturer in Food Technology, UCC.*





# eho training

New EU food hygiene Regulations came into force on 1st January this year. The new food law brings together 17 previous EU Hygiene Directives into five new pieces of legislation. The legislation introduces a 'farm to fork' approach to food safety.

The FSAI's role in relation to this new food law is to assist the enforcement officers in its application. The FSAI, therefore, recently

organised training days for environmental health officers (EHOs) on the new Regulations. The training sessions were attended by approximately 450 EHOs involved in food control activities. Following the training, a questions and answers session was facilitated by Ms Dorothy Guina-Dornan, Contracts Manager, FSAI and Mr Jeffrey Moon, Chief Specialist Environmental Health, FSAI, in conjunction

with Ms Siobhan McEvoy, Acting Chief Specialist Environmental Health, Department of Health and Children.

The training days were held as follows:  
Clarion Hotel, Dublin - 24th February  
Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork - 3rd March  
Gresham Hotel, Dublin - 6th March  
Galway Bay Hotel - 13th March

# newman scholarship programme

The Newman Scholarship Programme was set up by UCD in 1989 as a major research initiative to provide research opportunities at post-doctoral level. It has established itself as a leading international platform for researchers in both the humanities and the sciences and has been extremely successful in attracting distinguished intellectual talent from Ireland and overseas. It is recognised as a prestigious platform for young academics in the early stages of their careers and financial support is provided through generous donations from industry.

The Centre for Food Safety at UCD presently has six Newman Scholars, who attended a dinner at Newman House (the historic site where the first UCD lectures were delivered) on 22nd February last.

Located in the newly formed School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine, the UCD Centre for Food Safety conducts collaborative research across the university campus. The Centre also has strong links with the School of Public Health and Population Science. It engages with technical and non-technical experts in a

holistic approach. Established in 2003, the UCD Centre for Food Safety has an active research agenda, along with an undergraduate teaching programme. Some of its ongoing work involves supporting the infant formula manufacturers in Ireland by conducting surveillance for *Enterobacter sakazakii*, investigating the basis for the evolution of multiple antibiotic resistance amongst zoonotic pathogens (including *Salmonella* and *E. coli* amongst others). The Centre also provides special training programmes for veterinarians and other healthcare professionals on a rolling basis.

*Pictured at the Newman Scholar dinner were Séamus Fanning, Professor of Food Safety, UCD; Dr Rebecca O'Mahony, Newman Scholar; Dr Carmen Negrado, Newman Scholar; Mr Alan Reilly, Deputy CEO, FSAI; Dr Brenda Murphy, Newman Scholar; Dr Denise Drury, Newman Scholar; Dr Patrick Wall, Associate Professor of Public Health, UCD; Dr Annetta Zintl, Newman Scholar; Dr Ciara Walsh, Newman Scholar; and Mr John Matthews, Head of Marketing and Communications, Dawn Farm Foods.*



# irradiation surveillance

The FSAI recently published the results of a survey to determine the level of compliance of noodle products with EU food irradiation legislation. A total of 55 samples containing dried noodles, together with the individual sachets of seasoning and/or vegetables that accompanied them were collected and analysed in 2005. The samples included plain noodles, as well as noodle products with added meat, soya or seafood flavourings, vegetables, herbs and spices. Evidence of irradiation was detected in one or more of the ingredients of 14 out of the 55 products (25%), even though none of them were labelled to indicate this fact as required by law (Table 1). All of the affected products were produced outside the EU and the FSAI has notified the food retailers where the products were purchased that all affected batches should be removed from sale.

Food irradiation is a process that can be used to reduce the levels of harmful or spoilage micro-organisms in food, or kill any insects or pests that some foods may harbour. Irradiation can also be used to delay the onset of natural processes such as ripening, sprouting or germination that may affect the quality of fruit and vegetables. Whatever the reasons for applying this technology, food treated with ionising radiation must be labelled to ensure that consumers can make an informed choice about the food they purchase.

While irradiation is not suitable for all foods, the process is generally considered safe when carried out under controlled conditions and in suitable facilities. According to the World Health Organization and other international health bodies, foods treated with ionising

radiation within set limits, as set out in legislation, pose no threat to human health. However, when labelling is not applied to a food that has been treated with ionising radiation, it raises the question as to why the products were irradiated in the first place and whether the process was carried out under the correct conditions and in suitable authorised facilities.

A definitive list of foods authorised for irradiation is being developed by the European Commission, but as yet only dried aromatic herbs, spices and vegetable seasonings are included. However, a range of 27 other foods may be irradiated under existing Member State authorisations until the EU list has been completed. Importation of irradiated food into the EU is permitted as long as the food is appropriately labelled, is on the EU-positive list or authorised by individual Member States and has been irradiated in EU-authorised facilities.

This survey identified a significant non-compliance within a small section of the food industry with respect to labelling legislation governing irradiated food and, as a result, continued monitoring of this and other categories of foods for irradiation and accurate labelling is needed to ensure that consumers' interests are not compromised. The FSAI has notified the European Commission and other EU Member States through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed to raise awareness of this potential problem.

A complete report on this survey together with further information on food irradiation is available on our website at [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie)

**Table 1: Samples and Ingredients Confirmed as Positive for Irradiation**

Brand	Product	Best Before date	Produce of	Implicated components
Koka	Non-fried instant noodles - spicy sesame chicken	30/03/2006	Singapore	seasoning
Maitre Khan	Noodle soup - chicken with mushroom	09/05/2006	China	seasoning
Maitre Khan	Noodle soup - seafood	12/04/2006	China	seasoning, vegetables
Maitre Khan	Noodle soup - Thai Tom Yum	07/06/2006	China	seasoning
Maitre Khan	Stir fried noodle - fried seafood	09/05/2006	China	vegetables
Maitre Khan	Super noodles- scallion chicken	06/03/2006	China	seasoning, vegetables
Nissin	Instant noodle with soup base - Tokyo Shoyu	04/03/2006	Hong Kong	soup base
Nong Shim	Oriental style noodles with soup base - seafood	02/02/2006	Korea	seasoning
Original Sichaun Famous Snack	Instant sweet potato noodle - hot & sour	19/11/2006	China	soup base
President	Super Bowl noodles - roasted beef	22/04/2006	China	seasoning, vegetables, noodles
President Unif-100	Noodles - Furong shrimp	21/04/2006	China	seasoning, vegetables
President Unif-100	Noodles - shallot beef	21/04/2006	China	seasoning, vegetables
Samyang Foods	Noodle soup - Chacharoni	07/07/2006	Korea	vegetables
Samyang Foods	Seafood party	07/07/2006	Korea	vegetables

# new appointment: chief specialist in public health nutrition



Dr Mary A. T. Flynn has recently been appointed Chief Specialist in Public Health Nutrition with the FSAI. Mary, a dietician and a registered public health nutritionist, is a graduate of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD). She has developed hospital and community-based dietetic services and led research programmes in Ireland, Canada and the Middle East.

While completing her doctoral research, Mary provided dietetic treatment for patients attending the Cardiology Department in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. Later, she worked as a lecturer on

the BSc Human Nutrition and Dietetic course at DIT and TCD and was a member of the Nutrition Sub-committee of the FSAI. From 1999 until 2004 she managed *Nutrition and Active Living* for the Calgary Health Region in Canada. While in Canada she was appointed as Adjunct Professor in the University of Alberta and in the University of Calgary. Recently she completed Health Canada funded research into best practice for the prevention and treatment of childhood obesity.

Mary has written many publications in the areas of obesity, cardiovascular disease, assessment of dietary intakes, development

of food based dietary guidelines and women's health issues, including folic acid supplementation for the prevention of birth defects. She continues to link with Canada through her roles as member of the Health Canada Expert Advisory Committee on the revision of dietary guidelines.

As Chief Specialist, Dr Flynn will manage and develop the public health nutrition group within the Consumer Protection Division of FSAI, and work closely with stakeholders in the official agencies and the food industry, to ensure optimal consumer protection.



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

#### **S.I. No. 670 of 2005**

European Communities  
(Avian Influenza) (Control of Imports  
from Romania) Regulations, 2005

#### **S.I. No. 48 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Avian Influenza) (Control of  
Imports from Croatia) (Amendment)  
Regulations, 2006

#### **S.I. No. 71 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Avian Influenza) (Control of Imports  
from Romania) Regulations, 2006

#### **S.I. No. 80 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Avian Influenza) (Control of Imports  
from Italy) Regulations, 2006

#### **S.I. No. 81 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Avian Influenza) (Control of  
Imports from Russia) (Amendment)  
Regulations, 2006

#### **S.I. No. 106 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Pesticides Residues) (Foodstuffs  
of Animal Origin) (Amendment)  
Regulations, 2006

#### **S.I. No. 107 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Pesticides Residues)  
(Products of Plant Origin Including  
Fruit and Vegetables) (Amendment)  
Regulations, 2006

#### **S.I. No. 108 of 2006**

European Communities  
(Pesticides Residues) (Cereals)  
(Amendment) Regulations, 2006

# new executive director for efsa

The EFSA Management Board recently nominated Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle as future Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

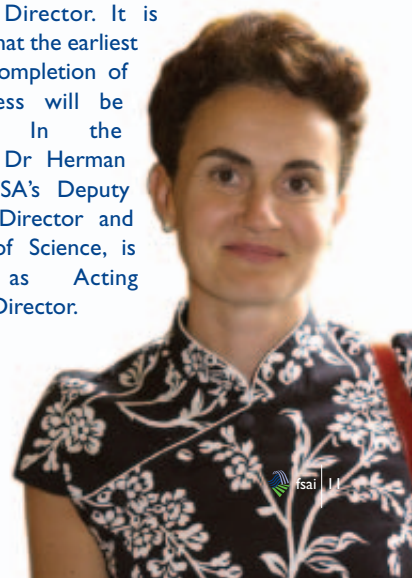
Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle is currently Regional Director of Agriculture and Forestry for the Ile de France Region and Vice-President of the EFSA Management Board. Having held senior management and advisory positions at the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Catherine was General-Director of Food of that ministry from 2000 to 2003. In this capacity, she was responsible for the management of health risks from food.

She holds degrees from the Institut National Agronomique Paris-Grignon, from the Ecole Nationale du Génie Rural des Eaux et des

Forêts and from Paris II. From 1991 to 1993, Catherine worked for the European Commission in the area of risk management and risk assessment.

Before a formal appointment can be made, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle was required to appear before the European Parliament in order to make a statement and answer any questions put forward by Members. The hearing in front of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee of the European Parliament took place on 23rd February last. Following this, the EFSA Management Board is awaiting the receipt of a letter from the President of the European Parliament. Taking into account the views of the ENVI Committee, the EFSA Management Board will move to the next

stage and consider the formal appointment of Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle as EFSA's new Executive Director. It is expected that the earliest time for completion of this process will be mid-2006. In the meantime, Dr Herman Koëter, EFSA's Deputy Executive Director and Director of Science, is serving as Acting Executive Director.







## mailing list

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

**We would like to ensure that anyone who may find it useful receives a copy.**

If you think there is someone else in your organisation who would benefit from receiving a copy please fill in the form below. This form can also be used to amend your own mailing details if required.

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**Bernadette Colley, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.**



## ehoa yearbook launch

Dr John O'Brien, CEO, FSAI, attended the recent launch of the Environmental Health Officers' Association (EHOA) Yearbook 2005-2006 in Drogheda.

*Pictured above are (l-r): Mr Thomas Rothwell, Principal EHO, Meath (retired), Ms Anne Marie Part, Principal EHO, Dublin/Mid-Leinster and Chair of the EHOA, Dr John O'Brien, CEO, FSAI and Mr Con Healy, Chief EHO, Dublin City (retired).*

## recent publications

The following publications have recently been produced by the FSAI:

- Leaflet: Functional Food
- Leaflet: Irradiated Food
- Guide to Food Safety Training (revised)
  - Level 1 - Induction Skills and
  - Level 2 - Additional Skills, for Food and Non-Food Handlers (Food Service, Retail and Manufacturing Sectors).
- Code of Practice No. 1: For the Health Service Executive on Risk Categorisation of Food Businesses (revised).

These publications are available on our website at [www.fsai.ie/publications](http://www.fsai.ie/publications).

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