

Food Safety Consultative Council Open Meeting

The FSAI's Food Safety Consultative Council (FSCC) recently hosted an open meeting to discuss the position for and against the merits of buying Irish food. The meeting, entitled 'Should Ireland's Food be Irish?' provided an opportunity for a discussion on the benefits and disadvantages to consumers who buy food produced in Ireland and the current legislation in place to regulate food labelling, whilst also giving the general public an opportunity to observe the workings of the Council.

Speakers at the event included Mr Jim Power, Love Irish Food; Mr Raymond O'Rourke, Food and Consumer Lawyer; Mr Dermott Jewell, Consumers' Association of Ireland and Ms Margaret Jeffares, Good Food Ireland. Delegates attending the meeting heard that in the current economic climate, recent pressures placed on the consumer including wage cuts, tax increases and cutbacks in public expenditure have made consumers increasingly price sensitive, and as a result price trends for food in 2009 had fallen by 7.8%, with non-alcoholic beverages falling by 11.7%. **See page 3**

Chaired by Ms Veronica Campbell, the FSCC meets quarterly to discuss food safety issues of relevance to the food industry and the general public. The Council acts as a forum for debate on food safety issues and provides advice to the FSAI Board. In practice, it gives members of the public and the food industry the opportunity to highlight issues of importance or concern to them in relation to food, which can be placed on the agenda for the FSAI to consider. At this meeting, a panel debate took place in which panel members, together with members of the audience, expressed their views on various aspects of Irish food.

The FSCC comprises 22 members representing a broad range of interests drawn from all sectors of the food industry and consumers. Through the course of its meetings, the Council examines segments of the food chain from farm to fork to review the food safety initiatives already in place and those required to ensure consumers' interests are to the forefront. The Council's objective is to provide feedback to the FSAI on its views, opinions and recommendations so that these can be placed on the FSAI's agenda for appropriate action, where necessary.



Mr Jim Power, Love Irish Food and Ms Veronica Campbell, Chair, Food Safety Consultative Council.

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Hazardous Waste — A New Threat to the Food Chain?

The recently published report of the inter-agency group, charged by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with reviewing the dioxin contamination of pig meat, identified the primary cause of the incident, as the use of contaminated fuel oil in a direct dryer used to dry waste bread that was being recycled for animal feed.

The fuel oil was contaminated with Aroclor 1260, a component of dielectric fluids that was used in the manufacture of electricity transformers until the 1980s. Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB)-based oils were used in transformers, as they are chemically and thermally stable and only destroyed at temperatures around 1,100 °C. The profile of the dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs found in pork and animal feed in December 2008 was consistent with incomplete combustion of fuel oil contaminated with Aroclor 1260. However, the source of the transformer oil and how it ended up in the fuel oil used in the dryer is not known at this time.

The primary responsibility for the production and marketing of safe animal feed is that of the feed business operator.

Safe and correct disposal of toxic chemicals such as Aroclor 1260 is essential. Strict legislation is in place requiring proper handling and controls. Disposal of hazardous waste is very expensive, as it involves incineration in designated plants, under strict conditions. The temptation to circumvent the rules is ever present, given the potential savings or profits. Ireland has had its share of waste disposal scandals in the past, including improper landfills and the illegal diversion of pharmaceutical waste to the feed chain. As legislation governing hazardous waste is primarily aimed at preventing contamination of the environment, the food industry and food control authorities are perhaps not as cognisant as they need to be, to the potential risks to the food chain from this source. The dioxin contamination of pork illustrates this point all too well. In that instance, we witnessed the enormous potential for damage to human health, the food industry and the economy.

The primary responsibility for the production and marketing of safe animal feed is that of the feed business operator. Prevention of further incidents requires both food producers and food inspectors to rethink their control strategies. We need to ask questions about the nature and volumes of hazardous wastes; their methods of disposal; and the potential for direct or indirect diversion into the food chain by the unscrupulous that have little regard for human health and the environment. Although the manufacture, processing and distribution

have been prohibited since the 1980s, it is estimated that some 40,000 tonnes of PCB-based transformer oil is currently in use/circulation in Europe. It is worth bearing in mind that the actual volume of Aroclor 1260 involved in the pork dioxin incident was about 150 litres. European regulations require that all PCB-containing equipment must be decommissioned by the end of 2010 and oils used in such equipment be disposed of correctly. The food industry needs to review security and think beyond the traditional physical, chemical and microbiological risks envisaged in HACCP. Environmental and food control authorities need to work more closely together, so that potential new risks to the food chain can be identified. As part of this, the FSAI has been working with the Environmental Protection Agency, to ensure that issues relating to persistent organic pollutants, such as dioxins, are dealt with on a national basis. The challenges posed by hazardous waste are real, and present a threat, not just to the environment, but also to the food chain.

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One of the main recommendations of the inter-agency review group is that the remit of the FSAI should be extended to include animal feed controls and that these should be included in the service contract arrangement between the FSAI and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Since the dioxin incident, the Department has reviewed and considerably strengthened its official feed control programme. The FSAI plans to evaluate the implications of this recommendation and to ensure that robust controls are in place for the protection of consumers' health from "farm to fork".



Alan Reilly

Alan Reilly
CEO

Should Ireland's Food Be Irish?

The recent Food Safety Consultative Council (FSCC) open meeting, entitled *Should Ireland's Food Be Irish?* discussed the position for and against the merits of buying Irish food. The theme on whether Ireland's food should be Irish is a highly topical issue, especially given the current economic climate. The open meeting allowed both sides of the debate to put forward their current thinking and views on the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing Irish food, and how consumers can be sure that food which they believe to be sourced locally is of Irish origin.

Mr Jim Power, Chairman, Love Irish Food put forward evidence supporting the benefits to the State of the economy of encouraging people to purchase Irish produce. He stated that the agri-food sector has an important role to play in aiding economic recovery. The current volatile price environment has led to many consumers ranking price more important than quality. Although Ireland's high domestic cost base is improving, competition from international suppliers is intensifying. Approximately 151,500 people are directly employed in the agri-food sector and therefore, to protect livelihoods, the food industry must be seen to fight back, and hammer home the importance of buying Irish to the consumer.

Mr Raymond O'Rourke, Food and Consumer Lawyer and member of the Taste Council put forward evidence that Irish shoppers are increasingly putting more emphasis on the importance of information on food labels, and that legislation regarding country of origin should be harmonised across the EU, allowing consumers to make more informed choices. He gave examples of studies conducted by Bord Bia, which have shown that Irish shoppers are not just claiming an interest in food produced locally, they are increasingly buying local produce, with a steady increase in the numbers purchasing Irish products on a weekly basis. Quality symbols have also grown in significance, with 48% of shoppers always checking for these merits compared to 29% in 2001. Clear and unambiguous labelling is, therefore, of vital importance when it comes to providing Irish consumers with the full picture, as 26% of shoppers confirm that they always check the country of origin on the label. The EU has made significant strides in minimising vague



Standing (L-R) Mr Paul Kelly, Food and Drink Industry Ireland; Ms Margaret Jeffares, Good Food Ireland; Mr Raymond O'Rourke, Food and Consumer Lawyer; Mr Dermott Jewell, Consumers' Association of Ireland; Mr Matt Cooper, Broadcaster and Journalist; Mr Alo Mohan, Irish Farmers' Association. **Centre (L-R)** Mr Jim Power, Love Irish Food; Ms Veronica Campbell, Chair, Food Safety Consultative Council; Mr Ray Bowe, Musgrave's Retail Partners, Ireland.

labelling information, however, discussions continue on tightening country of origin laws at an EU level, similar to the beef example, where substantial transformation is in place.

Also speaking at the meeting, Mr Dermott Jewell, Chief Executive, Consumers' Association of Ireland stated that consumers are often confused by creative marketing techniques and as a result, see the best-before date as the most reliable and the most sought after information on the label. According to Mr Jewell, consumers are simply concerned about foods that are better, faster, fresher, cheaper, and most importantly, what country they are sourced from. However, best-before dates are ranked as the most important deciding factor when buying foods, with price coming a close second.

The open meeting finished up with a panel debate in which panel members and members of the audience could express their views on various aspects of Irish food. As each question was debated, delegates had the opportunity to vote and record their judgments. Members of the panel discussed issues such as willingness to pay more for Irish food, clarity of food labels, country of origin labeling, 'buy Irish' campaigns and the reputation of Irish food abroad.

Same outcomes of the panel debate are outlined in Figures 1 to 3.

Chaired by Ms Veronica Campbell, the FSCC meets quarterly to discuss food safety issues of relevance to the food industry and the general public.

Figure 1: I'm prepared to pay more for Irish food

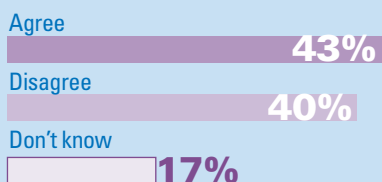


Figure 2: How much attention do you pay to food labels when you are shopping?

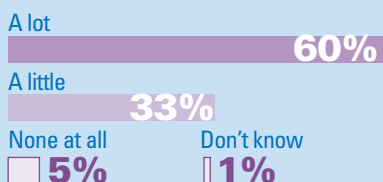
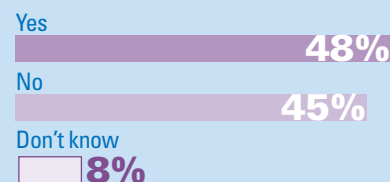


Figure 3: Have recent campaigns encouraged you to buy Irish food?





New Food Allergen Alert Service

The FSAI has recently launched a new free email and SMS service which will directly inform food allergy sufferers of the presence of allergens in inappropriately labelled foods.

It is estimated that in Ireland, approximately 5% of children and, on average, 3% of adults have food allergies. For people who have been medically diagnosed, their life-long treatment is usually strict avoidance of foods that give rise to their allergy. Correct information on the food label is crucial in managing an allergy. Certain foods and ingredients can trigger adverse health effects in people. Their immune systems can react because the body incorrectly recognises a substance as harmful. In some cases, this can happen almost immediately upon consumption, with common symptoms including coughing, wheezing, a rash visible on the skin and itching of the eyes, nose and throat. When a severe reaction occurs a person can develop anaphylaxis which is life threatening.

Anyone who suffers from a food allergy or with an interest in this area can subscribe to receive these alerts via our website, www.fsai.ie. Food allergen alerts will be issued upon receipt of information that a food product poses a risk to certain consumers' health, due to missing or incorrect allergen labelling. Food allergen alerts will also be issued to enforcement officers and food businesses.

The objective of this new notification system is to prevent people who have an established food allergy from purchasing or consuming a food product which may be detrimental to their health. Manufacturers and processors should regularly review the composition of their final

product and ensure that the presence of an allergen is clearly visible on the food label. By law, the food manufacturer must also clearly indicate on the label, the name of the ingredient from which the allergen originates.

However, information on labels such as 'may contain nuts' or 'manufactured on a line that also uses nuts' is voluntary and likely to be of little benefit to allergy sufferers. It can also provide a quick fix for those food business operators unwilling or unable to adhere to good manufacturing practices and HACCP controls. As the use of these labels can unnecessarily restrict the food choices available to allergen sufferers, manufacturers should be prudent in their allergen advice and prioritise the needs of allergen sufferers. Information included by manufacturers on a food label must not mislead consumers.

There are currently 14 categories of allergenic ingredients according to EU legislation, namely: cereals containing gluten; crustaceans; eggs; fish; soybeans; milk; celery and celeriac; mustard; sesame seeds; sulphur dioxide and sulphites; peanuts; tree nuts; molluscs; and lupins.

Those who have an established allergy and the parents of children with an established allergy are encouraged to subscribe online to receive the email and/or SMS text alert notifications.



Online Food Allergy Survey

The FSAI is also seeking to establish further information on the incidence and type of allergies in Ireland. If you, or a member of your family has a food allergy, please complete the short online survey on our website, www.fsai.ie. The results of this survey will assist in deliberations in this area and on the regulatory process governing the presence of allergens in food.

Standards Samples Description Guidance

Data collection is an important task of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and a fundamental component of risk assessment. EFSA is receiving from different providers (e.g. Member States, the European Commission and the food industry) an increasing volume of data in support of its scientific activities. To address the issue, EFSA set up a Technical Working Group on Data Collection (TWG-DC), mandated to develop a proposal to harmonise the collection of analytical measurement data for the presence of harmful or beneficial chemical substances in food, feed and water.

The TWG-DC was requested to produce guidance documents on:

- the harmonised description of data on analytical measurements in food and feed samples including a list of standardised data elements (items describing characteristics of samples or analytical results such as country of origin, product, analytical method, limit of detection, result, etc.), controlled terminologies and validation rules to enhance data quality.

- the procedures to efficiently transmit and exchange data between Member States and EFSA (Guidance on Data Exchange) taking care of selecting specific file formats for data transmission (e.g. XML, Microsoft Excel) and specific data transmission protocols to support electronic data exchange.

The Guidance on Standard Sample Description for Food and Feed was published by EFSA on 29 January. It specifies the data elements and the data structure of the samples and the analytical results for chemical contaminants and residues in food and feed included in monitoring and control programmes (e.g. sample description, analytical methods and the analytical results). The aim is to build a description as general as possible to facilitate its application to a wide range of measurements taken for food and feed safety assessment.

The harmonisation of data collection is recognised as a fundamental step for the development of an effective EFSA Data Warehouse.

See the EFSA website at: <http://tinyurl.com/ykwtqfu>

Answering the Call

Our trained customer advisors and food scientists deal on a daily basis with queries from a wide range of sources and which vary widely to include topics such as labelling, food complaints, starting up a new food business, additives, legislation and training.

2009 in Review

In 2009, a total of 9,444 queries were logged by our advice-line staff, giving an average of 787 per month. Of the total requests, the majority (71%) were received by telephone, with email being the second most popular means of contacting the advice-line (25%).

The majority of queries received were from the food industry (44%) (Fig 1) who mainly requested FSAI publications, labelling and training advice. Consumers were the second most frequent category of callers (27%), mainly reporting issues with food and food establishments, such as low hygiene standards, unfit food and suspected food poisoning (Fig 2). These complaints are referred to environmental health officers who investigate them on behalf of the FSAI.

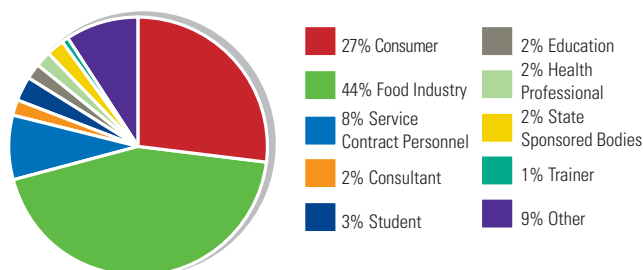


Figure 1: Category of Caller Contacting the Advice-Line, 2009

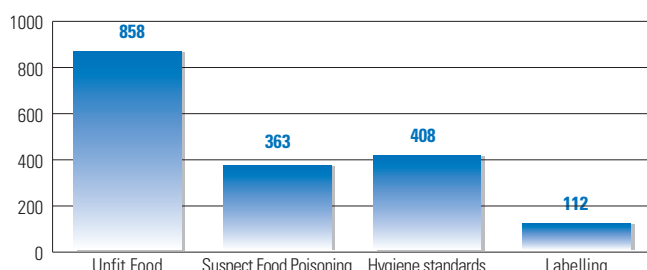


Figure 2: Consumer Complaints, 2009

The most popular categories of queries/requests to our advice-line in 2009 were requests for publications, food complaints, business start-up information and food labelling (Fig 3). Requests for information and guidance on how to set up a new food business increased by 50% in 2009 compared to 2008. This trend echoed the downturn in the economy with many requesters possibly forced to follow an alternative career path.

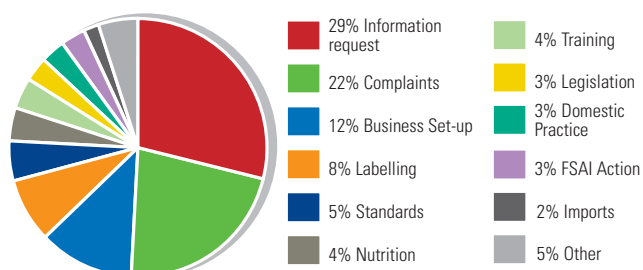


Figure 3: Types of Requests Received by the Advice-Line, 2009

Looking Back on the Last Decade

The FSAI celebrated its tenth anniversary last year. To recap on the last 10 years, the following is a look at the trends over the decade in terms of requesters, types of requests and other observations.

In general, there has been a steady increase in requests over the ten years (Fig 4). A notable peak occurred in 2000, following a product recall of cooked ham, in which just over 420 concerned consumers contacted us for advice over a two day period. Again in 2005, approximately 400 calls were recorded in relation to a large recall of various food products due to the presence of Sudan Red, an illegal food colourant. 2008, however, saw exceptional numbers of requests to the advice-line as a result of the crisis involving dioxin contamination of Irish pork. At the peak of the crisis in December 2008, we received more than 3,000 calls on one day on the issue.

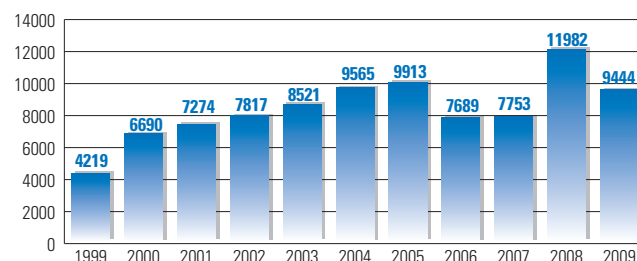


Figure 4: Total Requests to the Advice-line, 1999-2009

Consumers, caterers and manufacturers/processors have consistently been the most frequent users of the advice-line over the last ten years. The majority of calls from consumers are in relation to food complaints. Consumers were slow to make complaints at first, however the numbers of food complaints have gradually increased over the years. In the earlier years, many requests were also received in relation to domestic practice issues such as food storage, cooking, freezing etc.

Caterers and manufacturers/processors tend to seek information on hygiene standards, food labelling, legislation and training. Since 2003, requests for information on the legislation pertaining to the labelling of pre-packaged foods have steadily increased and 2009 saw a dramatic increase in the number of requests for information on starting a new food business.

The FSAI advice-line, on lo-call 1890 33 66 77 or info@fsai.ie, operates from 9am to 5pm weekdays.



Working in Partnership with the RPII

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) have renewed the Memorandum of Understanding that defines the scientific partnership between the two organisations. The Memorandum acknowledges the independence of the RPII and the FSAI while also recognising the respective roles of both bodies. It identifies areas where mutual support can be provided in the interest of consumer protection.

In addition to ensuring consumer health is not compromised, both organisations are looking to collaborate in ways that enhance their respective inherent expertise. Areas for collaboration are based around participation in national and international radiological emergency preparedness programmes including those organised by the European Commission, the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and the World Health Organization. They specifically include:

- Food countermeasures for radiological accidents
- Control of imports
- Emergency exercises.

Apart from sharing expertise, creating opportunities for synergies and providing a context for collaborative engagement, the Memorandum also clarifies the roles of both agencies in the unlikely event of the "National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents" (NEPNA) being activated.



Pictured signing the Memorandum of Understanding are Prof Alan Reilly, CEO, FSAI and Dr Ann McGarry, CEO, RPII.

Under NEPNA, the RPII has been assigned a number of key functions, including early warning, technical assessment of the incident, provision of technical advice on protective actions and monitoring of the environment and the food chain.

The FSAI's role includes supervising the collection of food samples/imports and the seizure and destruction of contaminated foodstuffs. In the interests of preparedness and resilience, both organisations have also formally agreed to participate in joint training exercises.

The Memorandum will run for five years but is subject to annual and ongoing review. Copies are available on our website at www.fsai.ie.

Training for Temporary Veterinary Inspectors

A training evening for temporary veterinary inspectors (TVIs) employed by local authorities to carry out meat inspection duties at butchers' abattoirs took place in the Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny on 26 November 2009. The event was organised by whole-time local authority veterinary offices in the south-east region and drew an attendance of almost 40 TVIs from counties Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford, Waterford, Laois and Wicklow.

The first speaker was Mr Garret Shine, Veterinary Officer, Louth County Council. Garret gave an outline of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that have been developed by the Local Authority Veterinary Service and which are accessible on the FSAI/official agency extranet at <https://safetynet.fsai.ie>. Garret explained how TVIs could access this valuable information tool by contacting the FSAI for user details. He went through the SOP on Clean Animals in some detail and stressed the legal requirement for TVIs to categorise animals presented for slaughter with regard to cleanliness and to communicate the results of this examination to the slaughterhouse operator. The purpose of this SOP is to ensure the suitability of animals presented for slaughter for human consumption thus minimising the risk of contamination of the carcass from soiling of the hide, fleece or skin.

Mr John Matthews, Chief Specialist in Veterinary Public Health, FSAI, presented on 'E. coli in the Slaughterhouse'. John gave a summary of serious outbreaks of meat associated food poisoning due to E. coli O157 in Ireland, the UK and the USA and explained how forensic techniques such as Pulse Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE) could trace



Pictured at the training evening were (l-r): Sean O'Laoide Veterinary Officer, Westmeath County Council; Garret Shine, Veterinary Officer, Louth County Council and Ruth Barry, Veterinary Officer, Laois County Council.

the exact strain of pathogenic E. coli or other microorganisms to the slaughterhouse and even to the farm where the animals originated. He stressed the necessity of minimising the risk of faecal contamination of carcasses which could be achieved through vigilance at ante-mortem inspection and good slaughtering/butchering technique.

Mr Sean O'Laoide, Veterinary Officer, Westmeath County Council was the final speaker on the night. He addressed the audience on the new approach to emergency on-farm slaughter in the case of acutely injured but otherwise healthy animals. Sean explained that the veterinary profession could not allow their clients' interests to outweigh the primary concerns of the welfare of the animals and the safety of the final consumer. This would inevitably lead to veterinarians having to make tough decisions that would not always be to the liking of the farming community. The legislation underpinning emergency on-farm slaughter is the European Communities (Welfare of Farmed Animals) Regulations, 2008 (S.I. No. 14 of 2008). Copies of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council's booklet on this subject were issued to all attendees.

The training session concluded with a lively discussion between speakers and attendees and feedback on the evening was very positive.

Zoonoses in Europe in 2008

The Annual Report on Zoonoses and Foodborne Outbreaks for 2008 has been published by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Zoonoses are infections and diseases that are naturally transmissible directly or indirectly (e.g. via contaminated food) between animals and humans.

The report shows that the number of human cases of campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis and listeriosis was lower in 2008 than in 2007, while the number of cases of infection with Verotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) increased.

The report also gives an overview of foodborne outbreaks in 2008: 5,332 were recorded, affecting over 45,000 people and causing 32 deaths.

VTEC

VTEC accounted for a total of 3,159 human infections in the EU, representing nearly a 9% increase from the previous year. Among animals and foodstuffs, VTEC was most often reported in cattle and bovine meat. In Ireland, the highest number of VTEC cases were reported since data collection began in 1999. There were 225 cases reported in 2008 of which 213 were confirmed. The 2008 Annual Report of the Irish Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) revealed that there were 42 outbreaks reported which accounted for 145 of the 213 confirmed cases. Outbreaks give a better opportunity than sporadic cases to identify the source of the infection. Person-to-person spread was the suspected mode of transmission in 21 of the outbreaks, with drinking water believed to have contributed to eight outbreaks and food implicated in three outbreaks. The increase in VTEC cases during August 2008 in the Health Service Executive - South region was linked to contaminated private wells following exceptionally heavy rainfall.

Campylobacter spp.

Campylobacteriosis continued to be the most frequently reported zoonotic infection in humans across the European Union, with 190,566 cases notified in 2008 (down from 200,507 in 2007). 1,752 human cases were reported in Ireland in 2008, down 133 cases from 2007. According to the European report, raw poultry meat was the most commonly contaminated foodstuffs and in animals *Campylobacter* species were found in poultry, pigs and cattle.

Salmonella spp.

Salmonellosis, the second most reported zoonotic infection in humans in Europe, decreased significantly for the fifth consecutive year, with 131,468 cases in 2008 compared to 151,998 in 2007 (a 13.5% decrease). In Ireland, the incidence of salmonellosis has remained relatively constant over this time with 447 cases reported in 2008. Across the EU *Salmonella* species were found most frequently in raw chicken, turkey and pig meat. 2008 was the first year in which

EU Member States implemented a new salmonella control programme in laying hens; 20 Member States, including Ireland, have already met their reduction target for that year. This could be the reason for a decrease of *Salmonella* Enteritidis infections in humans in Europe, since eggs are known to be the most important source for these types of salmonellae infections.

Listeria monocytogenes

Infections with *Listeria monocytogenes* showed a decrease of 11% compared to 2007, with 1,381 confirmed cases in 2008. Although listeriosis is less frequent in humans compared to campylobacteriosis and salmonellosis, it is significant because of its high mortality rate. In foodstuffs, the report found *Listeria monocytogenes* above the legal safety limit in some ready-to-eat foods, mostly in smoked fish and heat-treated meat products and cheeses. Because of the limitations in comparing data from different Member States due to differences in surveillance systems and sampling and analysis methodologies the European Commission is coordinating a harmonised baseline study on the prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in these foods during 2010.

The report also gives an overview of foodborne outbreaks in 2008: 5,332 were recorded, affecting over 45,000 people and causing 32 deaths. In Ireland, 25 foodborne outbreaks were reported. *Salmonella* spp. was once again the most frequently reported cause of foodborne outbreaks in Europe (accounting for 35% of outbreaks), followed by viruses and bacterial toxins. The most frequent food sources reported were eggs and egg products (23%), pig meat and derived products (10%) and buffet meals (9%).

The report which covers 15 zoonotic agents, including brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis and rabies is available to download at <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1496.htm>



For further information, see:

The Community Summary Report on trends and sources of zoonoses, zoonotic agents and foodborne outbreaks in the European Union in 2008

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1496.htm>

Annual Report 2008, Health Protection Surveillance Centre

<http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/AboutHPSC/AnnualReports/File,4080,en.pdf>

Legislation Update

Irish legislation

Nutrition Labelling for Foodstuffs

The Department of Health and Children has published the European Communities (Nutrition Labelling for Foodstuffs) Regulation, 2009 (S.I. No. 461 of 2009). This Regulation revokes the previous rules, i.e. S.I. No. 65 of 2005. The Regulation concerns nutrition labelling of foodstuffs for the ultimate consumer and for mass caterers and gives further effect to Council Directive 90/496/EEC on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs as amended by Commission Directive 2003/120/EC.

The Regulation specifically gives effect to Commission Directive 2008/100/EC as regards recommended daily allowances, energy conversion factors for fibre and erythritol and introduces a definition for fibre. Products which do not comply with the labelling requirements of 2008/100/EC must not be placed on the market with effect from 31 October 2012 and any such products placed on the market before that date and not sold, transferred or otherwise traded, on or before midnight on 30 October 2012, must be removed from the market.

The S.I. can be accessed on our website at: <http://tinyurl.com/yfm5wlp>

Food Waste Regulations

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, has published the Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulation, 2009 (S.I. No. 508 of 2009). The Regulation is designed to promote the segregation and recovery of food waste arising in the commercial sector and aims

to assist in achieving the targets set out in Directive 99/31/EC on the landfill of waste by promoting the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill sites to composting and to other forms of authorised treatment.

Schedule 1 to the S.I. lists the classes which are subject to the Regulation. These include premises used for the supply of hot food for consumption both on and off the premises, public houses, staff canteens, shops selling sandwiches or hot food where the sale of food is subsidiary to the main retail use, guesthouses/hotels/hostels with more than four bedrooms for guest use, trains and planes, hospitals, nursing homes and restaurants.

While the S.I. came into operation on 1 January 2010, the provisions of Part II relating to the segregation and processing of food waste will only take effect from 1 July 2010.

The Regulation **does not apply:**

(a) prior to 1 July 2011 to premises where the amount of food waste produced is less than 50kg per week, other than where a local authority otherwise —

- (i) provides for relevant policy objectives under a waste management plan, or
- (ii) applies conditions under a waste collection permit, or
- (iii) applies conditions under a waste presentation bye-law.

However, this exemption will only apply where a written declaration is made to the relevant competent authority prior to 1 July 2010. This written declaration must be made by either:

- a person who supplies food at the premises
- the occupier of the premises
- a person acting on behalf of the supplier of food or occupier.

The Regulation **does not apply:**

- to Category 1 animal by-products within the meaning of Regulation (EC) No. 1774/2002 (animal by-products) and Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 (animal by-products), which shall be
 - (i) collected and treated in accordance with the requirements of that Regulation, and
 - (ii) in the case of food waste that has arisen from a means of transport operating internationally, it may also be disposed of as waste by burial in a landfill approved under Directive 1999/31/EC in accordance with the
- to Category 2 animal by-products within the meaning of Regulation 1774/2002 and Regulation 1069/2009, which shall be collected and treated in accordance with the requirements of that Regulation
- to food waste arising at a premises of a type mentioned in Class 7 (e.g. hospital, care home) of Schedule 1 of the S.I. which is
 - (i) contaminated so as to pose a risk to human or animal health through an infectious disease
 - (ii) otherwise prohibited or withdrawn for use as a food or feed, and which shall be collected and treated in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 1774/2002 and Regulation 1069/2009.

Part II of the Regulation sets out the requirements regarding the segregation and processing of food waste and requires that food waste arising on the producer's premises is kept separate from non-biodegradable materials, other waste and contaminants.

A person organising a trade show, exhibition or any event where food is being supplied (there are certain exemptions as listed in Class 1 of Schedule 1) is obliged under the Regulation to submit a food waste management plan to the relevant local authority at least 30 days prior to the commencement of the event. Schedule 2 of the S.I. sets out the information that must be provided by the organiser.

The S.I. can be accessed at: <http://tinyurl.com/yhz49dr>



EC Publications

Method Validation and Quality Control Procedures for Pesticide Residues Analysis in Food and Feed

The European Commission has published a revised guidance note concerning method validation and quality control procedures for pesticide residues analysis in food and feed. The guidance document is intended for laboratories involved in the official control or monitoring of pesticide residues in food in the European Union. The document describes the method validation and analytical quality control (AQC) requirements to support the validity of data used for checking compliance with maximum residue limits (MRLs), enforcement actions, or assessment of consumer exposure to pesticides.

The key objectives are:

- (i) to provide a harmonised cost-effective quality assurance system in the EU
- (ii) to ensure the quality and comparability of analytical results

- (iii) to ensure that acceptable accuracy is achieved
- (iv) to ensure that false positives or false negatives are not reported
- (v) to support compliance with ISO/IEC 17025 (accreditation standard).

This document is complementary and integral to the requirements in ISO/IEC 17025. It can be accessed on the Europa website at: <http://tinyurl.com/ygy6kqj>

New EU Ecolabel Rules

New rules contained in Regulation (EC) No. 66/2010 on the EU Ecolabel were published in the Official Journal in January. These rules strengthen the previous rules governing this scheme which was launched in 1992 to recognise

environmentally-friendly products by awarding them a distinctive symbol of environmental quality – the flower. The scheme currently covers 26 product groups, including cleaning products, electronic equipment, textiles and tourist accommodation. The European Commission aims to increase the number of product groups to between 40 and 50 by 2015. The new rules include the possibility for Ecolabel criteria to be developed for food and drink products in the future. Prior to introducing such criteria for the sector it is recommended that a study should be undertaken to ensure that criteria set is feasible and that added value can be guaranteed. It is also proposed to consider whether only products that lie within the scope of legislation governing organic production and products would be eligible for award of the EU Ecolabel.

Further information is available at www.ecolabel.eu

The logo is available in annex II of the Regulation:

<http://tinyurl.com/yzm97dj>



Factsheet on Animal Welfare Labelling

In December 2009, the European Commission published a factsheet on animal welfare entitled 'How to Make an Informed Choice'. The factsheet discusses the European Commission's report on options for animal welfare labelling and the establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals. The overall policy goal in this area is to make it easier for consumers to identify and choose welfare-friendly products and thereby give an economic incentive to producers and EU citizens to improve the welfare of animals. The report stated that research carried out indicated that there is no harmonised system of animal welfare standards for labelling purposes in the EU and as a result consumers are unable to understand and differentiate the welfare standards promoted under existing voluntary schemes.

The factsheet is available on the Europa website at: <http://tinyurl.com/yjyfb37>

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

S.I. No. 461 of 2009
European Communities (Nutrition Labelling for Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2009

S.I. No. 463 of 2009
European Communities (Plastics and Other Materials) (Contact with Food) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations, 2009

S.I. No. 464 of 2009
European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 2009

S.I. No. 508 of 2009
Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations, 2009

S.I. No. 521 of 2009
Abattoirs Act (Veterinary Examination) (Salmonella in Pigs) Regulations, 2009

S.I. No. 522 of 2009
Diseases of Animals Act, 1966 (Control for Salmonella in Swine) Order, 2009

S.I. No. 15 of 2010
Ethics in Public Office (Prescribed Public Bodies, Designated Directorships of Public Bodies and Designated Positions in Public Bodies) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010

Mayo County Council Highlights Local Achievements

The Local Authority Veterinary Service of Mayo County Council highlighted the achievements of Mayo meat producers at a celebratory night held at Áras an Contae, Castlebar, Co Mayo on 5 November last year. Attending the event were 25 local food business owners, County Councillors, members of the local Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the FSAI, Teagasc and Leader.

Mayo County Council held the event in order to recognise the consistent efforts made by the owners of both local abattoirs and meat processing plants to achieve such high standards of food safety in their premises. Participating meat producers were awarded a certificate. In addition, a Mayo County Council logo was launched which will allow these producers to indicate to consumers that their produce is quality, locally produced food.

The proceedings were opened by Cathy Waddell, County Veterinary Officer, who welcomed attendees and outlined the serious responsibilities involved in producing safe food for consumers. She acknowledged the commitment that has been made by the local meat industry in maintaining high standards.

The Cathaoirleach Councillor, John Cribben, presented the awards to the 25 participants and in his speech outlined the hard work and dedication that is required to achieve high standards in this area. Mr Jim Higgins, MEP, spoke of the efforts made at local, national and European level by producers, regulators and legislators in ensuring that the goal of producing safe food is met.

Mayo County Manager, Mr Des Mahon, outlined the help and support that the County Enterprise Board in Mayo can provide to small businesses in the county and encouraged producers to remain up to date with relevant issues and new developments in their sector. Mr Sean Kelly spoke on behalf of the producers, encouraging fellow producers to continue to pursue the highest standards and maintain their impetus.



*Pictured at the event (l-r) are: **Back row:** Cllr Seamus Weir, Cllr Al McDonnell, Anthony Heffernan, Ger McGreal, Tom Dempsey, Val McGreal, Sean Kelly, Seamus Joyce, Seamus Hawkshaw, Martin Calvey, Willie Moore, Martin Maloney and Paddy Reilly. **Middle row:** Cllr John O'Malley, Cllr Eddie Sweeney, Cllr Michael Burke, Cllr Annie May Reape, Cllr Margaret Adams, Tom Carr, Tony Carolan, Pat Carolan, James McHale, Gerry Joyce, Mohammed Javied Iqbal, Cllr Micheal McNamara, Cllr Michael Holmes and Cllr Peter Flynn. **Front row:** Cllr Michelle Mulherin, Cathy Waddell, Cathy Gallagher, Des Mahon, County Manager, Jim Higgins, MEP, Cathaoirleach Cllr John Cribben, Donal O'Mahony, FSAI, Paul McDermott, Cllr Eugene Lavin and Cllr Michael Kilcoyne.*

Visit from China

The FSAI recently hosted a visit by a delegation of officials from the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) of the People's Republic of China, along with a representative of the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office.

The AQSIQ delegation was visiting Ireland as part of a wider fact finding mission to Europe to obtain a better understanding of community legislation and controls on food contact materials. During the trip to Ireland the delegation held a meeting with representatives of the European Commission at the FVO's offices in Grange, County Meath, and also visited the Dublin Public Analyst Laboratory, the Irish National Reference Laboratory for analysis of food contact materials. The delegation was particularly interested in methods of analysis for food contact materials and how these methods are harmonised throughout the European Community.



Pictured are delegates from the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China (AQSIQ) with staff from the FSAI and the FVO.

EFSA Opinions and New Labelling Requirements for Six Artificial Colours

In November last the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its updated opinions on the safety of six artificial colours. The colours in question are: Tartrazine (E102), Quinoline Yellow (E104), Sunset Yellow FCF (E110), Azorubine/Carmoisine (E122), Ponceau 4R (E124) and Allura Red AC (E129). These colours were previously assessed by the former Scientific Committee on Food, and Acceptable Daily Intakes (ADIs) were established for each. The colours are permitted in a range of foods within the Europe Union via their inclusion in the list of authorised colours set out in Directive 94/36/EC.

EFSA is in the process of re-evaluating the safety of all currently permitted food additives, starting with the colours, and priority was given to these particular colours following the publication of a UK FSA funded study (the so-called "Southampton Study") examining the potential effect of a mixture of colours and the preservative sodium benzoate on the behaviour of children. EFSA had previously undertaken an assessment of the combined effect of the colours on behaviour and concluded that the UK study provided limited evidence that certain mixtures could have a small effect on some children's activity and attention, but the study as a whole did not justify changing the ADIs for the individual colours involved. The current review by EFSA has examined the safety of the colours individually and has considered a wide range of information, and not just that related to the effect of the colours on hyperactivity. As a result of this review, EFSA has lowered the ADIs for three of the colours (Quinoline Yellow (E104), Sunset Yellow (E110) and Ponceau 4R (E124)) for different reasons in each case as different data were available on each individual compound. In the case of Quinoline Yellow, the ADI has been lowered from 10mg/kg bw/day to 0.5mg/kg bw/day. This new ADI is based on one study in particular carried out on rats where effects were seen at high doses. For Ponceau 4R, the ADI has been lowered from 4mg/kg bw/day to 0.7mg/kg bw/day. This is based on a long term mouse study reporting effects of high levels of Ponceau 4R on the kidneys (glomerulonephrosis) of mice. For Sunset Yellow, the ADI has been lowered from 2.25mg/kg bw/day to 1.0mg/kg bw/day, based on a rat study which showed effects in the testes when Sunset Yellow was administered at high doses. The ADIs for the other three colours remains unchanged.

The dietary exposure to the six colours was estimated by EFSA and the panel concluded that exposure to these colours could potentially exceed the new ADIs for both adults and children. In addition, it was estimated that some children who consume large amounts of food and drink containing Azorubine/Carmoisine or Allura Red AC could exceed the ADIs for these colours.

Although the EFSA estimates of intake were based on refined



European Food Safety Authority

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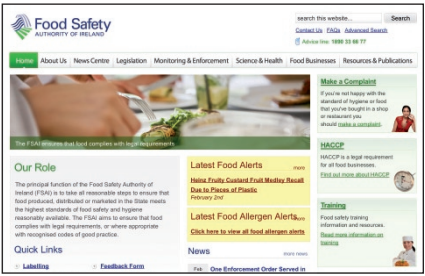
exposure data, including data from Ireland, further analysis undertaken on the consumption of these colours by Irish consumers, including children, indicates that the intakes of these additives are well below the current ADIs and the new revised ones derived by EFSA in these opinions. Risk management decisions based on these opinions may be taken at European level where it may be necessary to reduce the levels of these colours in foods or reduce the range of foods in which these colours are permitted for use so that the intake of these colours for other consumers across the EU will also be below the new revised ADIs.

Manufacturers have been working to reduce the use of artificial colours in foods in Ireland in recent years in response to consumer concerns and consumers can decide whether to eat food containing these colours or not as their presence will be indicated in the list of ingredients either by name or E-number. This enables consumers to make choices about whether the foods they eat contain these additives.

A warning label about a hyperactivity link for products containing any of the Southampton colours will be mandatory from July 2010. This was included in Regulation 1333/2008/EC on additives and the new provision states that foods containing the six food colours E110, E104, E122, E129, E102 and E124 must be labelled not only with the relevant E number but also with the words "may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children".



Website Review, 2009



The FSAI website, www.fsai.ie, is a comprehensive source of information for food businesses on every aspect of food safety, food hygiene management and food legislation. To commemorate the tenth

anniversary of the FSAI in 2009, the website was completely restructured. The design was updated and the site layout simplified to make information more accessible to all. The site is updated and monitored on a daily basis and is designed to provide users with all the information they need in relation to food safety in a quick and efficient manner.

In 2009, the site received 343,096 visits with 148,617 absolute unique visitors and 1,190,091 page views. Visitors came to the site from 210 different countries. 68% of visits to the website were from Ireland, but visits were

also recorded from the UK (8%), followed by the US, France, Canada, Germany and Austria.

After the home page, resources and publications, legislation and the food business section were the most popular areas of the site during the year.

One third of visitors came directly to the website; 13% were referred from other sites and 54% were directed from search engines (the Google search engine directed over 50% of total traffic, with users using search terms such as 'fsai', 'food safety authority' and 'fsai.ie'). Of the browsers used by website visitors, Internet Explorer was by far the most popular (84.5%).

Recent Publications



The FSAI Annual Report, 2008 has recently been produced by the FSAI.

The report is also available as *Gaeilge: Údarás Sábháilteachta Bia na hÉireann — Tuarascáil Bhliantúil, 2008*

The reports, together with all other FSAI publications are available on our website at www.fsai.ie/publications.




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