

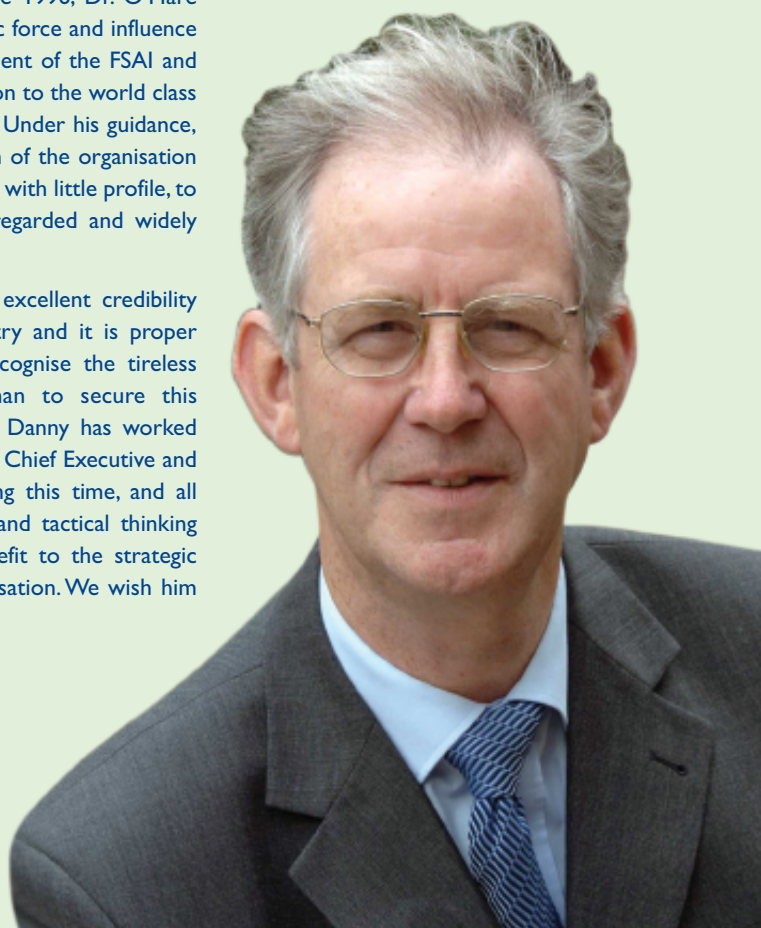


fsai chairman retires from board

It is with a sense of great pride and gratitude that the FSAI acknowledges the work and dedication of our outgoing Chairman, Dr. Danny O'Hare, as he announces his retirement from our Board. During his tenure since 1996, Dr. O'Hare has been a key strategic force and influence on the initial development of the FSAI and its significant progression to the world class organisation it is today. Under his guidance, he oversaw the growth of the organisation from a small state body with little profile, to the highly respected, regarded and widely understood Authority.

The FSAI now enjoys excellent credibility within the food industry and it is proper and appropriate to recognise the tireless work of our Chairman to secure this position. As Chairman, Danny has worked in partnership with the Chief Executive and staff of the FSAI during this time, and all agree that his calibre and tactical thinking were of immense benefit to the strategic direction of the organisation. We wish him

every success in his future endeavours and extend our sincerest gratitude for his expertise and unwavering commitment over the years.



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contaminated rice recall

In December 2006, the largest recall of food products since the Sudan Red 1 contamination in 2005, was undertaken by an Irish food manufacturer. Traceability information was used to quickly identify all the foods affected, and where they had been distributed, which greatly assisted the withdrawal from the food chain. Clear product identification was then used to inform consumers of the problem and the recall of products.

“The contamination concerned a number of glass fragments that were found”

The contamination concerned a number of glass fragments that were found as a result of customer complaints to Birds Eye, UK. The glass was found in Chicken Curry with Rice, and Chicken Tikka Masala with Rice frozen ready meals produced for Birds Eye by Rye Valley Foods. As required by Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002, Birds Eye notified the Food Standards Agency in the UK about the problem, as the complaints originated in the UK. At the same time, an investigation was initiated by the company to find the source of the contamination.

While the investigation in the UK proceeded, the Food Standards Agency informed the FSAI when it became apparent that the ready meals were prepared in Ireland. Rye Valley Foods met with the Department of Agriculture and Food, the official agency which supervises the manufacturing establishment, to ensure the local enforcement agency was involved at an early stage in overseeing the investigation.

In addition to ten complaints regarding Birds Eye products, there were a further ten complaints regarding ASDA (the UK retail chain) ready meals, also produced by Rye Valley. The complaints were all of a similar nature - that of small round pieces of glass associated with the rice component of the meals.

Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 also specifies that food shall not be placed on the market if it is ‘unsafe’ (Article 14). ‘Unsafe’ is specified as being ‘injurious to health’ or ‘unfit for human consumption’. In this case, the presence of the glass contamination made the ready meals ‘unsafe’. Article 19 of the Regulations describes the responsibilities of food business operators when they have reason to believe they have placed ‘unsafe’ food on the market. This includes immediate withdrawal of the products; and where products have reached the consumer, to accurately inform them of the problem and recall the products. These requirements apply to all food businesses along the food chain, from manufacturer to retailer.

As the Rye Valley Foods investigation continued, traceability information identified that the rice was supplied by a French supplier, which sourced the rice from Arkansas, US and imported it via Rotterdam, The Netherlands. The batches of product affected were produced over a four week period. In addition to those products supplied to Birds Eye and ASDA, other products using the same rice as an ingredient were produced for Sainsbury UK, Tesco Ireland, Supervalu and Centra. In Ireland, 17 varieties of ready meals required recall. In total over 17,000 tonnes of product was affected.

“In total over 17,000 tonnes of product was affected”

Analysis of the glass fragments was carried out in Dublin. The report concluded that the glass was of soda-lime composition - a type that has many widespread uses, such as bottles, glasses and windows. The samples were irregular and showed a great deal of abrasion or weathering, which may have indicated that the glass had been through some form of processing along with the rice it was associated with. The fragments were 3 - 5 mm in size, similar to that of rice grains.

Where a recall is required from consumers, the Regulations do not specify how the information is to be provided. Where a single product is concerned with a low risk to health, ‘point of sale’ notices placed in stores can be sufficient, but where there is wider distribution or a greater number of products involved, paid advertisements in the national press is a more appropriate means of informing the public. In some circumstances, a press release should also be used in addition to public notices. Details of what to include in these notices is provided in the FSAI Guidance Note No. 10: *Product Recall and Traceability*.

While each food business operator has the same obligations under the Regulations, the FSAI recommends that where a number of different products are involved from different retailers, public communications about a recall are coordinated with the manufacturer to ensure that a clear, easily understood message regarding the incident is conveyed to consumers.

“The FSAI issued a Food Alert for information”

In this incident, all of the retailers provided public notices in store at the point of sale, in addition to press notices. As the recall was widespread, the FSAI issued a Food Alert for information summarising the Irish products affected and this was published on the FSAI website. As the rice was supplied to Ireland from France and the final product was exported to the UK, the FSAI also initiated a Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notification to the European Commission with all the details of the incident.

The scale of the incident shows that, despite stringent quality control measures and supplier checks being carried out, serious problems can still occur. Longer supply chains increase this likelihood and the need for robust traceability information, and withdrawal and recall plans is even greater. Such traceability and recall arrangements have been legal requirements since 2006 and, in addition to protecting consumers, can greatly limit the impact that a food recall has on a food business.

Further Reading:

FSAI Code of Practice No. 5:
Food Incidents and Food Alerts

FSAI Guidance Note No. 10:
Product recall and Traceability

European Commission Guidance on the Implementation of Articles 11, 12, 16-20 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002

All available on www.fsai.ie, or by calling our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77.





fsai recalls contaminated fresh produce

The FSAI has recently recalled fresh produce from the market due to contamination with Salmonella, which presents a risk to consumers' health. This is the first time that the FSAI has issued a recall on ready-to-eat salad products, due to the presence of a pathogen.

Globally, we are seeing an increase in the numbers of outbreaks of food-borne illness associated with fresh produce, in particular ready-to-eat fruit and vegetables. Sales of ready-to-eat fresh produce are increasing in Ireland, as less time is spent on meal preparation. These outbreaks are most likely due to contamination in the field, washing

ready-to-eat fresh produce with contaminated water, or poor hygiene during preparation. The products involved in the recent FSAI recall were grown in the United States, shipped to the UK and then exported to Ireland.

Other food poisoning outbreaks have been caused by the presence of viruses, bacteria and parasites in fresh produce. An outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 food poisoning, associated with fresh spinach, occurred in the United States in September 2006. During that outbreak, 204 cases of illness due to *E. coli* O157:H7 infection were reported, including 104 hospitalisations and three deaths.

Such outbreaks emphasise the need for good traceability and recall procedures in food businesses, to facilitate the rapid identification of affected batches. A guidance note on recall and traceability has been developed by the FSAI, as well as a code of practice for food safety in the fresh produce supply chain in Ireland.

Further information and details of the batches of ready-to-eat salads recalled, as well as copies of the code of practice and guidance note are available on the FSAI website (www.fsai.ie) and also available by calling our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77.

small meat manufacturing establishments come up to the mark

At a recent award ceremony in County Hall, Galway, 11 small meat manufacturing establishments (SMMEs) in the Galway County and City areas were officially presented with their EC approval numbers by Councillor Micheal Mullins, County Mayor.

In January 2006, new legislation entered into force regarding the hygiene rules for food of animal origin, which requires food business operators, who predominantly wholesale, to undergo an approval procedure.

EC approved establishments operate at the highest standard and may export their products throughout the EU.

Micheál O'Mahony, FSAI stated that the eleven SMMEs involved, had shown a "willingness to stand up to the mark and to move with the times". Galway County Council organised the ceremony to acknowledge the commitment of the establishments to producing safe food and their achievement in reaching approval standard.

These SMMEs are an example to other small establishments, that approval under Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 on specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin is achievable, desirable and beneficial.

Pictured at the award ceremony are:
back row (l-r) John Tormey, Tormey Meats, Bob Russell, Russell Meats, James McGeogh, McGeogh's Connemara Fine Foods, Kenneth Heaney, Heaney Meats, John Coyle, Galway Fine Meats, Olivia Downey, Moycullen Meats, Tony Fahy, Tony Fahy Wholesale Meats, Claire Ryan, Mill Meats, Gerry Meehan, Loughnane Meat Products, Pascal Keane, Keane Quality Meats, Enda Collieran, Collieran Butchers Ltd.

Front Row (l-r) Rita Gately, Galway County Veterinary Officer, Michael Mullins, County Mayor, Jim Cullen, Director of Services, Environment Department, Galway County Council, Micheál O'Mahony, Chief Specialist, Veterinary Public Health, FSAI



sampling plan: national microbiological surveillance programme 2007

The sampling plan for the 2007 national microbiological surveillance programme is outlined in Table 1. The topics were agreed following consultation with environmental health officers (EHOs) and the official food microbiology laboratories (OFMLs) of the Health Service Executive. Sampling for each survey will be undertaken by EHOs and all samples will be analysed in the OFMLs.

Microbiological quality of ice for cooling drinks

The microbiological quality of ice depends both on the microbiological status of the water used in its manufacture and the hygiene practices employed during its production, handling and storage. Specific requirements are laid down in European legislation for ice [1], that is, ice which comes in contact with food must be made from potable water and must be made, handled and stored under conditions which protect it from contamination.

An Irish survey, undertaken as part of the 2002 national microbiological surveillance programme, detected *E. coli* in 5.0% (n=29) and coliforms in 29.5% (n=171) of ice samples (n=580) used to cool drinks [2]. This follow-on survey will determine if the microbiological quality of ice has improved since 2002.

This survey will also determine the need for specific national microbiological guidelines for ice. Currently, the microbiological quality

of ice is assessed using the microbiological criteria specified in the drinking water legislation [3], as microbiological criteria for ice are not specified in European legislation and national microbiological guidelines do not exist.

Microbiological safety of unpasteurised fruit and vegetable juices (including smoothies)

In 2002, a national microbiological survey, undertaken as part of the EU coordinated programme, investigated (among other things) the microbiological safety of unpasteurised fruit and vegetables juices [4]. The results from that survey were very encouraging, as all juice samples were satisfactory for *Salmonella* spp., *E. coli* O157 and *L. monocytogenes*; however, only 67 juices were sampled. Since 2002, significant growth has occurred in the juice market and juice bars (producing both juices and smoothies) are now commonplace in both urban and rural areas.

This survey will provide up-to-date information on the microbiological status of both unpasteurised juices and smoothies. It will be more extensive than the 2002 survey, thus reflecting the significance of these products at retail level. In addition, it will assess compliance with the food safety criteria specified in Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 [5] for these products.

Microbiological safety and quality of bottled water

The legislation governing bottled waters lays down microbiological criteria for this commodity. Bottled waters include natural mineral waters, spring waters and other waters which are supplied in a bottle or container, other than waters which are medicinal products.

The aim of this study is to investigate compliance of bottled waters available on the Irish market with the microbiological criteria set down in legislation.

1. Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs. www.fsai.ie/legislation/food/eu_docs/Food_hygiene/Reg852_2004.pdf
2. Report of 1st Quarter National Microbiological Survey 2002: Microbiological quality of Ice for Cooling Drinks. www.fsai.ie/surveillance/food_safety/microbiological/ice_cooling_drinks.pdf
3. S.I. 439 of 2000. European Communities (Drinking water) Regulations, 2000. www.fsai.ie/legislation/food/eu_docs/Water/SI439_2000.pdf
4. Report of 4th Quarter National Microbiological Survey 2002. www.fsai.ie/surveillance/food_safety/microbiological/4thQuarter2.pdf
5. Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs www.fsai.ie/legislation/food/eu_docs/Food_hygiene/Reg2073_2005.pdf

Table 1: Sampling plan for the national microbiological surveillance programme, 2007

Topic	Period	Microbiological parameters
Microbiological quality of ice for cooling drinks	January - April 2007	<i>Escherichia coli</i> Enterococci Coliforms
Microbiological safety of unpasteurised fruit and vegetable juices (including smoothies)	May - August 2007	<i>Salmonella</i> spp. <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> <i>Escherichia coli</i> O157
Microbiological safety and quality of bottled water	September - December 2007	<i>Escherichia coli</i> Coliforms Faecal streptococci <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> Sulphite reducing anaerobes Enterococci Colony count (22 & 37°C)

legislation update

Ireland's food code is considerable in volume and ever evolving, but most, if not all, of our national food legislation, derives from Ireland's membership of the European Union. With this in mind, this new section of the newsletter will contain general information and updates on food safety legislation recently published or currently being discussed at European level.

Recently published

Food contaminants

Commission Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 of 19 December 2006 setting maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs

This Regulation will replace the existing legislation i.e. Commission Regulation (EC) No 466/2001, and will apply from 1st March 2007. The existing legislation has been amended substantially many times. The new Regulation amends the maximum levels for certain contaminants to take into account new information and developments in Codex Alimentarius. It also clarifies some of the text in Regulation (EC) No 466/2001.

Health and nutrition claims on food

The much awaited Regulation on nutrition and health claims made on foods was published in December 2006. However, due to an error in the European publications' office, an incorrect version was initially published in the Official Journal of the European Union. The correct text was issued on 18th January 2007 in *Corrigendum (OJ L12, p3, 18/01/2007) to Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 (OJ L404, p9, 30/12/2006)* of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods.

This Regulation harmonises the provisions laid down by law which relate to nutrition and health claims made on food. It covers nutrition claims (e.g. "low fat") and health claims (i.e. claims of a positive relationship between a specific food and improved health). It sets rules for making such claims and also allows health claims (including "reduction of disease risk" claims) that were previously prohibited. In the interest of consumer protection, it also includes certain restrictions. A fuller article on the contents of the Regulation can be found in *fsainews* Volume 8, Issue 5 (September/October 2006).

Addition of vitamins and minerals to foods/food fortification

Regulation (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the addition of vitamins and minerals and of certain other substances to foods was published on 30th December 2006 in the Official Journal.

This Regulation lays down common EU rules on the addition of vitamins, minerals and other substances to foods. Certain foods such as food supplements, or those intended to meet special nutritional requirements e.g. foods for infants and young children, foods for special medical purposes, are excluded from the scope of the Regulation. The Regulation also prohibits the addition of vitamins and minerals to certain foods, such as unprocessed foodstuffs e.g. fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry and fish.

Only vitamins and/or minerals listed in Annex I, in the forms listed in Annex II of the Regulation may be added to foods. However, a transitional period has been included in which vitamins and minerals, not on the EU list, may remain on the market, provided they meet specific requirements.

Minimum and maximum levels for the addition of different nutrients to food will also be established based on scientific advice.

This new Regulation will apply from 1st July 2007. Foods placed on the market or labelled prior to 1st July 2007, which do not comply with the Regulation may be marketed until their expiry date, but not later than 31st December 2009.

Materials and articles intended to come into contact with food

Commission Regulation (EC) No 2023/2006 of 22 December 2006 on good manufacturing practice for materials and articles intended to come into contact with food, was published in the Official Journal on 29th December 2006.

This Regulation lays down the rules on good manufacturing practice (GMP) for the groups of materials and articles intended to come into contact with food listed in Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 and combinations of those materials and articles or recycled materials and articles used in those materials and articles.

Currently being discussed

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the definition, designation, presentation, and labelling of spirit drinks:

This draft proposal lays down the principal definition and classification of spirit drinks and it deals with particularities of description, presentation and labelling of spirit drinks.

EU package of proposals for new legislation on food additives, flavourings and enzymes (food improvement agents package):

Additives

The current legislation governing food additives consists of four Directives i.e. Framework and three specific Directives. The Framework Directive 89/107/EEC lays down the general principles for authorisation of food additives in the European Union, and is complemented by Directives 94/35/EC on sweeteners for use in foodstuffs, 94/36/EC on colours for use in foodstuffs and 95/2/EC on food additives other than colours and sweeteners. This new proposal will repeal these Directives and related Decisions and will, in their place, create a Regulation which brings together all additive legislation into one single instrument.

Flavourings

General rules for flavourings, labelling requirements and maximum levels for substances present in flavourings are currently laid down in Directive 88/388/EEC. The proposed Regulation aims to update the legislation governing food flavourings to reflect technological and scientific developments.

Enzymes

The legislation controlling the use of enzymes in food processing is not fully harmonised in the EU. Currently, enzymes used in food processing are considered to be either food additives or processing aids. The proposed Regulation will apply to enzymes used for a technological purpose in the manufacture, processing, preparation, treatment, packaging, transport or storage of food, including those used as processing aids.

the fsai advice-line

The mission of the FSAI is to protect consumers' health and consumers' interests by ensuring that food consumed, distributed, marketed or produced in the State meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene. In order to help fulfil this mission, the FSAI advice-line was set up in 1998. The advice-line is an important resource for our customers for obtaining up-to-date information on a wide range of food safety issues.

The advice-line operates Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and is manned by trained advice-line assistants and qualified food scientists. Queries are received from a wide range of customers including consumers, retailers, caterers, food manufacturers and processors, researchers, students and personnel from our official agencies and Government departments. There are various ways of contacting the staff of the advice-line including our lo-call number 1890 33 66 77, by email to info@fsai.ie or by personally calling in to our offices. Whatever means of communication is used, our staff will always endeavour to answer your queries as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

The FSAI advice-line deals with a huge range of queries. When a query is received, it is

either answered straight away, if possible, or if the information is not readily available the requester will receive a response within five working days. If the advice-line staff do not have the information being requested, the query is passed on to one of the many in-house specialists, depending on the nature of the query. The FSAI has specialists in many areas including agriculture, biotechnology, environmental health, food science, GM and novel foods, marine, nutrition, public health, toxicology and veterinary public health.

The most popular queries to the advice-line are requests for FSAI publications, food complaints from consumers, questions on food labelling, information on starting a food business and queries about food standards and legislation. Figure 1 shows the top ten requests to the advice-line in 2006.

As part of the FSAI's mission to protect consumers' health, the advice-line acts as a starting point for consumers who wish to make a complaint about a food premises or a food that they have purchased. All food complaints are investigated by the relevant enforcement officers who work under service contract to the FSAI. When a complaint is made to the advice-line, the complainant is given the relevant contact details for the enforcement officer for the area concerned. The complainant can then speak first hand to the officer, who will investigate the complaint. This process is confidential and the enforcement officer will not use the name of the complainant during the course of the investigation.

The types of complaints received generally concern poor hygiene standards, suspected food poisoning and food which is unfit for human consumption, often due to the presence of a foreign object, for example, an insect or a piece of glass. The FSAI encourages consumers to make complaints if they are concerned about a premises or a food so that investigations can be carried out and problems rectified.

The staff of the advice-line also provide a vital link to the general public during a food alert i.e. a food recall or withdrawal. Consumers can ring our lo-call number and gain access to information regarding the exact nature of the alert and the

food products involved. Our staff can also provide reassurance and advice to consumers on the dangers, or lack thereof, involved in a particular alert and any actions they should take.

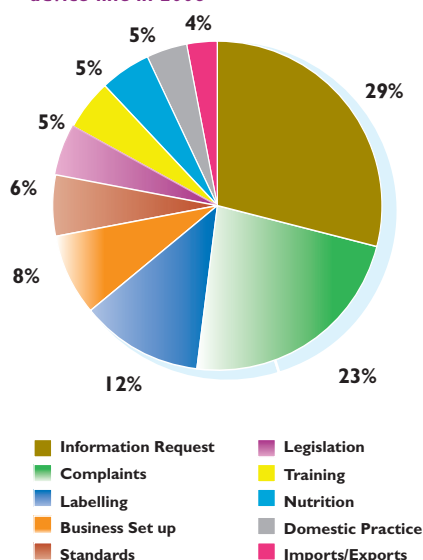
The FSAI constantly strives to better the service provided to our customers. To this end, we recently published a customer charter in which we make the following promises to our customers:

We will

- deal with our customers in a prompt and efficient manner and to the best of our ability,
- be polite, friendly and fair in our dealings with you,
- provide clear and accurate information,
- consult with our customers on a regular basis in order to evaluate our services.

It is important to us that in order to provide a service which meets the requirements of our customers and helps to fulfil our mission, that we receive feedback from our customers on a regular basis. We carry out evaluations of our advice-line service from time to time but we also appreciate any feedback that you may have. We can be contacted by any of the means listed above. A copy of our Customer Charter is available on our website (www.fsai.ie) or a hard copy can be obtained by calling our advice-line on lo-call 1890 33 66 77.

Figure 1: Top ten requests to the FSAI advice-line in 2006



fsai website survey

The FSAI website is another resource for food safety information. It allows the FSAI to promptly disseminate information and address issues of concern in real time. Visitors to the site include researchers,

scientists, staff in the food industry, consumers, media and service contract personnel. The FSAI is currently undertaking a website survey to assess stakeholder satisfaction with the website. The survey will

be on the website for a period of four weeks in the first and third quarters of 2007. Please use the survey as a means of providing feedback on the FSAI website (www.fsai.ie).



food safety information centre

The Food Safety Information Centre, located at our offices on Lower Abbey Street, is a valuable information resource. The centre contains a wide range of books, journals, videos and online databases related to food safety. Other facilities available include photocopying, printing and public access PCs, providing access to the electronic resources and the internet. The centre is open to staff from Government agencies, the food industry, researchers and the general

public from 9am - 5pm weekdays preferably by appointment to ensure that appropriate assistance is provided and that the information is available on visiting. The library catalogue is now available on our website so you can find out if we have resources available on a particular topic before you visit. A visit can be arranged by calling our librarian, on 01 8171300 or by emailing library@fsai.ie.

african regional training course on codex

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) was created in 1962 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). CAC sets food standards, the main objective of which are to protect consumers' health and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. Currently, it has 172 member countries, but it recognised that developing countries and countries with economies in transition are not participating fully in the work of Codex, or in the setting of food safety standards. The main reason for this is budgetary constraints at national level. In February 2003, the Codex Trust Fund (CTF) was launched to assist these countries to participate fully in Codex. The trust fund seeks to assist countries in initiating a programme of support in Codex. Funding is provided based on set criteria, including a provision that countries to which assistance is provided must make a contribution, on a sliding scale and eventually fund their own continuing participation. The fund depends on voluntary donations. Ireland has contributed generously to the fund and also provided assistance in the form of expertise.

Apart from direct assistance to delegates to attend Codex meetings, the CTF also organises training courses. For example, the Codex Co-ordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA) was held in Rabat, Morocco from 23-26th January 2007. CTF organised a training course on Codex for delegates in the preceding three days to CCAFRICA. Raymond Ellard from the FSai participated as a speaker/trainer. The course was designed to educate delegates about Codex and its work, as well as to help prepare them to take an active part in meetings. The course was also designed to assist in promoting greater awareness of Codex in their home countries and in some cases to promote the establishment of National Codex Committees.

Further information on the Codex Trust fund is available at: www.who.int/foodsafety/codex/trustfund/en/

Pictured are the delegates, trainers and speakers who participated in the training course in Morocco.



symposium on international seafood trade

Pictured on a visit to a mussel farm in the Island Fjord in Iceland are Alan Reilly, Deputy Chief Executive, FSai, Dr Eyjolfur Gudmundsson, Dean, Faculty of Business and Science, University of Akureyri and Dr Grimur Valdimarsson, Director, Fish Products and Industry Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The visit took place during the Symposium on International Seafood Trade: Challenges and Opportunities. The symposium was organised by the University of Akureyri, in cooperation with the Ministries of Fisheries and Foreign Affairs, Iceland, the FAO and the United Nations Fisheries Training Programme. Alan Reilly presented a paper on new EU Regulations on seafoods.



hse microbiology surveillance 2005

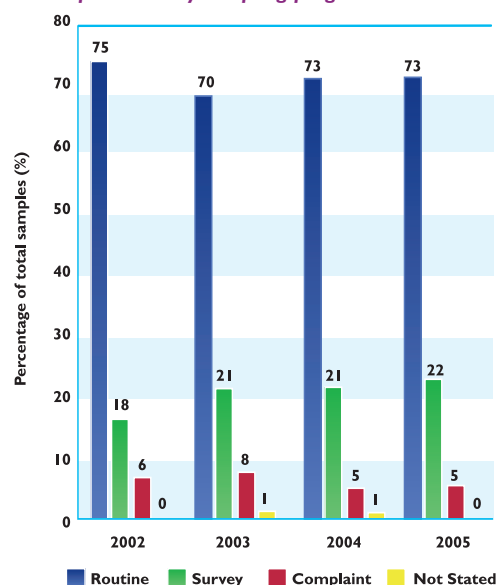
Under the official food control programme, food samples taken for microbiological analysis at Health Service Executive (HSE) supervised premises are submitted for analyses to one of seven official food microbiology laboratories (OFMLs). Food samples are analysed for a wide range of food-borne bacteria. Remedial action for samples with an unsatisfactory outcome is taken by environmental health officers. These actions can range from follow-up investigations, to taking of further samples, or an inspection of the premises to identify possible hygiene deficiencies.

Sample and analysis details

In 2005, 14,320 food samples were sampled and analysed for a total of 92,812 tests. This represented a 4% increase in sampling since 2004 (Figure 1). The majority of samples (73%) were taken under the routine sampling programme. Surveys (including both the FSAI coordinated national programme and local surveys, particular to HSE regions) accounted for 22% of samples, while 5% of samples were taken as part of complaint investigations. These figures compare similarly with previous years (Figure 1). Also similar to 2004, the majority of foods sampled (97%) were ready-to-eat.

The remainder of this article presents the results of the routine and complaint samples. The results of the surveys conducted have been presented in previous issues of *fsainews*.

Figure 1: Samples analysed at official food microbiology laboratories (2002-2005) presented by sampling programme



Using a European Commission classification system, food samples taken under the official food control programme are classified using 21 different food categories. Overall, as with previous years 'meat and meat products, game and poultry' and 'prepared dishes' were the most highly sampled food categories (Table 1). This pattern was observed in both routine and complaint samples.

Routine and complaint sample results

Test results of ready-to-eat food samples were classified as 'satisfactory', 'acceptable', 'unsatisfactory' and 'unacceptable/potentially

hazardous' based on criteria specified in FSAI Guidance Note No. 3: *Guidelines for the interpretation of results of microbiological analysis of some ready-to-eat foods sampled at point of sale*. In 2005, a total of 53,934 test results for routine samples and 3,834 test results for complaint samples were classified. The percentage of results classified as unsatisfactory and unacceptable/potentially hazardous for complaint samples, 2.0% and 0.1% respectively was, as expected, slightly higher than for routine samples, 1.3% and 0.0 % respectively. More details on these results by organism are given in Table 2 and further discussed below.

Table 1: Comparison of EU categories for routine and complaint samples analysed in official food microbiology laboratories, 2005

EU category code	EU category	Percentage of samples	
		Routine	Complaint
1	Dairy products	7.9	5.4
2	Egg and egg products	6.2	3.7
3	Meat and meat products, game and poultry	34.6	43.2
4	Fish, shellfish and molluscs	4.3	8.0
5	Fats and oils	0.0	0.0
6	Soups, broths and sauces	4.0	8.0
7	Cereals and bakery products	4.3	6.5
8	Fruit and vegetables	3.5	7.7
9	Herbs and spices	0.1	1.4
10	Non-alcoholic beverages	1.4	0.7
11	Wine	0.0	0.0
12	Alcoholic beverages (other than wine)	0.0	0.0
13	Ices and desserts	1.7	0.9
14	Cocoa and cocoa preparations (coffee and tea)	0.0	0.0
15	Confectionery	0.7	0.5
16	Nuts and nut products, snacks	0.3	0.4
17	Prepared dishes	30.0	11.9
18	Foodstuffs Intended for special nutritional uses	0.3	1.5
19	Additives	0.0	0.0
20	Materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs	0.0	0.0
21	Others	0.7	0.3

Table 2 Classification of microbiological test results by organism, 2005*

Organism	Indicator/ Pathogen	Total test results categorised using RTE guidelines	Microbiological status**			
			Satisfactory (%)	Acceptable (%)	Unsatisfactory (%)	Unacceptable/ potentially hazardous (%)
<i>Enterobacteriaceae</i>	Indicator	5,512	70.14	20.41	9.45	N/A
<i>Escherichia coli</i> (total)	Indicator	9,396	96.50	1.99	1.51	N/A
<i>Salmonella</i> spp.	Pathogen	9,404	99.95	N/A	N/A	0.05
<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	Pathogen	1,518	100.00	N/A	N/A	0.00
<i>Escherichia coli</i> O157 & other VTEC	Pathogen	115	100.00	N/A	N/A	0.00
<i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i>	Pathogen	9	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Pathogen	8,944	99.78	0.13	0.06	0.03
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Pathogen	9,519	98.30	1.06	0.61	0.03
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	Pathogen	7,906	99.39	0.43	0.18	0.00
<i>Bacillus cereus</i> & other pathogenic <i>Bacillus</i> spp.	Pathogen	5,445	98.70	0.62	0.50	0.18
Total		57,768	96.05	2.58	1.33	0.04

* Ready-to-eat routine and complaint samples only. Does not include survey samples.

** Microbiological status based on ready-to-eat guidelines (FSAI Guidance Note No. 3)

N/A: Not applicable

Indicator organisms

Analysis of ready-to-eat foods for indicator organisms (*Enterobacteriaceae* and *E. coli*) was undertaken to highlight/indicate potential problems such as the possible presence of pathogens, poor hygiene practices and poor process control. While only 1.5% of samples tested for *E. coli* were classified as unsatisfactory, 9.6% of samples tested for *Enterobacteriaceae* were unsatisfactory.

Pathogens

All ready-to-eat food samples tested for *Campylobacter* spp. (1,549), *E. coli* O157 (117) and *V. parahaemolyticus* (9) were found to be satisfactory (i.e. no pathogen was detected). This finding is particularly interesting in relation to *Campylobacter* spp., as this pathogen is the most common cause of bacterial gastroenteritis in Ireland. A similar finding was observed during routine analysis in previous years and in targeted microbiological surveillance work on refrigerated cooked chicken pieces in 2001. These results suggest that ready-to-eat foods are not a primary source of *Campylobacter* spp.

Salmonella spp. is the second most common cause of bacterial gastroenteritis in Ireland.

There are over 2,500 known *salmonella* serovars however, two serovars *S. Enteritidis* and *S. Typhimurium* account for the majority of cases of salmonellosis. These serovars were not isolated from ready-to-eat foods in 2005. However, five ready-to-eat food samples and one raw meat sample were found to be positive. The serovars and details of the samples from which these were isolated are presented in Table 3.

Additionally, in 2005, pathogenic *Bacillus* species were found at unacceptable levels in ten ready-to-eat foods; *Listeria monocytogenes* was found at unacceptable levels in three ready-to-eat foods and *Staphylococcus aureus* was found at unacceptable levels in three ready-to-eat foods.

Overall, the 2005 surveillance results indicated a high microbiological quality in the majority of foods sampled. This was similar to the findings in 2004.

Table 3: *Salmonella* serovars isolated from foods analysed at official food microbiology laboratories in 2005

EU food category	Sample description	Sampling programme	Serotype isolated
Meat and meat products, game and poultry	Uncooked chicken fillet	Routine	<i>S. Mbandaka</i>
Prepared dishes	Coleslaw	Routine	<i>S. Agona</i>
Fruit and vegetables	Dried mushroom	Complaint	<i>S. Stanley</i>
Fruit and vegetables	Dried leaf	Complaint	<i>S. Regent</i>
Fruit and vegetables	Melon seed kernels	Complaint	<i>S. Fresno</i> and <i>S. Fanti</i>
Nuts and nut products, snacks	Ground nut/seed kernels	Complaint	<i>S. Menston</i>



nanotechnology in food production

Nanotechnology can be defined as the design, characterisation, production and applications of structures, devices and systems at the nanometer scale. One nanometer is one thousand millionth of a metre, and by comparison is about 80,000 times smaller than the width of a human hair. There is increasing interest in substances at the nanoscale, because properties of such materials can be very different, with a greatly increased relative surface area which can make them, for example, more chemically reactive. Materials at this scale can also have different optical, electrical or magnetic behaviour.

The commercial application of nanotechnology is currently much more advanced in areas other than food, such as electronics and medicine. However, many possible food applications are at a research stage in academia and industry.

Only a small number have actually been commercialised, mainly in countries outside the EU, although it is anticipated that the worldwide nanotechnology food and packaging market will be worth approximately €15 billion by 2010.

The principle areas where nanotechnology has a potential for use in the food sector are in the encapsulation of food ingredients or flavourings, in emulsion formation, and in food packaging material and sensors.

Nanoencapsulation

Benefits from the use of encapsulation of ingredients in foods include masking of taste and odours; protection of ingredients during processing and digestion; and enhanced bioavailability. For example, encapsulation of fish oils (omega-3-fatty acids) for use as ingredients in breads and other foods can mask the taste and improve shelf-life by reducing oxidation. Encapsulation can also delay digestion and deliver bioactive compounds to target organs, which has a potential for use in functional foods.

The ability of the milk protein, alpha-lactalbumin, to self-assemble into nanotubes could offer the food industry a novel and important ingredient for gelling and encapsulation. Under appropriate conditions, alpha-lactalbumin can be partially hydrolysed using protease enzymes, and when the partially hydrolysed protein is exposed to calcium ions, the formation of a linear nanotube is triggered. These nanotubes have good stability and can withstand pasteurisation conditions (72°C for 40 seconds), as well as a freeze-drying treatment.

Nanoemulsions

The properties of matter change at the nanoscale level and this phenomenon can be exploited in the production of new foods. Fat soluble vitamins, for example Vitamin E, are water soluble at the nanoparticle size. It is possible to add fish oils (omega-3-fatty

acids) to water based drinks if the oils are reduced to nanoparticle level. As nanoparticles are smaller in size than the wavelength of light, they are transparent. This property means that water-based liquids would be clear and not cloudy when nanoparticles are added.

Food packaging material

Nanoparticles are being developed for use in food packaging materials and in food containers. This is an area of great potential for the food industry. Nano-structured metal films and coatings can strengthen plastic wrapping material/bottles allowing hot fill and longer shelf-life for food and drink.

It is recognised that, while offering many potential benefits to manufacturers and consumers, the application of nanotechnology in the food industry may present new challenges in terms of consideration of safety and regulation, to ensure that consumers are fully protected. Risk-benefit analysis needs to be carried out and used to underpin food safety controls and the regulatory framework.

The FSAI's Scientific Committee considered the use of nanotechnology in foods at its meeting on 25th January 2007. The Committee recommended the FSAI consider the establishment of an expert working group to examine in more detail issues surrounding the safe use of nanotechnology in food production.

fao workshop on strengthening food safety in small and less developed businesses

During the revision of the Codex Alimentarius standard on food hygiene, member countries identified a series of obstacles to the application of HACCP, particularly in small and less developed businesses. To address these obstacles, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) developed guidelines on the application of HACCP in small and/or less developed businesses, highlighting potential obstacles and

approaches to overcome them. This workshop on strengthening food safety in small and less developed businesses was convened by the FAO/WHO to pilot test these guidelines and develop practical measures for their application.

The workshop was held in Botswana and was attended by government and food industry representatives from six Southern African countries (Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and Lesotho).

Presentations and interactive working groups were an integral part of this workshop. Good feedback was gained from this workshop and this will be used by the FAO/WHO to develop further tools to support the guidelines.

The FSAI had significant involvement in this project. It contributed both to the preparation of the guidelines and workshop training. The workshop was part funded by the Department of Agriculture and Food.



eu food and veterinary office

programme of inspections 2007

The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission is the body charged with assessing compliance with the requirements of EU food safety and quality, veterinary and plant health legislation within the EU. The FVO also assess compliance with EU import requirements in third countries. It contributes to the development of EU policy in the food safety and quality, veterinary and plant health sectors, and to the development of effective control systems in the food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health sectors, as well as informing stakeholders of the outcomes of its audits and inspections.

FVO audits on compliance with EU food safety requirements are largely done through inspections of Member States and Third Countries, to assess the performance of national competent authorities with regard to compliance with EU food safety legislation.

The inspection programme for January to December 2007 has recently been published. It is anticipated that a total of 272 inspections will be carried out during 2007. Of these, the vast majority, 72%, will be inspections in the food sector. The remainder of inspections will be in animal health (25%), animal welfare (18%), plant health (17%) and general review (16%). Just over half of the inspections will take place in current Member States (56%) which now, including the new members, comprises 27 countries. Of the remainder of inspections, 4% will be in European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, 7% in candidate countries and 33% in other countries.

The programme for Ireland in 2007 includes the following inspections:

General review

These are new types of inspections (or missions) introduced in 2005. During these missions, an overall review of follow-up to previous FVO mission recommendations and a country profile is carried out. A country profile is a description of the structure and functioning of the overall system for controls in a Member State. The general review mission report will form the basis for the country profile for each Member State. The report includes looking at 11 different control systems - animal health, food of animal origin, imports of animals/food of animal origin, feedstuff, TSE/ABP, residues, food hygiene, imports of food of plant origin, pesticides, animal welfare and plant health. The general review missions are complementary to the sector specific missions. These missions have a different approach to sectoral missions in that they involve an assessment of progress made mainly through documentary evidence and do not include on the spot verification. A number of country profile missions have already been completed and the reports have been published on the FVO website. The FVO plans to have a country profile completed for all Member States by the end of 2007. The general review mission to Ireland is scheduled for June 2007.

Animal health

A mission is planned to Ireland to look specifically at the eradication programme for tuberculosis.

A copy of the FVO inspection programme, 2007 can be found at: ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/inspectprog/2007-year_en.pdf. The programme will be updated in June 2007 and may change subject to the emergence of urgent issues.

molluscan shellfish safety conference proceedings published

The proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Molluscan Shellfish Safety (ICMSS), which was co-hosted by the Marine Institute, the National University of Ireland, Galway, An Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and the FSAI, have recently been published.

The conference is the fifth in a series, and was hosted in Ireland for the first time, illustrating the leadership role Ireland now plays internationally in shellfish safety. Over 280 scientists, food safety regulators and industry representatives from over 40 countries around the world attended the conference which included topics on:

- Microbiological status of shellfish
- Shellfish viruses and pathogens
- Harmful algal blooms (HAB) and biotoxin contamination
- HAB mitigation and depuration
- Toxicology of shellfish toxins
- Current and emerging analytical methods
- Quality assurance and consumer safety
- Regulation and management of shellfish safety
- Role of industry in risk management and innovation.

There were a total of 58 oral presentations and 92 poster presentations in a five day programme and the great majority of the contributors also submitted papers for the proceedings. All submitted manuscripts were peer reviewed before inclusion in the book of proceedings. The peer review process ensures the continued improvement in the excellence of the science selected for publication. The FSAI was actively involved in both the scientific and editorial committees. The 6th ICMSS conference will be held in Blenheim, New Zealand later in 2007. A limited number of copies of the conference proceedings are available from the Marine Institute.



fish in the spotlight

The FSAI, in collaboration with the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), has recently published the results of a comprehensive study into the levels of dioxins (PCDDs), furans (PCDFs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and brominated flame retardants (BFRs) in fresh and processed fish products available on the Irish market. These so-called “persistent organic pollutants” or POPs occur as environmental contaminants as a result of emissions from combustion processes or (in the case of the PCBs and BFRs) as a consequence of past or current use in industrial processes and manufacturing. They are highly resistant to degradation and consequently persist in the environment, including the food chain, where they accumulate in fatty tissues of the primary intake species e.g. cattle or fish. In humans, the intake of dioxins from the diet is estimated to be 2-63% from fish and fish products, 6-32% from meat and meat products and 16-39% from milk and dairy products. Overall intake is obviously highly dependent on dietary patterns, but fish represent a potential source in the human diet.

Exposure to dioxins, furans and PCBs is thought to have adverse effects on health, including potential effects on reproductive function, the immune and nervous systems, and the dioxins, at least, are considered to

be cancer-causing. Less is known about the potential health effects of the BFRs, but they are believed to have similar toxicological effects. Human exposure should therefore be reduced as far as possible. As part of its strategy to reduce the health risks due to these POPs in the diet, the EC has introduced maximum levels for PCDDs, PCDFs and dioxin-like PCBs in foodstuffs, via Council Regulation (EC) No. 1881/2006 (EC 2006) which sets maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs. The legislation also imposes an obligation on Ireland and other Member States to monitor the levels of dioxins in foodstuffs such as fish, meat, eggs and dairy products and report results to the European Commission.

A total of 70 fish product samples were collected and analysed for this survey, including farmed and wild Atlantic salmon, smoked farmed salmon and canned salmon, fresh and canned herring, fresh and canned mackerel, fresh and canned tuna, fresh shellfish and canned sardines. The results showed that levels of PCDDs, PCDFs and PCBs in Irish fish and fishery products available on the Irish market were well below existing EC legal limits for these contaminants, as laid down in Regulation 1881/2006. The lowest level was found in a sample of canned tuna (0.012 ng WHO TEQ/kg whole weight), with the highest

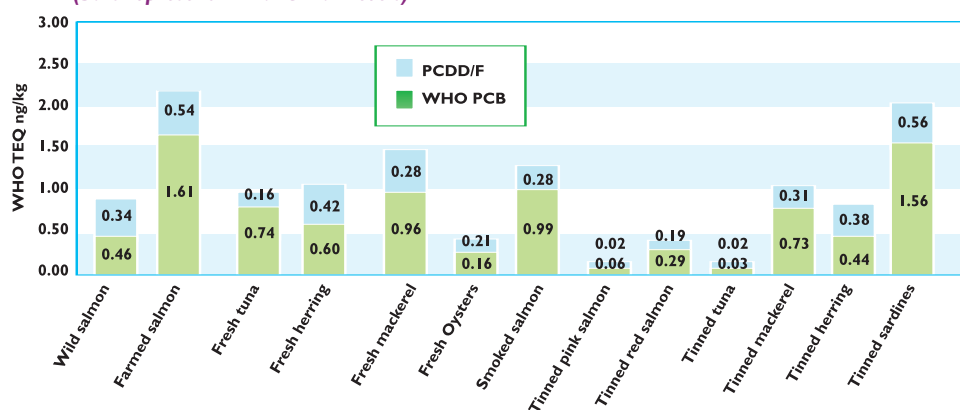
level found in a farmed salmon sample (0.82 ng WHO TEQ/kg whole weight), compared with the maximum level under the legislation of 4 ng WHO TEQ/kg whole weight. Figure 1 shows the mean upper-bound levels found for PCDDs, PCDFs and the dioxin-like PCBs in the fish species analysed.

The study found a reduction in the levels of PCDDs, PCDFs and PCBs detected in farmed salmon in comparison to levels measured in a previous study in 2002. This may in part be attributable to measures adopted by the Irish food industry in the intervening period, such as changes in sources or species of fish oils in fish feed. The study found very low levels of the BFR contaminants and the FSAI concluded that these levels are very unlikely to present a health risk to Irish consumers.

The results of the study are in line with those from previous FSAI studies on dioxin levels in fish in 2002, and also studies on meat, milk, and eggs in 2004, and confirm that dioxin levels in these foods are relatively low compared with data for similar products from more industrialised countries in the European Union. Although fish is a recognised dietary source of dioxins, furans and PCBs, this study shows that the levels of these contaminants are low in Irish fish products. The health benefits of eating fish are well established and in light of these findings, the FSAI considers that consumers should continue to eat two portions of fish a week, including one oily fish, such as salmon. Together with the Marine Institute and BIM, the FSAI will continue to closely monitor the levels of these contaminants in Irish produce in order to protect the health of the Irish consumer.

The report is available on the FSAI website (www.fsai.ie) and by calling our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77.

Figure 1: Mean upper-bound WHO TEQ PCDD/F & dl-PCB ng/kg whole weight in fish species (bars represent min and max levels)



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

S.I. No. 583 of 2006 European Communities (Avian Influenza) (Control on Imports of Avian Products from Romania) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations, 2006

S.I. No. 612 of 2006 European Communities (Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies and Animal By-Products) Regulations, 2006

S.I. No. 676 of 2006 National Beef Assurance Scheme Act, 2000 (Approval) Order, 2006

S.I. No. 699 of 2006 European Communities (Protection Measures in Relation to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza of the Subtype H5N1 in Poultry) (No. 3) Regulations, 2006

S.I. No. 700 of 2006 European Communities (Avian Influenza) (Precautionary Measures) (Amendment) Regulations, 2006

S.I. No. 701 of 2006 European Communities (Control of Avian Influenza) Regulations, 2006

zoonosis report for ireland published

The third zoonosis report for Ireland, compiled by the FSAI, has been published recently and features data on a number of different zoonoses resulting from inspections, sampling and testing carried out throughout the country in 2004.

Zoonoses are diseases and infections that are naturally transmissible from animals to man, through contaminated food and water (e.g. salmonellosis) and also by direct contact with infected insects and animals (e.g. rabies). Data relating to zoonotic agents in humans, animals, food and feed are forwarded to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) each year by all Member States. National zoonosis reports are vital in providing feedback that can be used to assess the effectiveness of regulatory controls.

Important changes to the reporting of infectious diseases in Ireland came into force on 1st January 2004. Zoonoses such as campylobacteriosis, listeriosis, and cryptosporidiosis were added to the list of human diseases that must be notified in Ireland. In addition, it became a requirement for directors of clinical laboratories to notify cases of infectious disease, such as brucellosis. These changes should ensure that future trends are more reliable, resulting in a more accurate reflection of the impact of those diseases on human and animal populations in Ireland.

Campylobacteriosis was the predominant human zoonosis reported in 2004 with an incident rate of 43.7 per 100,000 people, an increase on previous years.

Salmonellosis was the second most common human zoonosis in Ireland in 2004, with an incidence rate of 11 cases per 100,000 people. This included eight outbreaks, the largest of which involved ten individuals who had consumed a dessert in a restaurant. Routine testing of a wide range of foods showed that the majority of the foods contaminated with *Salmonella enterica* were raw poultry and pork meat.

Notable in 2004, was the reduction in notified VTEC infections (61), the first since 2000. The incidence rate for O157 serotype infections decreased from 2.1 cases/100,000 people in 2003 to 1.3 cases/100,000 people in 2004. Detection of VTEC O157 in food samples was low (0.15%), though presence at any level is of concern.

The incidence rates of the major zoonoses continue to peak in the summer months, when outdoor cooking is prevalent and consumption of pre-prepared and chilled foods is more common. Though the disproportionately high rate of zoonotic infections observed in children under five years of age, may be partly due to a reporting bias, the continuing rise in human campylobacter infections remains a cause for concern.

In December 2006, EFSA published the second community report on trends in zoonoses, relating to data collated for 2005. This publication should help Member States to assess, and possibly influence, their own zoonosis control systems by comparison.

Figure 1: Confirmed campylobacteriosis cases per 100,000 people in Ireland between 1999 and 2004

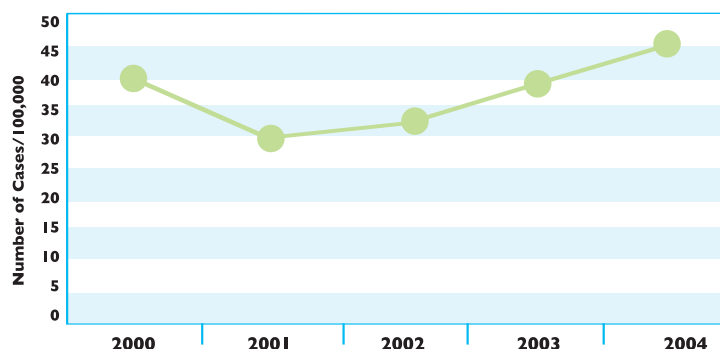


Figure 2: Salmonellosis notifications in Ireland between 1996 and 2004

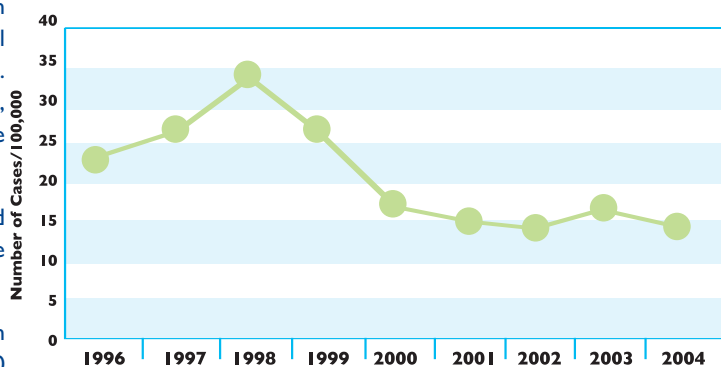
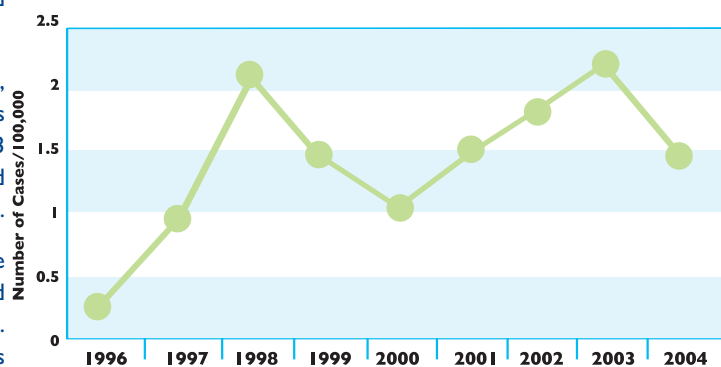


Figure 3: Crude incidence rate of VTEC O157 per 100,000 people in Ireland from 1996 to 2004



The report is available on the FSAI website (www.fsai.ie) and by calling our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77

The EFSA report can be viewed at:
www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring_zoonoses/reports/zoonoses_report_2005.html

2006 enforcement orders

In 2006, enforcement officers working with official agencies under the FSAI service contracts served a total of 37 Enforcement Orders. 73% of these were Closure Orders (27), 19% Improvement Orders (7) and the remaining 8% were Prohibition Orders (3).

The majority of the 27 Closure Orders served were within the service sector (17 Closure Orders). Establishments within the service sector include "all forms of catering, including takeaway food stores and catering facilities in firms, schools, holiday camps and public institutions" (Source: FSAI Code of Practice on the Risk Categorisation of Food Businesses to Determine Priority for Inspection). Furthermore, in 2006, three Closure Orders were served in the manufacturing/packing sector; another three Closure Orders to manufacturers selling direct to the final consumer and four within the retail sector. Six out of the seven Improvement Orders were served within the service sector.

Figure 2 shows that the overall trend in the numbers of enforcement orders served have been decreasing over the past five years, from 69 in 2002, 43 in 2005 and down to 37 in 2006.

The trend exhibited in the data also shows a drop in the average number of enforcements served per month. In 2002, there was an average of six orders served per month. This number decreased to five in 2003 and 2004, four in 2005 and three in 2006.

Figure 3 shows the trend in orders served since 2002. There are some noticeable fluctuations in the numbers of orders served, but 27 Closure Orders were served in both 2005 and 2006.

The numbers of Closure Orders served continues to fluctuate as a percentage of all Enforcements Orders with a notable increase in 2004 (68% from 55% in 2003), a drop in 2005 to 63%, and a ten percent increase again in 2006 (73%). Of particular note, is that for the first time, one of the Closure Orders was served as a result of obstruction where the authorised officer was unable to ascertain whether there was a grave and immediate danger to public health following the serving of an improvement notice. Further to this, the Closure Order was not complied with. A High Court Order was granted ordering an unobstructed inspection to be carried out and all legislative requirements to be complied with.

Figure 1: Orders served by business category, 2006.

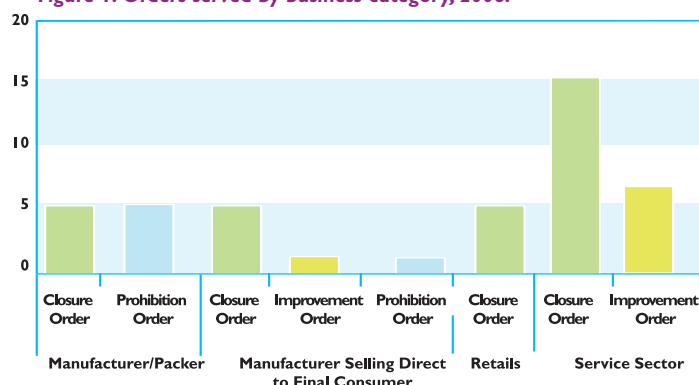


Figure 2: Trend in enforcement orders served

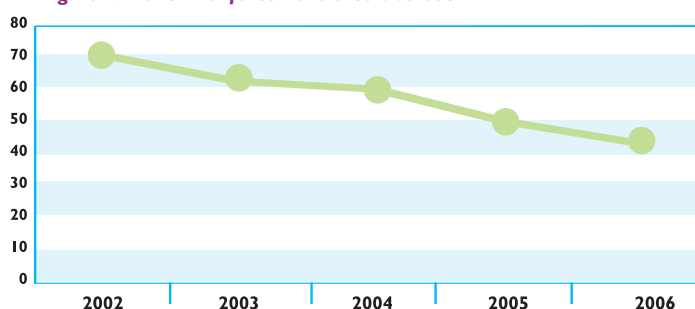


Figure 3: Trend in enforcement orders (2002 to 2006)

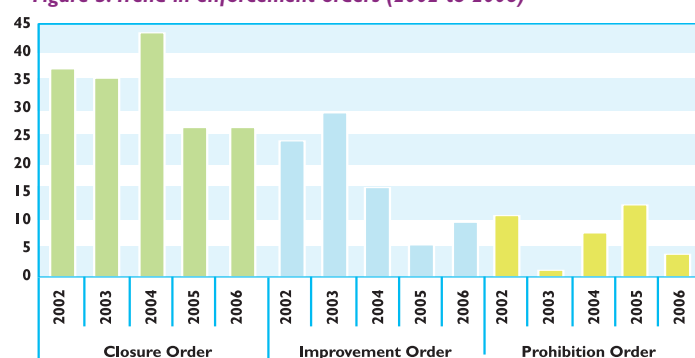
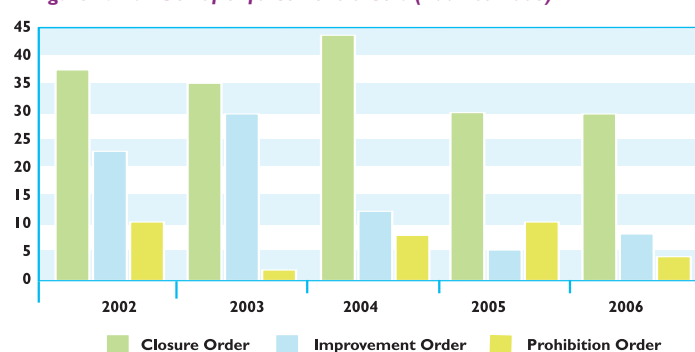


Figure 4: Number of enforcement orders (2002 to 2006)



folic acid food fortification meeting

Pictured at a meeting hosted by the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), Berlin, are 29 participants from 14 EU Member States and Switzerland. The meeting was organised following the recommendation of the Advisory Forum of the European Food Safety Authority to initiate a discussion forum between Member States, to share experiences and concerns associated with the fortification of foods on the European market with folic acid. FSAI participants at the meeting were Dr. Mary Flynn, Chief Specialist, Public Health Nutrition and Mr Alan Reilly, Deputy Chief Executive.





codex alimentarius seminar

dublin, 21st march 2007

The Codex Alimentarius Commission is an inter-governmental body which develops science-based food standards, guidelines and related texts under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. It has two principal objectives - consumer health protection and facilitating fair practices in the food trade. Codex standards, which cover the compositional, hygienic and nutritional quality of all the main foods, are

also formally recognised under World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements. They, therefore, have a very significant influence on both food safety and trade.

This half-day seminar, hosted by the Department of Agriculture & Food (DAF) and the FSAI, aims to provide an insight into the purpose and functioning of the Codex, its relationship with the WTO Agreements,

and its influence on food safety and trade. Speakers will include high level officials from the Codex secretariat, the WTO, the European Commission and national Codex delegates. If you are interested in receiving an invitation to this event, which is intended for key food industry and regulatory personnel, please telephone Olivia Murphy on 01-6072426 or email codex@agriculture.gov.ie

new sea fisheries protection authority

In January 2007, Noel Dempsey T.D., Minister for the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, formally announced the establishment of the new independent statutory Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

The new Sea Fisheries Protection Authority is wholly independent from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and is legally charged with the State's sea fisheries law enforcement functions. The SFPA will enforce the EU Common Fisheries Policy and sea fisheries

law generally, and food safety law relating to fish and fishery products. Under the legislation establishing the SFPA, the Department's roles and responsibilities under its service contract with the FSAI, have been transferred to the SFPA.

A fully representative (14 person) statutory Consultative Committee will be appointed by the Minister to ensure the sector can formally input into the work of the SFPA. A system for dealing with individual complaints and concerns is also to be set up, through the appointment of complaints officers. The SFPA will be fully accountable

to the Joint Oireachtas Committees on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

The headquarters of the SFPA will be located in Clonakilty, in conjunction with the new national marine headquarters, which will be completed in 2008. The FSAI welcomes the setting up of the SFPA and is in the process of having it listed as an official agency.

The SFPA website is www.sfpa.ie and it may be contacted by e-mail at sfpa_info@sfpa.ie or by telephone on 01 6783333.

conflict resolution and the enforcement officer

Enforcement officers may experience conflict and obstruction when undertaking food safety audits and inspections. This may take the form of intimidating or threatening behaviour, bullying or even assault. The need for training in this area was highlighted following a recent High Court case taken by EHOs who were obstructed and prevented from carrying out inspections by a food business operator.

Cross agency meetings are hosted by the FSAI, as an opportunity for staff from all of the official agencies to meet and exchange information and discuss issues of interest.

In an effort to facilitate discussion and enhance skills in conflict resolution, the FSAI made it a focus of the recent cross agency meetings, which were attended by

enforcement officers from all of the official agencies. During these meetings, the reasons behind conflict in enforcement activities, and strategies to diffuse conflict, in difficult and potentially dangerous situations, were examined. Actors were used to perform a number of dramatisations, representing the

type of obstruction and conflict situations which could arise. Actors received feedback from the attendees on how best to avoid situations becoming aggressive and in turn they repeated the dramatisations improvising the suggestions from the audience.



Pictured are attendees at the cross agency training on conflict resolution.



mailing list

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Please return this completed form to:

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

fsai / fetac food safety skills awards ceremony



An awards ceremony for the first recipients of the FSAI's Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) certified two-day Food Safety Training Skills Programme was held on 6th February 2007. The two-day training programme is targeted at those in management, training and supervisory roles within the Irish food sector. The course is designed to equip trainers and managers with the necessary knowledge, skills and training materials to deliver the FSAI's induction training programme *Food Safety & You* to all employees in their food business. The first day of the training programme focuses on the background to training, how adults learn and teaching techniques and styles. The second day focuses on the delivery of the *Food Safety and You* training programme.

The *Food Safety and You* induction programme is designed to cater for all workers in the food industry, and is designed to promote active learning and the application of training in the work environment, with the involvement of the manager or supervisor in the process. The awards were presented by Dr Brian Redahan, FSAI and Ms Ann Devlin, FETAC.

For further information on this programme, please contact training@fsai.ie or 01-8171348.

recent publications

The following publications have recently been produced by the FSAI:

- Guidance Note No. 16 - *Food Stalls (Revision 1)*
- Leaflet - *Food Safety Training*
- *Report on Zoonoses in Ireland 2004*

These publications are available on our website at www.fsai.ie/publications, or by calling our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77.

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