

Ireland Hosts EFSA Gathering

Presidency of the Council of the European Union rotates among Member States every six months. Ireland has that honour for the first half of 2013. It's our seventh time and means an extra busy few months generally for Government and particularly for those civil and public service staff involved in the many aspects of EU work. Food safety is no exception. Two recent meetings of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) were hosted by FSAI, in the splendid surroundings of Dublin Castle and the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham.

EFSA's Advisory Forum (AF) was first to visit. The AF is one of the four separate components which comprise EFSA, the other three being its Management Board, the Executive Director and staff, (now more than 400) and the Scientific Committee and Panels. Each EU Member State has a representative on the AF. Three of the four European Free Trade Association (EFTA) States- Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are also represented, together with some candidate countries such as Croatia, Turkey, Montenegro and FYR Macedonia. The AF is important as it's the only platform EFSA has to interact collectively with the national food safety agencies of the countries it serves. The AF is therefore central to the development of EFSA's work programme and provides a firsthand opportunity to learn about and discuss the food safety issues which challenge frontline staff on a daily basis. It also affords the chance to keep food safety agencies abreast of the work of EFSA, which is essentially concentrated on risk assessment. Risk management is a matter for the Member States and the Commission.

The Dublin meeting of the AF was opened by Simon Coveney, T.D., and Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. His address was timely, given it took place at the height of the horsemeat saga, by then an EU issue. EFSA had a direct role to play, in that it was asked and has since produced a risk assessment on phenylbutazone, a drug commonly administered to horses. Once administered however, the animals are not permitted to enter the food chain.

Member States food safety agencies and EFSA work together to pool resources, to avoid duplication of work and to inform each other on



Pictured at the Advisory Forum meeting are (l-r): Simon Coveney, T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Ms Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Executive Director, EFSA and Prof. Alan Reilly, Chief Executive, FSAI.

activities in the area of risk assessment. This enhanced cooperation on risk assessment supports the EU and its Member States in taking coordinated, effective and timely decisions in the fields of food and feed safety.

The AF plays a practical and central role in strengthening EFSA's cooperation with Member States in order to join forces in addressing European risk assessment and risk communications issues. Members use the AF to advise EFSA on scientific matters, its work programme

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History, Horsemeat and the Home Straight

Over three months have elapsed since the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) uncovered the hidden practice of replacing processed beef with horsemeat. Initial inquiries put the spotlight on three processing plants, two in Ireland and one in the UK. Soon, it became evident that the problem was not confined to these islands as every country in Europe became involved. It is disturbing, that in Europe where, in the wake of food scares, the food control systems have undergone extensive review and renewal, a scandal of large proportions went unnoticed and undetected.

The scale of the scandal is astounding. Numerous foods, beef burgers, beef meals, pies, meat balls, kebabs and remarkably even chicken nuggets were removed from sale. One recall alone in the Netherlands involved 50,000 tonnes of meat. Leading international food brands and retailers were caught in a web of deception that was perpetuated in Europe for at least a year and possibly longer. Some businesses have ceased, others lost market share, and consumer confidence eroded. Brands and reputations carefully nurtured over years will take a long time to recover their association with quality and trust. Apart from reputational damage, the scandal resulted in severe economic damage and the regrettable waste of considerable quantities of food.

What is clear is there is very little risk to public health from this incident. All evidence to date suggests that the horsemeat used came from approved abattoirs. All products in Ireland that tested positive for equine- DNA, tested negative for the anti-inflammatory drug phenylbutazone or "bute". Thousands of bute tests on horsemeat were conducted as part of Europe wide testing programme in March, found only 0.51% samples positive. The European Food Safety Authority together with European Medicines Agency reaffirmed that the risks associated with bute were "of low concern to consumers".

Nevertheless the practice of replacing processed beef with horsemeat and failing to inform consumers is unacceptable. The primary motive is profit. Perhaps in a recession, regulatory agencies and the food sector should have been more alert to the potential to exploit price differentials, duping both consumers and business. Fraud is an age old problem in food. It was the reason for Ireland's first major piece of food legislation in 1875 when the Sale of Food & Drugs Act was enacted. Good will come from the current scandal as food control agencies relearn the need to check not just for safety but for fraud. The production and retail trade will be sparked into taking greater responsibility for controls in their supply chains.

Already there are changes coming. Global standards for the trade in beef trim will become more stringent. It will no longer be the industry norm to purchase frozen beef blocks on face value. Laboratory testing for species authenticity will be commonplace. DNA testing of meat products will be standard for major retailers. Verification of the authenticity of meat species will underpin product labelling.

The value of business-to-business assurance schemes will be questioned. Most food companies caught in the horsemeat scandal used registration to private schemes or standards as a basis for trade. Regulatory bodies took such schemes into account when determining risk. No doubt these private schemes and associated standards will be revised to take account of potential fraud.

A sinister aspect of the horsemeat scandal draws its effect on competitiveness. Contracts to supply processed food products are won or lost on price. Where suppliers can undercut competitors by using cheaper raw materials without declaring their true nature, for instance by illegally substituting beef with horsemeat, it unfairly skews

competitiveness. It also results in a race to the bottom in terms of food quality. This aspect should be examined under EU Competition rules.

As happens after every food scare or scandal in Europe, we can anticipate some strengthening of our food laws. It is expected that food regulatory agencies will be required to include checks for food fraud as well as food safety in their control programmes. This will require more sophisticated methods of risk assessment and create demands for improved analytical capability within official laboratories. Penalties or sanctions for those convicted of food fraud will be increased. Horse passport systems will be tightened. Pressure will increase to introduce country of origin labelling of all meats sooner rather than later, given the convoluted and lengthy food chains which became evident during this scandal.

Proactive risk communication and acceptance of responsibility increases public trust and minimises reputational damage

As ever with food incidents, an important lesson is how risk communication minimises damage to reputations and brands. There were interesting contrasts in how food companies responded to the crisis, varying from denial to full acceptance of responsibilities. Good practice dictates that food businesses develop and test a crisis management plan that includes a communication strategy. Our experience is that the more a food company is open and transparent, the less likely it will be accused of cover up or lack of due care. Open communication is best practice. The horsemeat scandal demonstrated again how proactive risk communication and acceptance of responsibility increases public trust and minimises reputational damage.

From FSAI's viewpoint, the horsemeat scandal confirmed our belief in the value of regular policing of the food supply, combined with the use of the modern scientific analytical methods. We were also starkly reminded of the history of food control stretching back to 1875 when food safety and food fraud work went hand in hand. This is a lesson

we must not forget, nor the continuing importance of having an independent food regulator to underpin confidence in the integrity of the Irish food supply.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Reilly".

Alan Reilly
Chief Executive

Ireland hosts EFSA Gathering (Continued)



Members of the Advisory Forum at Dublin Castle

and priorities, and to address emerging risk issues as early as possible. Ireland is represented on the AF by the FSAI.

In this, the 47th meeting of the AF discussions covered matters such as EFSA's Draft Multi-Annual Plan 2014-2016, its work with Member States and the EFSA paper on Whole Genome Sequencing. The latter is sure to be hot topic in the future. Cooperation on pesticides and emerging risks were also up for debate.

EFSA Advisory Forum Communications Working Group

The Advisory Forum meeting was followed by one of its Communications Working Group (AFCWG). Composed of communications experts, working in the communications departments of national food safety agencies in the EU aim to build a more collaborative and informed approach to communicating risks in the food chain. The group is an important means for exchange of information and experiences. The EU with 27 and soon 28 Member States and more than twenty official languages as well as a huge diversity of cultures, communicating food risk poses a real challenge. It is worth remembering that in its first five years EFSA issued more than 450 scientific opinions. Now in its eleventh year, its output is still increasing. Making sense of the science for business, regulators and the public is at time more difficult than the science itself. Then again, it is hard to imagine now how Europe managed when EFSA did not exist.

EFSA cannot hope to tailor every message for the large diversity of cultures and stakeholders within the EU. It has to depend on national agencies to get its messages across in an appropriate way. The AFCWG is a solid basis for strengthening the coherence and co-ordination of communications activities between the national authorities and EFSA. Close involvement and participation of the European Commission also ensures more consistent and clearer messages on food safety, while taking into account the different but complementary roles of risk assessors and risk managers.

For more information visit www.efsa.europa.eu



Members of the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham

FSAI Consults on Allergen Information

Current EU food labelling laws require all packaged food to declare on the packaging the presence of certain food allergens when they are used in the manufacture of that food. From December 2014, the Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 will extend this requirement to foods sold loose (non-prepacked foods) which

include meals provided in restaurants and canteens, food or food ingredients sold without packaging in retail outlets and food packed on the sales premises or at the consumer's request in takeaways, deli counters, supermarkets, butchers or food stalls.

The FSAI is inviting all interested parties to submit their views on how allergen information for non-prepacked foods should be provided. The consultation will remain open until 5pm on Tuesday 4 June 2013. Further details can be found at http://www.fsai.ie/legislation/consultations/consultations_2013.html

Minced Beef and Beef Burgers Should Be Thoroughly Cooked

Consumers and caterers should thoroughly cook minced beef and beef burgers before eating because they may contain harmful bacteria. A recently published FSAI survey reports that *Verotoxigenic E. coli* (VTEC) and *Salmonella* were found in samples of raw minced beef and beef burgers collected from retail shops and catering establishments in Ireland.

This survey, detected:

1. **VTEC** in 2.5% (10/402) of samples tested using a non-serogroup specific PCR test for VTEC
2. ***E. coli* 0157** in 0.2% (2/983) samples tested specifically for *E. coli* 0157, and
3. ***Salmonella* Dublin** in 0.1% (1/983) of the samples tested for *Salmonella*.

Although all the beef tested in this survey was intended to be cooked before eating, the presence of these pathogens could potentially cause human illness, either through undercooking or cross-contamination.



Outbreaks

VTEC and *Salmonella* can cause serious illness in humans, with various reported outbreaks caused by eating raw or undercooked minced beef or beef burgers (see Table 1). A major outbreak of *E. coli* 0157 (the most common strain of VTEC) in the United States of America in 1993 was caused by eating undercooked beef burgers from the 'Jack in the Box' fast-food chain. The cooking time and temperature used by the restaurant was not sufficient to kill *E. coli* 0157 present in the raw meat. More than 700 people fell ill during this outbreak and four children died.

Such outbreaks are not confined to history. In early 2013, the US Centres for Disease Control investigated a Multi State outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium linked to minced beef from one supplier. The source was discovered after a number of people fell ill after eating kibbeh (a raw minced beef dish) at the same restaurant.

Table 1: Outbreaks where eating raw or undercooked minced beef or beef burgers was reported

Food	Pathogen	Number ill	Country	Year
Undercooked beef burgers	<i>E. coli</i> 0157	700 (4 deaths)	United States	1993
Raw minced beef	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium	107 (+51 probable)	United States	1994-95
Steak tartare	<i>E. coli</i> 0157	21 (+11 probable)	The Netherlands	2005
Tasted raw minced beef during its preparation	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium	4	Norway	2005
Steak tartare	<i>E. coli</i> 0157	20	The Netherlands	2008-2009
Undercooked minced beef (still red in centre)	<i>E. coli</i> 0157	13	Denmark	2012
Raw minced beef dish (Kibbeh)	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium	22	United States	2013

Contamination

Cattle carry harmful bacteria in their gastrointestinal tract. These bacteria are also shed in faeces and can be present on the animal hide. Although strict hygiene procedures are used during slaughter, the animal's carcass can – and does – become contaminated with these bacteria. When the carcass is then divided into the various cuts of meat, the contamination is transferred to the outside surfaces of those cuts of meat.



Cook thoroughly

When meat is minced, bacteria that are on the surface of the meat become mixed throughout the mince, and this is why minced meat and beef burgers should be cooked thoroughly, but steaks or whole joints of beef may be eaten rare. Cooking minced beef and beef burgers to a core temperature of 75°C or equivalent (e.g. 70°C for two minutes) is recommended.

Vulnerable people

Some people are more vulnerable to infection by pathogens such as VTEC or *Salmonella* – and also to the more serious consequences of infection by these bacteria. It is strongly advised that the following groups of people only eat minced beef or beef burgers that are thoroughly cooked:

1. Children younger than five years of age
2. Pregnant women
3. People older than 65 years; and
4. People undergoing medical treatments or who have medical conditions which impair their immune system.

Storage temperature

This FSAI survey found that minced beef and beef burgers were stored at temperatures greater than 5°C in some retail or catering establishments. This included three samples in which VTEC were detected. While temperature abuse does not cause minced beef or beef burgers to become contaminated with pathogens, it does increase the risk to health as it may allow the number of pathogens present to increase. In catering and retail establishments, and in the home, raw meat should be stored at a temperature of 5°C or less in order to prevent or slow down the growth of any pathogens that may be present.

Testing for VTEC

The *E. coli* O157 test is the most common test used by laboratories to test food for VTEC. But the O157 test will not pick up any other VTEC that may be present in the food. When some of the samples taken for the FSAI's survey were tested using a broad ranging VTEC test, seven VTEC serogroups were picked up which would have been missed if only the *E. coli* O157 test had been used. These VTEC serogroups were: O6, O8, O130, O145, O149, O166 and an isolate which was O-unidentifiable.

If food business operators or official agencies consider it appropriate to test raw minced beef or beef burgers for VTEC, they should consider testing for a range of serogroups, in particular those most frequently linked to human illness. According to the European Food Safety Authority, these serogroups are: O157; O26, O103, O91, O145 and O111. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) published a standard method for the detection of five of these serogroups in 2012.

Survey recommendations

As *Salmonella* and VTEC were detected in raw minced beef and beef burger samples collected for this survey, the FSAI has made the following recommendations:

1. Raw minced beef and beef burgers should be fully cooked before consumption (to a core temperature of 75°C, or an equivalent time/temperature combination). This is of particular importance for people more vulnerable to infection, e.g. children younger than five years of age; pregnant women; people older than 65 years; and people undergoing treatments or who have medical conditions which impair their immune system.
2. In retail and catering establishments, raw minced beef and beef burgers should be stored or displayed at 5°C or less.
3. If food business operators or enforcement officers consider it appropriate to test raw minced beef or beef burgers for VTEC, consideration should be given to testing for a range of serogroups; in particular O157, O26, O103, O91, O145 and O111, as these serogroups are recognised to cause most cases of human VTEC infection in the EU.

Further reading

- The full survey report is available on the FSAI website at: <http://bit.ly/109tYOj>
- The Prevention of Verotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) Infection: a Shared Responsibility: <http://bit.ly/17StdRf>
- Multistate Outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium Infections Linked to Ground Beef: <http://1.usa.gov/11eP3tf>
- Monitoring of Verotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) and identification of human pathogenic VTEC types: <http://bit.ly/1252YUk>



Fiftieth Anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which was established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) to implement their Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. Since its establishment, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has remained fully committed to protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in food trade, as evidenced by the hundreds of food standards, guidelines, codes and thousands of maximum limits that have been adopted.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission, frequently referred to simply as "Codex", has become the global food standards reference point for consumers, food producers and processors, national food control agencies and the international food trade. It has an influence on the thinking of food producers and processors as well as on the awareness of the end users – the consumers. While Codex standards and related texts are non-mandatory in nature, they have, since 1995, become international benchmarks for food safety under the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). As such, Codex standards have become the benchmarks against which national food measures and regulations are evaluated within the legal parameters of the WTO Agreements.

Membership

Today, there are 185 Member Countries and one Member Organisation (EU), in addition to 219 Codex Observers representing International Governmental Organisations and non-Governmental Organisations, and other United Nations Organisations. In 1963, Ireland became one of the founding Members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. During the last 50 years, Ireland has participated in various Codex Commodity, General Subject and Regional Committees of relevance and played its part in contributing to the development of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice and recommendations.

Irish Codex Contact

Ireland's participation in Codex is coordinated through the Irish Codex Contact Point (CCP) based in the Research & Codex Division of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). Officials from a number of government departments and state agencies such as the FSAI are involved in representing Ireland at Codex sessions reflecting the mix of expertise in, and responsibilities for, the complex range of issues under discussion. DAFM also operates an Irish Codex Advisory Committee (ICAC) that affords the main stakeholders in Ireland an opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the Irish position on all Codex issues.

This year, DAFM launched a new Codex webpage which can be accessed at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/foodsafetyconsumerissues/foodsafetylegislation/codexalimentarius/>. The new webpage contains a facility that allows interested bodies to register to become Irish Codex stakeholders and submit comments on official Codex documents that will assist in the formulation of the Irish position on Codex issues.

Celebration activities

Codex Alimentarius's 50th Anniversary celebration activities are taking place at numerous Codex Committee Sessions this year. An international conference 'Food Safety Risk Analysis – Fifty Years with Codex Alimentarius in European Region' will also take place on the

19-20 September in Putawy, Poland to mark the occasion. The Codex Secretariat will collate information on all Codex 50th Anniversary celebratory events held in member countries to form a special publication at the end of the year. The Irish CCP is available to advise and assist with any events you may be planning in this regard.



Codex and Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

As Ireland currently hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Irish delegations attending Codex meetings have been responsible for coordinating the views of all EU Member States ahead of, and during, the Codex meetings, to ensure the interests of European countries are fully represented. FSAI staff have been involved in the following meetings:

Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS)

The 20th Session of CCFICS was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand from the 18-22 February 2013. The main item for discussion was the Proposed Draft Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems. This document is intended to provide practical guidance to assist national Governments and their competent authorities in the design, development, operation, evaluation and improvement of the national food control system. It highlights the key principles and core elements of an efficient and effective food control system.

A special session was held to mark the 50th anniversary of Codex with a discussion on emerging challenges for food regulators. The United States offered to develop a paper based on the discussion to inform future work of the Committee.

Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA)

In March, the CCFA met in Beijing, China to further consider and develop a global standard for the use of additives (for example colours, sweeteners or emulsifiers) in foods. The aim of the standard is to ensure the use of additives in foods does not pose a risk to consumer health, whilst helping to facilitate the international trade in foods which contain food additives. At this year's meeting of the CCFA, maximum levels for a number of emulsifiers, stabilisers and thickeners in a wide range of foods were considered, along with proposed uses for several sweeteners in foods.

Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF)

At the beginning of April, the CCCF met in Moscow, Russian Federation, to work on the elaboration of a number of standards controlling the presence of a range of contaminants in different food commodities. At this meeting standards were considered, among others, on maximum limits for the presence of the mycotoxin deoxynivalenol (DON) in cereals and cereal-based products, and the current guideline levels for methylmercury in fish were also reviewed.

Training on FSAI Guidance on Risk-Based Food Inspection

The FSAI in conjunction with the HSE organised two HSE Environmental Health Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training days on Guidance Note 1: Guidance for the Health Service Executive on the inspection of food businesses.

The purpose of Guidance Note 1 is to support the development of the HSE inspection programmes by:

- Setting out the process for:
 - risk categorisation of food businesses to determine the frequency of scheduled inspections
 - inspection
 - determining action in the case of non-compliance
 - prioritisation of inspection
- Facilitating the Environmental Health Service (EHS) of the HSE in scheduling official food control inspections and prioritising inspections of food businesses by targeting:
 - food businesses which pose the greatest potential risk to the population should a food safety control failure occur
 - food businesses identified during official control activities as posing a significant or serious risk due to the increased likelihood of food safety failures
 - facilitating a consistent approach within the EHS of the HSE in prioritising and conducting inspections of food businesses aimed at verifying and/or securing compliance by food business operators with relevant food law and/or relevant accepted industry codes of practice/guidance notes.

The training consisted of presentations and workshop sessions to allow for discussion and feedback on the practical aspects relating to the implementation of Guidance Note 1.



Pictured above and below are attendees at the Guidance Note 1 training days



Legislation Update

EU Legislation

New EU legislation on sprouts

Following the large outbreak in France and Germany of Shiga toxin-producing *E. Coli* in May 2011, consumption of sprouts was identified as the most likely origin of the outbreaks.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted a Scientific Opinion in the wake of the outbreak on the risk posed by Shiga toxin-producing *E. Coli* and other pathogenic bacteria in seeds and sprouted seeds. It concluded that the contamination of dry seeds with bacterial pathogens is the most likely initial source of the sprout-associated outbreaks and that due to the high humidity and the favourable temperature during sprouting, bacterial pathogens present on dry seeds can multiply during sprouting and result in a public health risk.

In order to mitigate the identified risks, it was considered necessary to introduce additional requirements for sprouting seeds. This has resulted in a suite of measures in the form of four new Commission Regulations to cover the import,

traceability, microbiological criteria and approval of establishments producing sprouts:

- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 208/2013 on traceability requirements for sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 209/2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 as regards microbiological criteria for sprouts and the sampling rules for poultry carcasses and fresh poultry meat
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 210/2013 on the approval of establishments producing sprouts pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European parliament and of the Council
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 211/2013 on certification requirements for imports into the Union of sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts

Traceability Requirements for sprouts and seeds

Regulation (EU) No 208/2013 of 11 March 2013 on traceability requirements for sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts.

Specific rules for the traceability of sprouts and of seeds intended for the production of sprouts are set out in the above Regulation. Rapid tracing of sprouts and seeds is required in order to limit the public health impact in the case of a food borne outbreak linked to the consumption of sprouts.

In addition to the traceability requirements set out in Article 18 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, this new Regulation places an obligation on food business operators to provide information on the volume or quantity of seeds or sprouts, the date of dispatch, together with a reference identifying the batch and a detailed description of the seeds or sprouts. The Regulation allows for flexibility as regards the format in which food business operators keep

records and transmit the relevant information as part of the traceability requirements.

This Regulation shall not apply to sprouts after they have undergone a treatment which eliminates microbiological hazards, compatible with European Union legislation.

Consignments of seeds intended for the production of sprouts and consignments of sprouts must be accompanied, when imported into the EU, by a certificate as provided in Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 211/2013. These traceability requirements will apply from 1 July 2013

Microbiological Criteria

Regulation (EU) No 209/2013 of 11 March 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 as regards microbiological criteria for sprouts and the sampling rules for poultry carcasses and fresh poultry meat.

Considering the potential major health risk posed by the possible presence of pathogens in sprouts, provisions on additional microbiological criteria have been laid down in this Regulation following the EFSA recommendations.



This Regulation allows for flexibility with regard to the stages of sampling and the type of samples which are to be taken, in order to take into account the diversity of production systems, while maintaining equivalent food safety standards.

Sprouts should be considered to be ready-to-eat food and therefore must comply with the food safety criteria for ready-to-eat food laid down in EU legislation, including the sampling of processing areas and equipment as part of the sampling scheme.

Establishments Producing Sprouts

Regulation (EU) No 210/2013 on the approval of establishments producing sprouts pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

This Regulation places an obligation on food business operators to ensure that establishments producing sprouts are approved by the competent authority in accordance with Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. The Regulation states that competent authority only approve those establishments that comply with the requirements set out in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and in the Annex to this new Regulation.

Imports of Sprouts into the EU

Regulation (EU) No 211/2013 on certification requirements for imports into the Union of sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts

Consignments of sprouts or seeds intended for the production of sprouts imported into the EU and originating in or dispatched from third countries must be accompanied by a certificate in accordance with the model set out

in the Annex to Regulation (EU) No 211/2013, attesting that

- the seeds were produced under conditions which comply with the general hygiene provisions for primary production and associated operations set out in Part A of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and
- the sprouts were produced under conditions which comply with the traceability requirements laid down in Implementing Regulation (EU) No 208/2013,
- the sprouts have been produced in establishments approved in accordance with the requirements laid down in Article 2 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 210/2013 and
- the sprouts respect the microbiological criteria laid down in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005.

The certificate must be drawn up in the official language or languages of the third country of dispatch and the Member State in which the import into the EU takes place, or be accompanied by a certified translation into that language or languages. If the Member State of destination so requests, certificates must also be accompanied by a certified translation into the official language or languages of that Member State. However, a Member State may consent to the use of an official Union language other than its own.

The original of the certificate must accompany the consignment until it reaches its destination as indicated in the certificate. In the case of splitting of the consignment, a copy of the certificate must accompany each part of the consignment.

For a transitional period until 1 July 2013, consignments of sprouts or seeds intended for the production of sprouts originating in or dispatched from third countries may continue to be imported into the EU without the certificate provided for in this new Regulation.

Use of Lactic Acid on Bovine Carcasses

Commission Regulation (EU) No 101/2013 of 4 February 2013 concerning the use of lactic acid to reduce microbiological surface contamination on bovine carcasses

On 14 December 2010, the Commission received an application for approval of the use of lactic acid to reduce surface contamination of bovine carcasses and meat. On 26 July 2011, EFSA adopted a Scientific Opinion on the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of lactic acid for the removal of microbial surface contamination from beef carcasses, cuts and trimmings. In its Opinion, EFSA concludes that the treatments using lactic acid for decontamination are of no safety concern, provided that the substance used complies with EU specifications for food additives.

This Regulation allows food business operators to use lactic acid to reduce microbiological

surface contamination on bovine carcasses or half carcasses or quarters at the level of the slaughterhouse in compliance with the conditions set out in the Annex to this Regulation. The use of lactic acid to reduce microbiological surface contamination on bovine carcasses or half carcasses or quarters must not affect the food business operator's duty to comply with the requirements of EU legislation on food hygiene, as laid down in Regulations (EC) No 852/2004, (EC) No 853/2004 and (EC) No 2073/2005 and should in no way be considered as a substitution for good hygienic slaughtering practices and operating procedures or as an alternative to complying with the requirements of those Regulations. Sampling of carcasses for the purposes of assessing compliance with microbiological criteria within the meaning of Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 must be carried out before the application of lactic acid solutions on the carcasses or half-carcasses or quarters.

Food business operators operating slaughterhouses in which lactic acid solutions are used to reduce microbial surface contamination of entire carcasses or half-carcasses or quarters must inform the food business operator receiving the treated carcasses or half-carcasses or quarters of such use. This information should be documented.

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

S.I. No. 40 of 2013

European Communities (Official Controls on the Import of Food of Non-Animal Origin for Pesticide Residues) (Amendment) Regulations, 2013

S.I. No. 69 of 2013

European Communities (Equine) (Amendment) Regulations, 2013

FSAI hosts delegation from the Saudi Food and Drug Authority

From 11-15 of March seven employees of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) visited Ireland to familiarise themselves with the organisation and implementation of official controls. The group came from a diverse range of disciplines including risk assessment, market controls, nutrition and the quality department. They were particularly interested in the structure of the FSAI ISO 9001 Quality Management System as the SFDA have also implemented and been certified to the requirements of this standard in the last two years.

The group spent the first two days in the FSAI learning about our structures and relationships with official agencies. This was followed by visits to the Meath office of the Health Service Executive, Louth County Council and the Dunmore East office of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority. The purpose of these visits was to see at first hand the structures, management and official control duties carried out by these inspectorates. The group completed their itinerary by visiting the National Standards Authority of Ireland to be briefed on certification activities there. The delegation leader Rashed Abdulrahman Al-Arfaj commented at the closing meeting that he and his colleagues had found the visit very "useful and successful".



Pictured with the delegation from the Saudi Food and Drug Authority are FSAI staff members Marita Porter, Celine Donoghue (far left) and John Coady (far right)

HSE Inspection Service on EuroparlTV

EuroparlTV is the web television of the European Parliament which aims to inform EU citizens about the Parliament's activities. The service includes live streaming of parliamentary sessions and committee meetings, news and debate programmes and educational videos. Subtitles are available for all videos in the 22 official languages of the EU.

In the wake of the horsemeat investigation, EuroparlTV produced a five minute piece titled 'Flushing out the food fraudsters' in which they briefly followed environment health officer, Lisa Fitzpatrick, carrying out an inspection of a food business in the Dublin area. A number of individuals were also interviewed including Mr Raymond Ellard, Director of Consumer Protection with the FSAI. The video can be viewed on the EuroparlTV website at <http://bit.ly/14JL26l>

All-Island State Veterinarians' Scientific Conference

Prof Alan Reilly, FSAI opened the 2013 All Ireland State Veterinarians' Scientific Conference with a topical keynote presentation on the current horsemeat fraud scandal. Professor Reilly's presentation titled "The horsemeat scandal, straight from the horse's mouth" outlined the background to the FSAI's food authenticity sampling programme, which uncovered this extensive international fraud, the ever increasing complexity of the food supply chain and some of the challenges for producers and regulators operating in the food arena.

Another highlight of the conference was a presentation by Prof Temple Grandin the internationally renowned animal welfare and animal behaviour expert who spoke about managing animal welfare in the slaughterhouse, from transport through to stunning.

The conference is the second Island of Ireland collaboration which was attended by veterinarians working in the state veterinary services, North and South. The conference was organised by the Veterinary Officers Association, the Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance and the Local Authority Veterinary Service



Pictured at the 2013 All-Island State Veterinarian's Scientific Conference are (l-r): Professor Alan Reilly, Chief Executive, FSAI; Diarmuid Lynch, President, Veterinary Officers' Association; Dermot McCaughey, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance veterinary branch and Brendan Smyth, Local Authority Veterinary Service

Many people contact our advice-line each month to ask questions on a variety of food safety issues. Some questions get asked time and time again – so in each issue of FSAI NEWS, we feature a Frequently Asked Question. This issue's question is ...

What is the situation regarding illness and food workers?

The Law

Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 sets out the food hygiene rules that apply to all food businesses and includes information on staff working while ill. It states that no person suffering from, or being a carrier of, a disease likely to be transmitted through food, or with infected wounds, skin infections, sores or diarrhoea, is to be permitted to handle food or enter any food handling area in any capacity if there is any likelihood of direct or indirect contamination. Also, anyone who has symptoms of such illnesses or has such wounds/infections, and who is likely to come into contact with food, must report this immediately to the food business operator or person in charge.

Types of illnesses

The following illnesses should be reported to the food business operator or person in charge and staff should be made aware of this obligation:

- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Skin disorders such as boils or infected wounds
- Infection/skin disorders of the face, hands or forearms
- Flu, coughing, infections of the mouth, throat, ears or eyes
- Pus-containing discharges from the eyes, ears, nose or mouth/gums
- Jaundice

Excluding staff from working with food

An individual risk assessment should be carried out in order to determine if a food worker should be excluded from work when ill. However, in the following cases a food handler must not work with food:

- when suffering with gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and/or vomiting), while symptomatic. They should not return to work until 48 hours after symptoms have ceased and stools have returned to normal
- where there has been a diagnosis of Verocytotoxin-producing E.coli (VTEC),

typhoid, paratyphoid and Shigella dysentery, until microbiological stool clearance as been established

- where there has been a diagnosis of Hepatitis A, for seven days following onset of jaundice and/or symptoms
- where infected skin lesions on exposed body parts cannot be adequately covered
- where staff have purulent discharge (pus) from the eye, ear, nose or mouth, until recovered

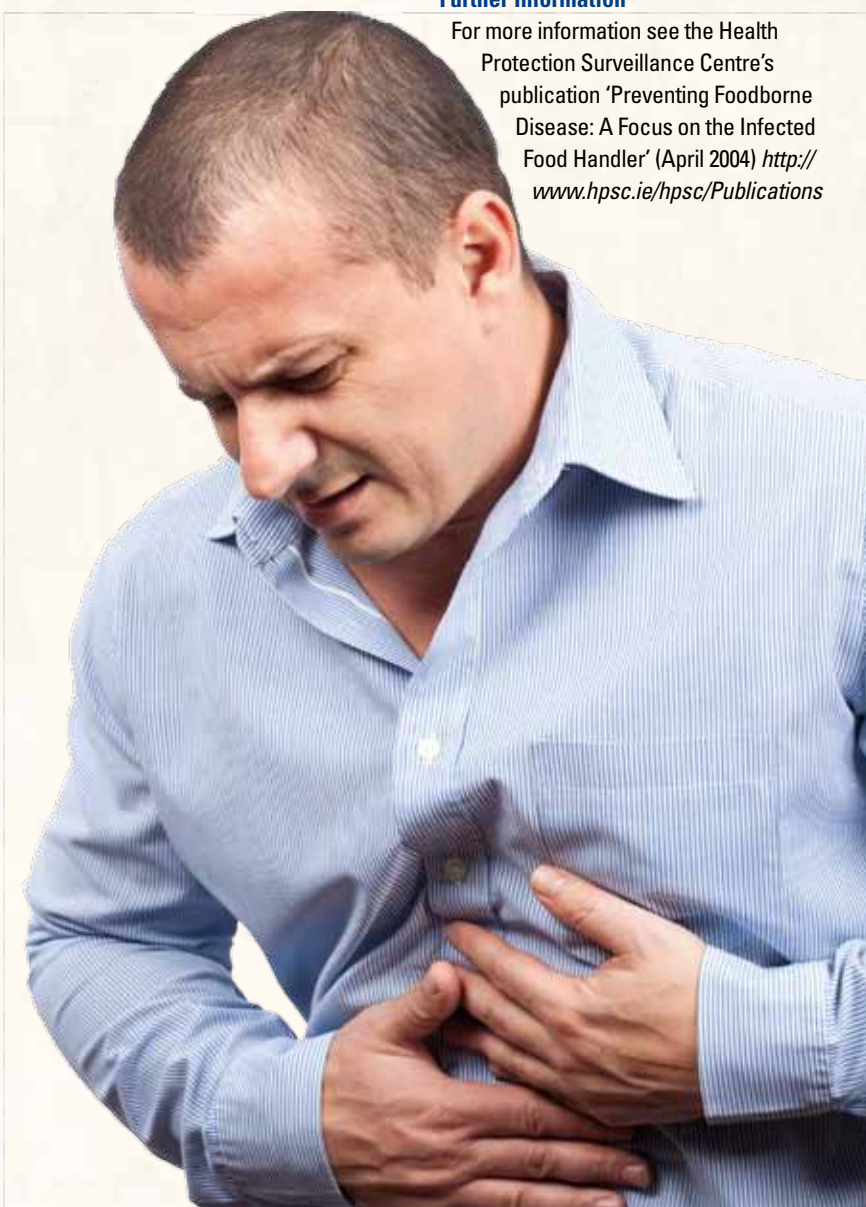
Completion of a medical questionnaire

It is not a legal requirement for new staff members to complete a medical questionnaire, however, it would be considered best practice. Temporary staff should also be asked to complete a questionnaire.

In addition, it is recommended that staff should report any gastrointestinal illness (diarrhoea/vomiting) suffered whilst on holidays, on returning to work.

Further Information

For more information see the Health Protection Surveillance Centre's publication 'Preventing Foodborne Disease: A Focus on the Infected Food Handler' (April 2004) <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/Publications>



Recent Publications

The following publications were recently produced by the FSAI:

- Audit of Official Controls in Food Business Operations Catering for High-risk Population Groups supervised by EHOs in the HSE
- Audit of Official Controls in Food Business Operations Catering for High-risk Population Groups Supervised by EHOs in the HSE Corrective Action Plan



The following leaflets have been revised and updated:

- Organic food
- Irradiated food
- Genetically modified food

These publications are available on our website at: www.fsai.ie/resources_publications.html.



Dates for your Diary:

The FSAI Salt Reduction Programme – Ten Years of Progress

Date: Tuesday, May 28th 2013

Time: 8:30am to 1:00pm

Location: Gibson Hotel, Point Village, Dublin 1

Details: This free half day seminar will discuss the salt reduction programme and the long term goal of reducing the salt intake of the Irish population to 6g a day. To view the full agenda and to register online, see the events section of our website www.fsai.ie/events

'Breakfast Bites'

Date: Thursday, May 16th 2013

Time: 8am

Location: FSAI office

Details: The FSAI would like to present 'Breakfast Bites', a series of free informal breakfast meetings for businesses, useful information on the topics that you want to know more about. These events will be very helpful in getting your new small food business off the ground. The first 'Breakfast Bite' will be: **Food business start-up – what you need to know.** Email breakfastbites@fsai.ie for more information.

Thinking of starting or expanding a business?

Who To Talk To 2013 Featuring a Focus on Food sector

Date: Tuesday, May 14th 2013

Time: 2.00 pm – 8.00 pm

Location: Thurles Chamber Enterprise Centre, LIT Campus, Thurles

Details: The North Tipperary County Development Board is repeating its initiative held in May last year which was designed to provide information about supports available for business creation and development. This year with a focus on the food sector presentations will be given by relevant agencies and organisations. FSAI staff will be in attendance to provide information on food safety aspects of setting up and running a food business.



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Mailing List

FSAI/News is a resource for all public health professionals, researchers, food scientists, food hygienists and quality control personnel working in food safety. We would like to ensure that anyone who may find it useful receives a copy. If you think there is someone else in your organisation who would benefit from receiving a copy please fill in the form below. You can also use this form to change your own mailing details.

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