

# FSAI NEWS

January/February 2015



Vol 17 Issue 1 ISSN 1393-6972

**In this issue** [Page 2 > Time to Pass On the Food Safety Baton](#) [Page 3 > Professor Reilly Retires from the FSAI](#) [Page 4 > Calories on Menus to be a Legal Requirement; Guide to Good Hygiene for Irish Country Markets](#) [Page 5 > Enforcement Orders Served in 2014; Successful Prosecution for the FSAI](#) [Page 6 > Legislation Update](#) [Page 8 > Advice Line - A Review of 2014; EFSA Meeting on the Standard Sample Description \(SSD2\); EFSA's Guidance on Data Exchange 2 Published](#) [Page 9 > Antimicrobial Resistance – What the EU Data Is Telling Us; Antimicrobial Resistance Conference](#) [Page 10 > Event Round-up](#) [Page 11 > Campylobacteriosis Increasing in Ireland; Seminar on Bottled Water](#) [Page 11 > Congratulations to Oonagh Lyons; Recent Publications](#)

## Features in focus



**Page 2:**  
Professor Reilly  
Retires from the FSAI



**Page 4:**  
Calories on Menus  
to be a Legal  
Requirement



**Page 5:**  
Successful  
Prosecution  
for the FSAI

## Welcome to our New Chief Executive

Dr Pamela Byrne has been appointed Chief Executive of the FSAI and will take up office on 2 March, following the retirement of Prof. Alan Reilly. Dr Byrne joins the FSAI from Abbott Nutrition where she held the position of Director of Regulatory Policy and Intelligence. Having previously held senior positions in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, she has extensive experience of the food regulatory environment, as well as expertise in risk assessment and food safety management at both national and international levels.

A native of Cork, Dr Byrne holds a PhD in Environmental Toxicology from University College, Cork; an MSc in Aquatic Resource Management from Kings College, University of London; a BSc in Zoology from UCC and a Higher Diploma in Environmental Law from the University of Aberystwyth in Wales.

During her time at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Dr Byrne gained a deep knowledge of the food sector as an environmental toxicologist and risk assessor, and was instrumental in developing Ireland's research and innovation policy programmes in relation to food and the bio-economy. Dr Byrne also worked in the Cabinet of



Dr Pamela Byrne has been appointed Chief Executive of the FSAI

the European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation - Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn.

We would like to warmly welcome Dr Byrne to the FSAI and look forward to working closely with her as Chief Executive, to deliver an exemplary regulatory environment that is to the fore in protecting public health and consumer interests in the area of food safety and hygiene.



**Alan Reilly**  
Chief Executive

## Time to Pass On the **Food Safety Baton**

It is with great pride, as I enter a new chapter of my life, that I can look back at my early years in the FSAI, when it was an embryonic agency with a handful of staff and remember how lucky I was to bear witness to the journey it has taken to become one of the best food safety agencies in the world.

The FSAI was one of the first of a new breed of agencies established across Europe - the off-spring of the BSE crisis which ravaged consumer confidence in the safety of the food supply. A strong effective regulator to police the food chain and a commitment from the food industry to produce safe food was seen as the solution to preventing similar food safety issues. From the start, the vision for the agency and skills of the personnel, combined with a focus on science, laid a superb roadmap for the organisation to follow. Under the visionary approach of its first CEO, Prof. Patrick Wall, the organisation drew together specialists and experts from a variety of fields to establish what was then and still is today, a model agency for many other EU Member States.

An instrumental part of the FSAI's success is that as an agency, it was established to work under the aegis of the Department of Health. Great thanks is due to the bravery of the politicians at the time who did something unique in Europe and indeed the civil servants in the Department of Health who were and have always been a great support to the efforts and ambitions of the FSAI.

For a robust food safety regime in Ireland, the FSAI has always sought to stay ahead and identify potential for breaches of food safety. All its policies, deliberations and actions are fundamentally underpinned by science. Our approach by the team is science-based – if the science is right and is telling us something, then we plan and act. This has benefited consumers and the actions could not be taken without our many partners in Ireland. We rely very much on the expertise and can-do attitude of our agents in the field - from the environmental health officers of the HSE, the officials of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the veterinary inspectors in the many local authorities, to our colleagues in the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority and the Marine Institute – all have the same core focus of protecting consumer health in relation to food safety throughout their dedicated work and inspection regime.

We have also relied greatly on our Scientific Committee and Sub-committees to ensure that our risk management decisions are evidenced-based and underpinned by quality scientific data. They are a significant asset to the scientific work carried out by the FSAI. Together with some of the FSAI scientists, a number of the scientists from our scientific advisory structure now also populate the European Food Safety Authority's advisory committees and panels. These networks facilitate strengthening coordinated approaches in addressing European risk assessment and risk communications issues.

The tireless work of each and every individual involved in our Irish food safety army are to be thanked and applauded for their many efforts and achievements during my tenure here. The many regulatory actions to safeguard our food chain all stem back to systems that were put in place to ensure maximum traceability across the food chain. These systems have evolved over the past decade and now of course, incorporate sophisticated new approaches, such as DNA identification, which we as an agency pioneered.

There have been plenty of high-wire acts in my time - the Irish food safety team have been involved in some of the biggest food safety issues in Europe. We had the pork dioxin crisis in 2008 and more recently, we uncovered the EU-wide horsemeat contamination issue. Both major incidents placed Ireland and its food safety regime at the fore in terms of identifying food safety issues and acting swiftly in the best interests of our consumers at home and abroad. The expert actions of the individuals in the FSAI and in the official agencies, who swiftly managed these issues, protected Ireland's reputation for producing safe food and in effect, protected the Irish food industry.

The agri-food sector has played an important part in developing a food safety culture and ensuring food safety management systems are based on best practice. Industry representatives have populated our Food Safety Consultative Council and have provided a solid sounding board contributing to our overall strategy.

As a major food exporting country, Ireland has demonstrated to both domestic consumers and international purchasers of Irish foods that we had robust controls. I know the FSAI will continue to do well into the future after I have left and will no doubt continue to place food safety and public health before all other issues in managing any future food issue.

They say that imitation is the best form of flattery. Many aspects of the FSAI's structure, approach, protocols and documents have been copied far and wide, and the FSAI brand is well recognised globally in the food safety regulatory community.

While sad to be leaving, I am so very grateful to the FSAI staff who I have had the immense pleasure to have worked with over the years. The FSAI is fortunate to have the best and the brightest in its organisation who are fully committed and dedicated to their work. It is thanks to their ongoing achievements that the FSAI is the organisation that it is today.

It has been a real honour to serve as the Chief Executive and I thank all those who worked with me during my tenure.



Prof. Alan Reilly is pictured here with Prof. Michael Gibney, Chairman, FSAI Board

## Professor Reilly Retires from the FSAI

We would like to thank our outgoing Chief Executive, Prof. Alan Reilly for the outstanding leadership he has shown during his tenure at the FSAI. Prof. Reilly has ensured that the FSAI and its policies have adapted within an ever-changing global and national food scene. Alan's contribution to the FSAI, to consumers of Irish food, to the food industry and to the public service has been really excellent and remarkable. One of his greatest contributions was developing and fostering the FSAI team. He has led the FSAI to be regarded nationally and internationally as a highly respected regulatory body.

A graduate of University College, Dublin and of Brunel University, Uxbridge, UK, Prof. Reilly has worked for over 40 years in the area of food safety. Before joining the FSAI in 1999, he worked in the Food Safety Programme of the World Health Organization in Geneva. He spent a number of years working at the Natural Resources Institute of the University of Greenwich in Kent, UK and worked as a visiting Associate Professor at the College of Fisheries, in the University of the Philippines.

One of the biggest food crises in Ireland followed the identification of dioxin contamination in Irish pork. Under the guidance of Prof. Reilly, the FSAI worked with official agencies in coordinating a rapid and decisive response which was praised both at home and abroad as a good example of risk management. He was also responsible for leading the team which carried out the study examining the authenticity of a number of beef products in retail outlets in Ireland. This work uncovered one of the largest food frauds in recent years that led to products being withdrawn on an unprecedented scale from major retailers across Europe and as far afield as Hong Kong and the Caribbean. The outcome of the work of the FSAI has been the strengthening of the food regulatory structure across the European Union and greater consumer protection.

A number of initiatives were undertaken during Prof. Reilly's tenure which have had a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Irish consumers. Backed by a strong scientific evidence base, the FSAI embarked on a salt reduction programme in 2003 with the food industry. Since then, many food manufacturers, retailers and caterers have made a concentrated effort to facilitate the move to healthier, less salt intensive consumer options. The result is that the levels of salt in Irish produced foods have been considerably reduced.

Several reports outlining scientific recommendations for a national food and nutrition policy in Ireland have been developed by the FSAI. These focus on health promotion and disease prevention. Through a combination of a statutory control programme and voluntary standards, the incidence of human salmonellosis caused by Irish produced hen eggs has been reduced by over 60% in the last decade. In 2014, Prof. Reilly was instrumental in the FSAI carrying out a public consultation on examining the feasibility of adopting a calories on menus scheme intended to empower consumers to make more informed choices when purchasing foods from food service outlets such as restaurants, bars and cafés. This resulted in the FSAI creating MenuCal, a free online tool which enables

chefs, caterers and small food businesses to calculate the calorie values in the food they prepare and sell.

In 2009, the FSAI was honoured by the World Health Organization (WHO) with the prestigious WHO Food Safety Award in recognition of the international contributions it has made to promote food safety in the global economy and in promoting an integrated science-based approach. In late 2014, Ireland was ranked joint first place with Canada out of 16 OECD countries for its food safety processes and performances. These are a reflection of Prof. Reilly's contribution and commitment to food safety control in Ireland and also to the role of the FSAI.

The Board of the FSAI would like to thank Prof. Reilly for his excellent leadership of the FSAI and for his extensive achievements in the Irish food safety arena to ensure that consumers of food in Ireland can have confidence in the safety of the food they are eating. We wish him the very best in his retirement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Gibney".

Prof. Michael Gibney  
Chairman, FSAI Board



# Calories on Menus to be a Legal Requirement

Proposals which require restaurants, takeaways and all food service outlets to post calorie details of all food items on menus were recently approved at the Government's Cabinet. The proposed laws will require all menus, including boards, leaflets, digital menus or other forms, to display the amount of calories beside the price in the same font size and colour.

In 2012, the FSAI carried out a consultation with interested parties examining the feasibility of adopting a 'Calories on Menus' scheme intended to empower consumers to make more informed choices when purchasing foods from food service outlets such as restaurants, bars and cafés. Our research showed that there was an overwhelming demand and desire by consumers (96%) for displaying calories on menus and that nine out of ten consumers wanted calorie information displayed beside the price of food and drink items on the menu.

However, the FSAI was aware that food businesses needed an accurate, low cost means of assessing the calorie values of their food themselves. In response, we devised a calorie calculator that delivers this. This online calorie counting model, MenuCal, is available free of charge on our website at: <https://menucal.fsai.ie>.

MenuCal was tested by chefs and cooks throughout its design and development phases to ensure it is instinctive and straightforward to use, thereby vastly reducing the time required to determine the calorie values of their menu items. The tool incorporates over 450 useful tips and prompts depending on ingredient and recipe type. It includes an initial 2,000 popular food ingredients which users can add to and customise, based on their own recipes. It also provides a secure



Prof. Mary Flynn, Chief Specialist, Public Health Nutrition, FSAI, advocates the benefits of putting calories on menus to assist consumers make healthier food choices.

and safe place for chefs and cooks to keep personalised recipes and maintain files of their most popular dishes under password protection.

Displaying calories on menus in food service businesses empowers consumers to make better choices and creates a demand for healthier food in smaller portions from food businesses. When food and drinks are prepared outside the home, the consumer

does not know what ingredients are used and how they are prepared, so displaying calories on menus is vital if people are to make more informed choices about what they eat.

Calorie posting is one of a range of measures on obesity planned by the Department of Health and Children for 2015. Others include revised Healthy Eating Guidelines and a new Obesity Policy and Action Plan.

# Guide to Good Hygiene for Irish Country Markets

An updated guide to good hygiene practice in Irish Country Markets was launched in December by Tom Hayes, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Irish Country Markets, the FSAI and the Environmental Health Service collaborated closely in the development of the guide.

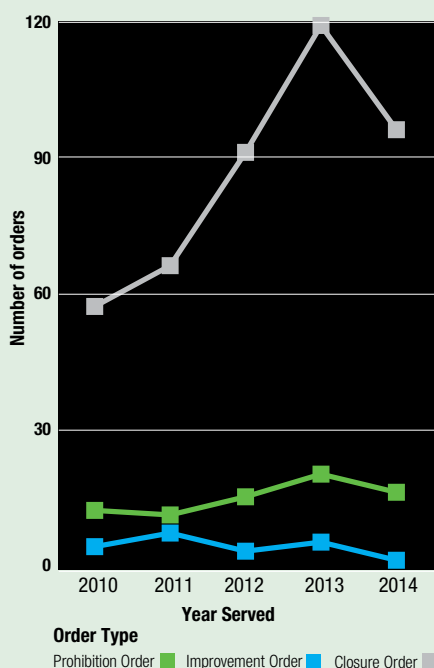
Best practice from all food producers is required to ensure the safety of their food. Objective, independent and transparent food safety management systems must be in place to ensure maintenance of high standards and prompt and proactive measures are taken where risks emerge. Minister Hayes stated that "Ireland's experience has been that consumer confidence is essential for the development of the food industry at all levels. This is particularly true at local level where the consumer is confident that the food product bought at the local market is both safe and of a high quality". Irish consumers like to support local food producers, and it is important those consumers enjoy high standards of food safety.



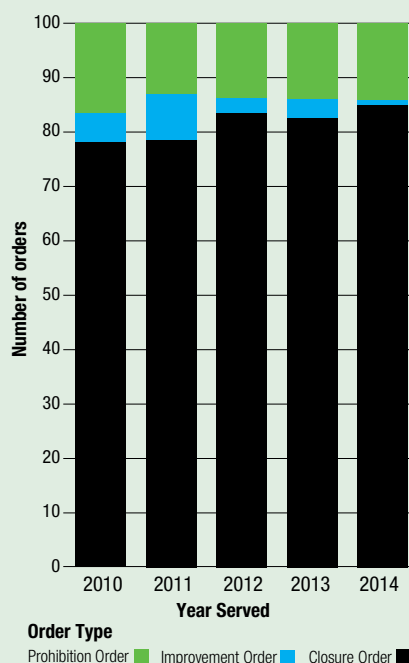
Tom Hayes, T.D., Minister for State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is pictured here (centre) with Margaret Sweeney, National Chairman, Country Markets Ltd., Raymond Ellard, Director of Consumer Protection, FSAI and representatives of Country Markets, Bord Bia, ICOS and the HSE at the official launch of Guide to Good Hygiene Practice for Country Markets.

# Enforcement Orders Served in 2014

A total of 113 Enforcement Orders were served on food businesses for breaches in food safety legislation in 2014, compared with 144 in 2013. Between 1 January and 31 December 2014, enforcement officers served 96 Closure Orders, 16 Prohibition Orders and one Improvement Order on food businesses throughout the country. While this represented a decrease of 21% in the number of Enforcement Orders needing to be served in comparison with the previous year, it was still the second highest number served on food businesses in the last five years (Fig 1).



**Figure 1: Enforcement Orders Served by Type, 2010 – 2015**



**Figure 2: Enforcement Orders Served by Percentage, 2010 – 2015**

Looking at all order types over the past five years, the percentage of Improvement Orders has decreased but the percentage of Closure Orders and Prohibition Orders have marginally increased (Fig 2). Since 2010, 532 Enforcement Orders have been served, the majority as expected in Dublin city (162) where there is the largest volume of food businesses.

Seventy three percent of all Orders served in the last five years were to the service sector, followed by 16% to the retail sector. 2014 saw increases in Orders served to manufacturer/packers (5 in 2012 and 2103 to 7 in 2014) and manufacturers selling direct to the final consumer (1 in 2013 to 3 in 2014).

The legal onus is on food businesses to act responsibly and ensure that the food they serve and sell is safe to eat. As such, food businesses must ensure they have robust food safety management systems in place. Enforcement officers will not hold back in taking swift action against any food business that fails to meet its legal obligations in this area to ensure consumer health is protected.

## Successful Prosecution for the FSAI

On 20 January 2015, at Virginia District Court, Mr Hugh (Hughie) Byrne of Hughie's Bar, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan, pleaded guilty to four breaches of food law, following the seizure of counterfeit Smirnoff Red Label vodka from his premises on 17 December 2013 by the FSAI.

Judge Sean McBride convicted Hughie Byrne for the following:

1. Making a false statement to an authorised officer, which misled the investigation
2. Selling below strength counterfeit Smirnoff Red Label vodka
3. Misleading consumers regarding the packaging and labelling of the product
4. Failing to provide information on traceability and provenance of the product seized.

Delivering his judgement, Judge McBride noted the severity of the offence and said that the punishment had to reflect its gravity, but he would temper the fines due to the

guilty plea and would not impose a term of imprisonment. Fines totalling €7,000 and costs of €2,000 were imposed on Hughie Byrne. Judge McBride also made an order for the destruction of the illicit spirit seized by the FSAI.

Judge McBride commended the FSAI for its important and detailed investigation and noted that the entire tourist and food and drink industry is based on integrity and the safety and protection of the consumer.





# Legislation Update



## Food Contaminants – Smoked Food

**Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1327/2014 of 12 December 2014 amending Regulation (EC) No. 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in traditionally smoked meat and meat products and traditionally smoked fish and fishery products has been published in the EU Official Journal.**

Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1881/2006 sets maximum levels for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in food, including smoked meat and meat products and smoked fish and fishery products. The Regulation requires that the maximum levels for PAHs must be safe and as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA) based upon good manufacturing and agricultural/fishery practices. In order to achieve lower maximum levels, adaptations of smoking technology were necessary in some cases and a transition period of three years was granted before the lower maximum levels became applicable on the 1 September 2014.

However, recent evidence demonstrated that, despite the application of good smoking practices, the lower levels for PAHs are not achievable in certain cases of traditionally smoked meat and meat products and traditionally smoked fish and fishery products. In these cases the smoking practices cannot be changed without significantly changing the organoleptic characteristics of the food. Consequently such traditionally smoked products would disappear from the market.

Therefore this amending Regulation (EU) No. 1327/2014 provides a derogation from the application of the lower maximum levels for PAHs as of 1 September 2014 for certain Member States (including Ireland) for three years for local production and consumption of traditionally smoked meat and meat products and/or fish and fishery products. The maximum levels which applied prior to 1 September 2014 will apply to those smoked products.

Within three years from the application of this amending Regulation, the situation will be re-assessed on the basis of all available information. This assessment could result in a more limited and detailed list of smoked meat and meat products, fish and fishery products for which a derogation for local production and consumption could be granted without a time limit.

Member States who have been granted the derogation are obliged to gather data on PAH levels in traditionally smoked products. The EC has indicated its desire to reassess the need for derogations after the three year period expires and Ireland has implemented an inter-agency monitoring programme collecting data on smoked fishery products and smoked meat products to inform this review.

## Novel Foods – Chia Oil

**Commission Implementing Decision 2014/890/EU (OJ L353, p15, 10/12/2014) of 8 December 2014 authorising the placing on the market of chia oil (*Salvia hispanica*) as a novel food ingredient under Regulation (EC) No. 258/97 of the European Parliament and of the Council was published in the EU Official Journal in December 2014.**

This Decision authorises the placing on the market in the EU of chia oil as a novel food ingredient. Its use is permitted in fats and oils and also in food supplements. Maximum levels are established and are set out in Annex II to the Decision. The designation of chia oil on the labelling of the foodstuffs containing it is: 'Chia oil (*Salvia hispanica*)'.

## Labelling of Spirit Drinks

**Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008 sets out the requirements regarding the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks. It classifies spirit drinks into 46 categories e.g. rum, whiskey, vodka, gin. The categories are listed in Annex II to the Regulation.**

According to Article 10(1) and (2) of that Regulation, a spirit drink or another foodstuff may, under certain conditions, bear in its presentation a compound term which:

- includes the name of one of the categories listed in Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008, or
- one of the geographical indications listed in Annex III to that Regulation, or
- may bear one or more allusions that include one or more of those categories or geographical indications.

The Regulation prohibits the use of a term listed in categories 1 to 46 of Annex II, or of a geographical indication registered in Annex III in a compound term or the allusion in the presentation of a foodstuff unless the alcohol originates exclusively from the spirit drink(s) referred to.

In order to ensure the uniform use of compound terms and allusions in all EU Member States, Regulation (EU) No. 716/2013 was published in July 2013 and it establishes detailed rules for the use of compound terms and allusions





in the presentation of spirit drinks and other foodstuffs. Whilst most of the Regulation has applied since 1 September 2013, Article 3 and 4 which set out the rules on the use of compound terms and allusions will apply from 1 March 2015.

#### Reference to a Spirit Drink

When reference is made to a certain spirit drink in the presentation of a foodstuff, that spirit drink must fully comply with Regulation (EC) No. 110/200.

#### Compound Term

A 'compound term' is defined in Regulation (EU) No. 716/2013 as the combination of a term listed in categories 1 to 46 of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008 or a geographical indication of a spirit drink, from which all the alcohol of the final product originates, with:

- (i) the name of one or more foodstuffs other than those used for the production of that spirit drink in accordance with Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008, or adjectives deriving from those names and/or
- (ii) the term 'liqueur'.

The term 'spirit drink' must not be part of a compound term describing an alcoholic beverage. A compound term describing an alcoholic beverage must not consist of a combination of the term 'liqueur' with the name of one of the categories 33 to 40 of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008.

A compound term must not replace the sales denomination of a spirit drink.

The compound term describing an alcoholic beverage must appear in uniform characters of the same font, size and colour. It must not be interrupted by any textual or pictorial element which does not form part of it and must not appear in a larger font size than that of the sales denomination..

#### Allusion

An 'allusion' is defined as meaning the direct or indirect reference to one or more spirit drink categories or geographical indications, other than the reference in a compound term or list of ingredients of a foodstuff.

The allusion to any spirit drink category or geographical indication, for the presentation of a foodstuff, must not be in the same line as the sales denomination. For alcoholic beverages, the allusion must appear in a font size smaller than those used for the sales denomination and compound term.

#### EU Consultation – Pre-Packaged Products and Quantities

The European Commission is inviting views on the rules which deal with the measurement and quantities of pre-packaged goods. It focuses on the following legislation:

- Directive 75/107/EEC on bottles used as measuring containers, the application of the Directive is voluntary but is widely used. The relevant marking consists of a reversed epsilon marking ("3") next to the indication of quantity (volume) on the bottom of such bottles
- Directive 76/211/EEC on the making-up by weight or volume of pre-packages (e-mark), which is voluntary and its use is widespread.

Pre-packed products bearing the e-mark are recognisable by the large lower-case "e" on the label or packaging, next to the indication of quantity (volume or weight)

- Directive 2007/45/EC on nominal quantities for pre-packed products (pack-sizes), which allows for pre-packaged goods to be sold in any size of packaging, except for wines and spirits, which must be sold in fixed sizes of packaging.

The results of the survey will be included in the final evaluation of the Directives. The European Commission aims to publish the evaluation report by the end of 2015.

The consultation takes the form of an online survey which can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/16IRiDw>. It closes on 7 April 2015.



## New Regulations

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

#### S.I. No. 3 of 2015

European Communities (Official Controls on the Import of Food of Non-Animal Origin) (Amendment) Regulations 2015

#### S.I. No. 20 of 2015

European Communities (Official Controls on the Import of Food of Non-Animal Origin for Pesticide Residues) (Amendment) Regulations 2015

#### S.I. No. 21 of 2015

European Communities (Pesticide Residues) (Amendment) Regulations 2015

## Advice Line - A Review of 2014

One of the main functions of the FSAI is to provide information to stakeholders on all aspects of food safety and nutrition. As such, our staff deal on a daily basis with queries from a wide range of sources and on a wide variety of topics.

Trained advisors on our Advice Line, supported by food scientists, dealt with 14,348 queries last year, an 8% increase on 2013. The Advice Line, which operates Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, is a valuable source of food safety information and is used by, amongst others, the food industry, people starting a new food business, members of the public and enforcement officers.

Of the 14,348 queries received last year, 11,604 involved requests for advice across



a range of food-related areas, while 2,738 related specifically to complaints by consumers about food and food premises (Fig 1). This activity reflects a demand amongst food businesses for information about labelling requirements and resources for food business start-ups and a growing awareness among consumers of the need to report poor hygiene practice. Labelling requests were up almost 100% on 2013 (at 2,463 requests) due to the introduction of the new Food Information to Consumers rules in December.

Consumer complaints ranged from reports of food unfit to eat, to inaccurate labelling:

- 1,199 complaints on unfit food
- 529 complaints on suspect food poisoning
- 566 complaints on hygiene standards
- 175 complaints on incorrect information on food labelling
- 269 other

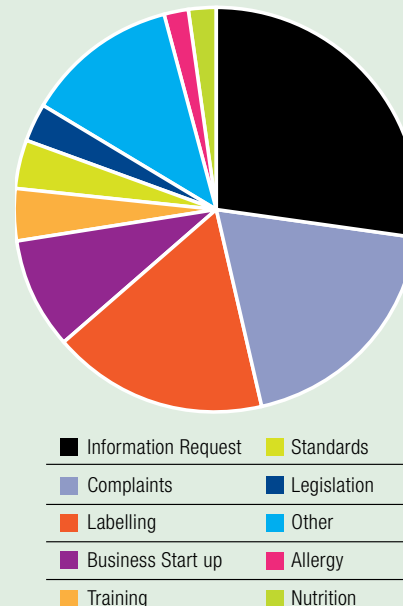
Complaints received by the FSAI were followed up and investigated by environmental health officers throughout the country, or other enforcement officers, as appropriate.

Approximately 50% of queries to our Advice Line were received by telephone and 30% were received by email. The remainder came from our website, walk-ins, attendance at

exhibitions, staff requests and through the FSAI's facebook and Twitter pages.

Our Advice Line can be reached on lo-call 1890 336677. Alternatively, anyone can email their enquiry to [info@fsai.ie](mailto:info@fsai.ie) or through the 'make a complaint' section of our website.

Figure 1: Top 10 Request Types, 2014



## EFSA Meeting on the Standard Sample Description (SSD2)



The FSAI welcomed Mr Francesco Vernazza from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Evidence Management Unit to two meetings with representatives of the Irish official control laboratories and inspectorate services. This provided an overview of EFSA's European data collection and analysis strategy including the Standard Sample Description (SSD) data model revisions and the FOODEX2 food classification and description system.

The current status in Ireland and the benefits adoption of these standards could bring in an Irish context were discussed at the meeting. The pragmatic steps needed to move towards use of these standards in the Irish food safety system were identified. The laboratory LIMS administrators, sampling officer representatives and other attendees participated actively at the meeting which proved extremely beneficial.

Mr Vernazza was in Dublin as part of the EFSA Guest Scientist exchange programme which encourages exchange of experience and good practice throughout Europe. Eileen O'Dea, FSAI, also spent time with the EFSA DATA unit, finalising some aspects of its data collection processes and documentation.



Ms Eileen O'Dea, Data Unit, FSAI is pictured here with Mr Francesco Vernazza, EFSA Evidence Management Unit.

## EFSA's Guidance on Data Exchange 2 Published

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its Guidance on Data Exchange 2 (GDE2) in December. This guidance defines the formats, mechanisms and business rules associated with the Standard Sample Description 2 (SSD2) standardised data model for the reporting of harmonised food safety data across the EU. (See: <http://bit.ly/1vJqyDi>)

Chaired by Eileen O'Dea of the FSAI, a working group was set up by EFSA to revise the SSD and GDE, originally published in 2010. The revised guidelines allow for reporting zoonoses, additives and antimicrobial resistance data as well as chemical contaminants and pesticides for which SSD was originally developed.



# Antimicrobial Resistance – What the EU Data Is Telling Us

The first integrated analysis of European antimicrobial consumption data and antimicrobial resistance occurrence data in humans and food-producing animals was recently published. It was produced jointly by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA), using data from 2011 and 2012.

## Antimicrobial Consumption

The report found that in general, antimicrobial consumption in 2012 was higher in animals than in humans, although differences were observed between countries. In 15 of 26 countries, average antimicrobial consumption was lower or much lower in food-producing animals than in humans, in three countries consumption was similar in the two groups, and in eight countries consumption in food-producing animals was higher or much higher than in humans.

The WHO has prioritised 3rd- and 4th-generation cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones, considering them to be among the critically important antimicrobials in human medicine. The EU report found that in most countries, the consumption of fluoroquinolones was higher in humans than in the animal sector. In all countries, consumption of 3rd- and 4th-generation cephalosporins was much higher in humans than in food-producing animals.



## Antimicrobial Resistance and Possible Links with Antimicrobial Consumption

In both humans and animals, positive associations were observed between consumption of antimicrobials and the corresponding resistance in bacteria for most of the combinations investigated.

Potential associations between the consumption of antimicrobials in food-producing animals and occurrence of corresponding resistance in bacteria from humans were also examined. The following were the main findings:

- **No associations were observed between the consumption of 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-generation cephalosporins in food-producing animals and the occurrence of resistance to this sub-class in selected bacteria from humans.**
- **No associations were observed between the consumption of fluoroquinolones in food-producing animals and the occurrence of resistance in *Salmonella* spp. and *Campylobacter* spp. from cases of human infection.**
- **Positive associations were noted for consumption of macrolides in food-producing animals and the occurrence of resistance in *Campylobacter* spp. from cases of human infection, and for consumption of tetracyclines and the occurrence of resistance in *Salmonella* spp. and *Campylobacter* spp.**

## Caveats and Conclusions

The report noted however, that the associations identified should be treated with caution because the epidemiology of resistance is complex, and several factors aside from the amount of antimicrobial consumption influence the level of resistance. The report findings should be considered as hypotheses for subsequent testing by focused research that in time could provide more definitive explanations for the observed associations.

In addition, differences between the systems for collection and reporting of data on antimicrobial consumption and resistance in bacteria from humans and food-producing animals, at the time of data collection (2011–2012), were considered to have hindered direct comparisons. The report made recommendations to address current data limitations for analyses of this type and concluded that responsible use of antimicrobials in both humans and animals should be promoted.

The report is available at: <http://bit.ly/1DqKZNb>



## Antimicrobial Resistance Conference

In December, University College Dublin, in association with the FSAI and the National Zoonoses Committee hosted a conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). It explored the challenges to human and veterinary medicine in tackling this global problem and presented examples of international best practice.

The importance of surveillance in food-producing animals, the environment and human medicine as a progressive measure to limit future resistance problems was emphasised by Sara O'Brien, University of Liverpool, who also discussed its economic impact. Robert Cunney of the Health Service executive (HSE) presented the Irish human data and the challenges for clinical medicine. Martin Cormican, also of the HSE, set the scene in the Irish food chain, presenting data on resistance in foodborne pathogens while Martin Blake, department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, outlined current and proposed actions to combat AMR in food production.

Other speakers at the event included John Fitzgerald of Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture, UK; Joseph O'Flaherty, Animal Health Ireland; Rens van Dobbenburg, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and Marta Martins, University College Dublin. Presentations are available at: <http://bit.ly/1MxmsZG>.

The importance of the 'One Health' approach was evident throughout the conference. This is where a coordinated and holistic approach in human, animal and food sectors worldwide is recognised as fundamental to tackling this problem.

# Event Round-up



Pictured are speakers at the event: Dr Lisa O'Connor, Chief Specialist, Food Science, FSAI; Sharon Williams, Training Executive, FSAI; Helen Crowley, Technical Executive, FSAI; Zsafia Csomor, Heart and Soul Bakery, Northwest Business Park; Bakery; Anne-Marie Boland, Senior Technical Executive, FSAI; Dr Karl McDonald, Technical Executive, FSAI; Philip Devenish, Environmental Health Officer, HSE; Ciara McDonagh, Food Industry Development Department, Teagasc and Raymond Ellard, Director of Consumer Protection, FSAI

## Small Food Business Start-Up Seminar

In January, the FSAI hosted a 'Small Food Business Start-Up Seminar'. The aim of the event was to make it easier for new food businesses to get up and running and help them to comply with all the relevant food safety requirements.

The seminar brought together experts to explore everything from registering a new food business, food product development, food safety training requirements, setting up

a food safety management system, labelling regulations, traceability, the food recall process, inspections and the information resources available from the FSAI. There were also a number of questions and answers sessions throughout the day.

The seminar is one of several supports we provide food businesses on an ongoing basis, including a free Advice Line and a dedicated online resource to assist people thinking of setting up a new food outlet or business.



Gillian Usher, FSAI, gives a demonstration on MenuCal at Catex

## Catex

The FSAI took part at this year's CATEX, a foodservice exhibition held in the RDS, Dublin from 17-19 February. Visitors to the stand had many queries for our expert staff, focusing mainly on labelling and allergen labelling. We also had much interest in MenuCal at the event, with FSAI staff taking visitors through the simple steps involved in putting calories on their menus using the free online tool.



Geraldine O'Meadhra and Dawn Smith were pictured at the recent Breakfast Bites session on managing food safety in a food business

## Breakfast Bites

Our most recent 'Breakfast Bite' took place on 18 February on 'how to manage food safety in your business'. Dr Lisa O'Connor, Chief Specialist, Food Science, FSAI, outlined what a food safety management system is and why a food business must put one in place. She discussed why the system must be based on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). Lisa explained the HACCP principles and how the legislation allows for flexibility in how they are applied. She also outlined the support material available.

## Upcoming Events

### Shellfish Regional Information Meetings

The FSAI, in conjunction with the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara, is holding a series of Shellfish Regional Information Meetings around the coast in April and May. The informal events are an opportunity for all those involved in the shellfish industry to learn more about the role of the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme and how it assists industry to ensure that live bivalve molluscs placed on the market meet the highest standards of food safety. This series of events will focus on microbiological classification of shellfish production areas but will also cover topics such as biotoxin and phytoplankton monitoring, phytoplankton sampling and viruses.

The events will take place in Donegal, Galway, Cork, Dublin and Kerry. To register for one of these free half day events, please visit our website or phone 01 8171398

### Breakfast Bites

'Breakfast Bites' are a series of free, informal breakfast meetings for food businesses. Our next 'Breakfast Bite' will focus on food safety training and will take place on **19 March**.

### Small Food Business Start-Up Seminar

The next small food business start-up seminars will take place as follows:

- Waterford - 24 March
- Athlone - 21 April



## Subscribe to our Events

For further information on upcoming events, see our website at: [www.fsai.ie/events](http://www.fsai.ie/events). You can subscribe to our email alerts to receive further details when they are available.



# Campylobacteriosis Increasing in Ireland

Campylobacteriosis continues to be the most commonly reported foodborne illness in Ireland with 10 times more cases of campylobacteriosis being reported than salmonellosis. The European Food Safety Authority and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control annual figures for foodborne illness recently published suggest that the campylobacteriosis figures across Europe have stabilised, but that is not the experience in Ireland. Over 2,600 cases of food poisoning due to *Campylobacter* were recorded in Ireland in 2014, compared to some 2,288 in 2013.\*

The figures recorded by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre in Ireland are the highest since campylobacteriosis became legally notifiable in 2004 and requires cross-industry and consumer responses to be undertaken to tackle the problem. The FSAI supports setting a microbiological hygiene standard for poultry meat at European level. This would create a maximum tolerance level for *Campylobacter* in poultry which could be reviewed over time. The FSAI also recommends that chicken flocks are systemically and regularly tested for *Campylobacter* before they are presented for slaughter and from these data, poultry producers could improve their biosecurity to keep *Campylobacter* out of poultry houses.

Leak-proof packaging on chicken was recommended in a 2011 report by the FSAI and has been adopted widely. Leak-proof packaging can provide a barrier to the spread of *Campylobacter* and retailers should source chicken products from producers using leak-proof packaging solutions. Where chicken is sold in conventional packaging, retailers should review their food safety management systems to control the risk of *Campylobacter* spreading to ready-to-eat foods. For conventional packaging, the FSAI recommends that retailers consider providing

specific bags to place the chicken in and therefore, better protect against leakage and cross-contamination.

Consumers can also protect themselves and prevent contamination of their food by being mindful of some key practices, such as: when shopping, designating a bag for packing raw poultry and raw meats only; always washing hands and utensils after handling raw poultry but never washing raw poultry meat or whole birds as this spreads contamination; storing raw poultry in the fridge separated from

ready-to-eat foods; and always cooking poultry meat thoroughly, until there is no pink meat and the juices run clear.

\* Provisional figures for 2014 reported to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre.



Speakers at the seminar are pictured here (l-r): Mr James Cahill, SEHO, HSE Limerick; Dr Chris Thomas, Auditor, NSAI; Mr Martin Nestor, SEHO, HSE Clare; Dr Michelle Miniñan, FSAI; Dr Michelle Riblet, FSAI and Dr Andrew Flanagan, Executive Analytical Chemist, Galway PAL

## Seminar on Bottled Water

On 20 January, the FSAI hosted a seminar on bottled water which was attended by the official agency staff from the National Standards Authority of Ireland and the Health Service Executive, who are responsible

for official controls in Irish bottled water establishments. Topics discussed on the day related to natural mineral water recognition, food contact materials, food incidents, permitted treatments of natural mineral

water, labelling, sampling and analysis programmes. The seminar was well attended and provided a valuable forum for discussion between colleagues on controls in this areas.





Left to right: Dr. Alyson Hill, Lecturer in Dietetics, University of Ulster, Oonagh Lyons and Prof. Helene McNulty, Professor of Nutritional Science, University of Ulster and Member of the FSAI Public Health Nutrition Sub-committee of the Scientific Committee.

## Congratulations to Oonagh Lyons

Congratulations to Oonagh Lyons, on her award of Best MSc Nutrition Research Project from the University of Ulster. Oonagh has recently joined the FSAI as a Research Fellow in Public Health Nutrition.

## Recent Publications

The following publications have recently been produced by the FSAI and are available on our website:

- Targeted Audit to Verify Compliance with Marginal, Localised and Restricted Legislation
- Targeted Audit to Verify Compliance with Marginal, Localised and Restricted Legislation Corrective Action Plan
- Food Hypersensitivity - Food Allergy and Intolerance (Revised)
- Legislation on Chemical Contaminants (Revised)
- Guidance Document for Nitrate and Nitrite Sampling of Meat Products (Revised)



Editor: Edel Smyth

Contributors:  
Anne-Marie Boland  
Helen Crowley  
Lisa O'Connor  
Eileen O'Dea  
Michelle Riblet  
Olive Ryan



Abbey Court  
Lower Abbey Street  
Dublin 1

Tel: (01) 8171300

newsletter@fsai.ie

www.fsai.ie



www.facebook.com/FSAI



@FSAIinfo.

Please subscribe to our mailing list, or update your details, by contacting us at [newsletter@fsai.ie](mailto:newsletter@fsai.ie).

You can also subscribe to the electronic version of our newsletter online at [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie).



'Permission is granted to reproduce information contained herein with appropriate credit'. © 2015