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Minister for Health Visits FSAI

One of the first ports of call for the new Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, was the FSAI on 30 July. The Minister's background as a medical doctor gives him a head start in understanding the importance of diet in public health and some of the key food safety challenges associated with the complexities of the global food chain. Issues discussed with the Minister were the role of the FSAI in the enforcement of national food regulations and how official agencies work under the service contact programme of the FSAI in ensuring that food produced and marketed in Ireland meets the highest standards of food safety and food hygiene. A priority for the Minister is tackling issues associated with obesity and the FSAI can provide independent scientific advice to underpin policies and decisions in this area.

The importance of the work of the FSAI in enhancing Ireland's reputation as a food producer supplying foods into 140 overseas markets was discussed with the Minister. It is imperative to have an effective food regulatory programme in place for protecting consumers' health and consumers' interests, whilst maintaining confidence and trust in the safety of Irish produced and marketed foods. The

agri-food sector is a key component of Ireland's economy and has been set as the cornerstone of the Irish economic revival in the Programme for Government. Clearly the FSAI's role as an independent agency charged with protecting the consumer, regulating the food industry, enforcing food safety standards and using the best scientific advice to underpin risk management decisions is key to supporting Government initiatives.



Pictured during his visit to FSAI in July is Minister for Health, Leo Varadkar, with Prof. Mike Gibney, Chair of the FSAI Board and Prof. Alan Reilly, CEO, FSAI



Alan Reilly
Chief Executive

Genetic Modification - Are the Food Safety Concerns Still Justified?

Over the past twenty years, the regulation of the use of genetic modification technology in food production remains one of the most controversial aspects of European food law. Opinions are polarised into pro- and anti-genetic modification lobbies. Reasons for opposition were many – ranging from protectionism, political ideology, food safety, fear of unknown consequences, the unpopularity of multi-national companies and potential environmental impacts. In response some EU Member States went as far as banning genetically modified (GM) crops.

As a result, the application of this technology in Europe has stalled, while crops derived using genetic modification technology are widely grown and marketed in many other parts of the world. Despite experiences elsewhere, Europe remains a reluctant user, even as the technology has evolved over the past two decades and gets more sophisticated.

The well expressed range of concerns of anti-genetic modification protagonists were taken on board in Europe where a complex and comprehensive regulatory regime has been introduced. Accepting that policy should be based on sound science, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was established in 2002. It is now one of the world's foremost scientific, independent, risk assessment bodies. No GM foods can be authorised in the EU without a scientific evaluation from EFSA. Yet despite this formidable, scientific safeguard, when it comes to decision making on genetic modification issues, some in the EU do not seem to listen to what EFSA has to say.

In a further response to the concerns of policymakers and the public regarding the safety of the genetic modification technology, the European Commission embarked on a broad research programme over the past twenty years. It was put in place to address any disquiet about the potential environmental impact of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), food safety, the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops, and risk assessment strategies. The research aimed to increase knowledge, enable the Commission and policymakers in Member States to contribute to the international debate, and to provide scientific support for EU regulatory frameworks.

In a review of a decade of research on GMOs, funded by the European Commission¹, the main conclusion to be drawn from the efforts of more than 130 research projects, covering a period of more than 25 years, and involving more than 500 independent research groups, is that biotechnology, and in particular genetic modification, is not *per se* riskier than conventional plant breeding technologies. Europe has spent hundreds of millions of euro on examining the safety of genetic modification technology as applied to foods. Strikingly, despite these findings, the result of this massive investment in research is that acceptance of the technology has not moved any further forward in some Member States.

Research elsewhere has similar findings. In the United States, repeated studies have found no threats to human health from GM ingredients which are to be found in up to four-fifths of processed foods on the American market. Additionally, while GM food has been on the market in the US for over 20 years, no substantiated ill effects have been reported or food safety issues identified.

The approval process for placing GMOs on the European market remains convoluted. Genetically modified plants intended for cultivation in the EU and for use as food or feed require authorisation under European legislation and must undergo an approval system in which the safety for humans, animals and the environment is assessed. The approval process² involves national authorities in Member States, EFSA and the European Commission. GMOs are authorised only if considered safe for human and animal health and the environment. Applications for marketing and release of GMOs must have a monitoring plan, where it is considered appropriate, in order to confirm anticipated consumption patterns, ensure implementation of any recommended usage conditions and detect any possible unforeseen effects. To aid consumer choice, European regulations also require that foods derived from GMOs must be labelled when a GM component of a food or food ingredient comprises greater than 0.9% of that food or ingredient.

Genetic modification is one of a number of promising tools for improving the nutritional quality and safety of various foods and assisting farmers to increase production in order to feed the fast increasing global population. Yet Europe remains sceptical and reluctant although nobody has become ill or died from the effect of eating food derived from GMOs. While foods derived from GMOs will not, on their own, solve the food security challenges related to access to safe and nutritious food or sustainable food production, their role should not continue to be dismissed for ideological or political reasons.

In the decades since the debate on GMOs in food began, the science and technology has not stood still. With the fast paced development of biotechnology, new techniques for genetic editing of genomes have come to the fore. Such techniques allow for the improvement of crops by taking the plant's pre-existing genetic information and editing it, thus avoiding the insertion of foreign genes, a technique to which many objected. The GM or non-GM status of many of these new techniques remains under discussion at EU level, the outcome of which could decide their use in improving future crop production in the EU. If Europe is to remain at the forefront of research and innovation in the agri-food arena, policies need to be developed now to guide the exploitation of this new genetic modification technology. It is time to put aside irrational and non-science based fears of new technologies in the interests of consumers everywhere.

¹A Decade of EU-Funded GMO Research' - <http://bit.ly/1oMD8m7>

²GMO monitoring after authorisation - <http://bit.ly/1thyGv9>



Presence of Chicken and Bovine DNA found in Takeaway Lamb Dishes

An FSAI survey, carried out in collaboration with the Health Service Executive (HSE) in June 2014, revealed the presence of meats other than lamb in seven of the twenty foods sampled from independent takeaway restaurants in Dublin City, which were described on the menus/menu boards as containing lamb (see Table 1). The study tested for the presence of DNA from bovine, pig, sheep, goat, horse, chicken and turkey in ten kebabs and ten lamb dishes. Horse, goat, pig or turkey DNA was not found in any sample.

Six of the seven foods with undeclared meat were described on the menus/menu boards as lamb kebabs, but most of these did not contain any lamb at all or only contained lamb in very small quantities. All six lamb kebabs with undeclared meat contained over 60% chicken and 5–30% beef. Only three of these six lamb kebabs were found to contain lamb, however, the levels were as low as 1–5%. Finally, one of the ten lamb dishes sampled – minced meat for lamb skewers – with undeclared meat that was described on the menu/menu board as lamb, was found to contain over 60% beef and over 30% lamb.

The fact that undeclared meats have been identified in products advertised as lamb raises concerns about misleading consumers

and not giving them the correct information about the food they are eating. Incorrectly listing meat products on a menu or menu board, whether inadvertently or by design, is an infringement of the labelling legislation.

Following on from the horsemeat issue in 2013, it is vital that consumers can have trust and confidence in food businesses and the food on sale in Ireland. Food businesses must ensure that they have robust supplier controls in place at all times so that they know who is supplying them and that all products and all ingredients are authentic. Food businesses also have a duty to their customers to ensure the food they are selling is labelled correctly so that consumers can make an informed decision on what they are buying.

Table 1: Details of the samples containing undeclared species

Food type sampled	Description of meat on the menu board or menu	Meat species found
Kebab meat slices	Lamb	Beef (minor part) and chicken (major part)
Doner kebab meat	Lamb	Beef (minor part) and chicken (major part)
Kebab meat from spit	Lamb	Beef (minor part), lamb (minor part) and chicken (major part)
Doner kebab meat	Lamb	Beef (minor part), chicken (major part) and lamb (diminutive part)
Lamb kebab	Lamb	Beef (minor part), lamb (diminutive part) and chicken (major part)
Lamb kebab	lamb	Beef (minor part) and chicken (major part)
Raw minced lamb for lamb skewers	Lamb	Beef (major part) and lamb (medium part)

Notes:

1. The relative quantities of DNA found are classified as follows: Major part (60–100%), medium part (30–60%), minor part (5–30%), diminutive part (1–5%).
2. A cut-off of 1% DNA was used, so meat species found at quantities <1% were not included in the meat species listed on the table.
3. All samples were tested in an accredited laboratory using semi-quantitative DNA analysis.

FSAI Survey Finds no Horse DNA in Beef Products

The FSAI published results of a survey in July, carried out as part of an ongoing EU-wide programme on food fraud. 52 products marketed and/or labelled as beef were analysed for the presence of horse DNA. These included beef liver, beef meat, corned beef, meat balls, meat based meals, meat burger, meat stew, cooked pasta with meat filling and ready-to-eat meals for children. Analysis of these samples found no traces of horse DNA in any of the products. These results demonstrate compliance by the food industry.

View full results on our website at <http://bit.ly/1BaRP6p>



EU Consultation on Quality of Drinking Water

The EU has opened a public consultation on the Quality of Drinking Water in the EU. The aim of this consultation is to get a better understanding of citizens' views on the need and the possible range of actions which could be undertaken to improve the supply of high quality drinking water. The results of the consultation will be used as input to decide if and where the EU Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC might need improvement. The consultation is open now and will run until 23 September 2014.

You can access the consultation on the European Commission website at <http://bit.ly/1r0yKEj>

New Rules for Nutrition Labelling of Prepacked Foods

With the introduction of the new regulation on food information to consumers (Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011) on 13 December this year, many food manufacturers, and those labelling foods, are required to make changes to the nutrition declaration on their labels.

The new rules on nutrition labelling will apply from 13 December 2014, to all manufacturers who currently declare nutrition information on a voluntary basis or due to a claim being made on the label. Those food products that do not currently provide nutrition information on their label have until 13 December 2016 to comply with these new rules. After this date nutrition declaration becomes **mandatory** for all prepacked foods with only some exceptions (see Annex V of the Regulation for exemptions).

In the new labelling format the order of the nutrients has changed and salt must now be declared instead of sodium. Table 1 shows how the nutrients must now be presented.

Table 1: Mandatory Nutrition Declaration

	Per 100g/ml
Energy	kJ/Kcal
Fat	g
Saturates	g
Carbohydrates	g
Sugars	g
Protein	g
Salt	g

Manufacturers also have the option to add one or more **supplementary nutrients** from the list provided in Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 and so the nutrition declaration could look like this (if all supplementary nutrients are declared) (Table 2).

Table 2: Mandatory nutrition declaration with supplementary nutrients

	Per 100g/ml
Energy	kJ/kcal
Fat	g
of which saturates	g
of which monounsaturates	g
of which polyunsaturates	g
Carbohydrate	g
of which sugars	g
of which polyols	g
of which starch	g
Fibre	g
Protein	
Salt	g
Vitamins and Minerals	Units specified in Annex XIII & % RI Values

■ Mandatory ■ Supplementary

Once the mandatory and the supplementary nutrients are declared, no other nutrient can be added to the nutrition declaration as it is a 'closed list'. Where another nutrient, not on this list, must be declared on the label, as a result of a requirement of the nutrition claims legislation, this nutrient must be declared below, but not in, the nutrition table.

As before, the nutrition declaration must be declared per 100 g/ml, using the specific units for each nutrient. The nutrition information declared on the label must not be compromised by other non-essential information and must be declared in tabular format (unless space is an issue on the label).

Per Portion

In addition to the mandatory nutrition declaration per 100 g/ml, manufacturers may also declare the amount of nutrients per portion and/or per consumption unit, provided that these are easily recognisable by the consumer purchasing the product, that the label also indicates the size of the portion or consumption unit and that the number of these portions/consumption units contained in the product is stated. In this case, the nutrition table may look like this (Table 3):

Table 3: Mandatory nutrition declaration with 'per portion' information

	Per 100g/ml	Per Biscuit*
Energy	kJ/Kcal	kJ/Kcal
Fat	g	g
Saturates	g	g
Carbohydrates	g	g
Sugars	g	g
Protein	g	g
Salt	g	g

■ Mandatory ■ Supplementary

Reference Intakes

Along with the mandatory nutrition declaration shown in Table 1, % Reference Intake (RI) values (listed in Annex XIII to the Regulation) may also be provided on a voluntary basis. This optional declaration can be given per 100 g/ml or per portion. Where the % RI is provided for these nutrients the following statement must be indicated in close proximity: '*Reference intake of an average adult (8400kJ/2000kcal)*'. Where supplementary information on vitamins and minerals is declared, % RI values for these vitamins and minerals must always be given in addition to the amount (see Table 7). Below are a number of examples showing voluntary declarations with % RI given (Tables 4, 5 and 6):

Table 4: Mandatory nutrition declaration with voluntary % RI per 100g

	Per 100g/ml	% Reference Intake Per 100g
Energy	kJ/Kcal	%
Fat	g	%
Saturates	g	%
Carbohydrates	g	%
Sugars	g	%
Protein	g	%
Salt	g	%

■ Mandatory ■ Voluntary/Optional

Table 5: Mandatory nutrition declaration with voluntary portion information and % RI per 100g

	Per 100g	Per Biscuit (10g) *	% RI per 100g
Energy	kJ/Kcal	kJ/Kcal	%
Fat	g	g	%
Saturates	g	g	%
Carbohydrates	g	g	%
Sugars	g	g	%
Protein	g	g	%
Salt	g	g	%

■ Mandatory ■ Voluntary/Optional

*This pack contains 10 biscuits

Table 6: Mandatory nutrition declaration with portion information and % RI values per 100g and per portion

	Per 100g	Per Biscuit (10g) *	% Reference Intake Per 100g	% Reference Intake per Biscuit
Energy	kJ/Kcal	kJ/Kcal	%	%
Fat	g	g	%	%
Saturates	g	g	%	%
Carbo-hydrates	g	g	%	%
Sugars	g	g	%	%
Protein	g	g	%	%
Salt	g	g	%	%

■ Mandatory ■ Voluntary/Optional

*This pack contains 10 biscuits

Table 7: Mandatory nutrition declaration with supplementary information on vitamins and minerals

	Per 100g/ml
Energy	kJ/Kcal
Fat	g
Saturates	g
Carbohydrates	g
Sugars	g
Protein	g
Salt	g
Vitamin A	µg (..%)
Vitamin C	mg (..%)
Iron	mg (..%)
Calcium	mg (..%)

Repeating Nutrition Information on Front of Pack

Where the mandatory nutrition information is declared on the label, certain nutrients may be repeated in the 'principal field of vision', i.e. the front of pack. This repeated information is a voluntary measure but where manufacturers choose to repeat this information, it must be as follows:

- Energy only
or
- Energy along with fat, saturates, sugar and salt.

This repeated information may be provided per 100 g/ml only; per 100 g/ml and per portion; or on a per portion basis only.

When repeating the information on a per portion basis only, energy, fat, saturates, sugar and salt must all be declared. However, in addition, the energy value per 100 g/ml must also be indicated.

The repeated information may also be given as % RI per 100 g/ml and/or % RI per portion. Where the % RI information is provided on a per portion basis only, the following statement will also be required (if it is not already elsewhere on the label) – 'Reference intake of an average adult (8400kJ/2000kcal)'.

Font Size

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 has also introduced a minimum font size for all of the mandatory information and where nutrition information is declared on the label, it must also comply with this minimum font size. The mandatory information must appear on the label in characters using a font size where the x-height is equal to or greater than 1.2 mm. This is covered in Annex IV of the Regulation.



Transition Period

The legislation allows for any food which has been placed on the market or labelled prior to the 13 December 2014, which is not in compliance with the new nutrition format, to be marketed until stocks of the food are exhausted. Any food labelled after this date must comply with the new rules.

Exemptions

The following foods are exempted from having to declare nutrition information:

- Unprocessed products that comprise a single ingredient or category of ingredients
- Processed products which the only processing they have been subjected to is maturing and that comprise a single ingredient or category of ingredients
- Waters intended for human consumption including those where the only added ingredients are carbon dioxide and/or flavourings
- A herb, a spice or mixtures thereof
- Salt and salt substitutes
- Table top sweeteners
- Products covered by Directive 1999/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 February 1999 relating to coffee extracts and chicory extracts, whole or milled coffee beans and whole milled decaffeinated coffee beans

- Herbal and fruit infusions, tea, decaffeinated tea, instant or soluble tea or tea extract, decaffeinated instant or soluble tea or tea extract, which do not contain added ingredients other than flavourings which do not modify the nutritional value of the tea
- Fermented vinegars and substitutes for vinegar, including those where the only added ingredients are flavourings
- Flavourings
- Food additives
- Processing aids
- Food enzymes
- Gelatine
- Jam setting compounds
- Yeast
- Chewing gums
- Food in packaging or containers the largest surface of which has an area of less than 25 cm²
- Food, including handcrafted food, directly supplied by the manufacturer of small quantities of products to the final consumer or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer.

Accessing Regulation and Further Information

For more information and guidance on this new Regulation please visit our website at <http://bit.ly/1qUGv7s>

Legislation Update



Food Additives in Meat Preparations

Commission Regulation (EU) No. 601/2014 amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the food categories of meat and the use of certain food additives in meat preparations was published in the EU Official Journal in June.

Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 1333/2008 lays down a Union list of food additives approved for use in foods and their conditions of use. This amending Regulation extends the permitted use of certain additives to meat preparations and these include the use of:

- Acetic acid and acetates (E 260 - 263), Lactic acid and lactates (E 270, E 325-327), Ascorbic acid and ascorbates (E 300 - 302), Citric acid and citrates (E 330 - 333), as acidity regulators, preservatives and/or anti-oxidants to prevent oxidation and/or rancidity and to increase microbiological stability are authorised in all meat preparations to which ingredients other than additives or salt have been added
- Phosphoric acid – phosphates – di – tri – and polyphosphates (E 338 - 452) as humectant to prevent the loss of meat juices during further processing, in particular when the brine has been injected, is authorised. However, in order to limit further exposure to added phosphates in food, the extension of the use of these phosphates is limited to certain listed traditional products and to burger meat with a minimum vegetable and/or cereal content of 4% mixed within the meat
- Alginate (E 401 - 404), Carrageenan (E 407), Processed eucheama seaweed (E 407a), Locust bean gum (E 410), Guar

gum (E 412), Tragacanth (E 413), Xanthan gum (E 415), Acetylated distarch phosphate (E 1414) and Hydroxy propyl distarch phosphate (E 1442) as humectants or stabilisers to diminish leakage of water in the packaging and to prevent the loss of meat juices during further processing is authorised in meat preparations to which ingredients have been injected and in meat preparations composed of meat parts that have been handled differently: minced, sliced or processed and that are combined together, e.g. roulades containing minced meat

- Sodium carbonates (E 500) as humectant in poultry meat preparations in order to maintain consistency and juiciness during further preparation is authorised
- Acetylated distarch phosphate (E 1414) and Hydroxy propyl distarch phosphate (E 1442) to diminish leakage of water in preparations in which ingredients have been injected, in meat preparations composed of meat parts that have been handled differently: minced, sliced or processed and that are combined together, e.g. roulades containing minced meat.

EU Quality Terms

The EU recently published two Regulations which supplement the current rules regarding EU Quality terms. These Regulations are:

- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 664/2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to the establishment of the Union symbols for protected designations of origin, protected geographical indications and traditional

specialities guaranteed and with regard to certain rules on sourcing, certain procedural rules and certain additional transitional rules

- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 668/2014 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

The Regulations clarify the use of the EU symbols and indications on products marketed under protected designations of origin (PDO), protected geographical indications (PGI) or traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG). They also aim to simplify the application and modification procedure for registering foodstuffs by introducing easier templates. The rules stipulate that communication for the transmission of applications, information and documents is in electronic format.

The new rules also clarify that feedstuffs for animals used for production of protected designations of origin (PDOs) may come from outside the defined area under three conditions:

1. If there is no other possibility to produce the feedstuffs within the area
2. If the quality of the product is maintained, and
3. If the outsourced part of the feedstuff does not exceed 50% of the total annual animal feed.

'Mountain Product'

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 665/2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to conditions of use of the optional quality term 'mountain product' has been published in the EU Official Journal.

Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012 established a scheme for optional quality terms and also set out conditions of use of the optional quality term 'mountain product'. This Regulation supplements those conditions of use in order to prevent consumers being misled. It restricts use of the term 'mountain product' to products produced by animals in mountain areas as defined in Article 18(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 and processed in such areas. It permits the application of the term 'mountain product' to products made from animals that are reared for at least the last two thirds of their life in those mountain areas, if the products are processed in such areas.





Beef Labelling

Regulation (EU) No. 653/2014 amending Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 as regards electronic identification (EID) of bovine animals and labelling of beef was published in the EU Official Journal at the end of June.

This Regulation deletes specific rules for the voluntary labelling of beef which are set out in Articles 16, 17 and 18 of Regulation (EC) 1760/2000. From 13 December 2014, food information which is added to labels voluntarily by operators or organisations marketing beef e.g. age indication at slaughter; breed of animal etc. will not need to be 'approved'. Such information must comply with general legislation on labelling and in particular with Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to the consumer and it must be objective, verifiable by the competent authorities and comprehensible for consumers. Mandatory requirements for beef labelling (i.e. information on the origin of the cattle) remain unchanged.

New Proposed Irish legislation

Allergen rules

A copy of a proposed Irish Statutory Instrument (S.I.) titled 'The Provision of Food Allergen Information to Consumers in respect of Non-Prepacked Food' has been forwarded to the European Commission as part of Ireland's obligation under Directive 98/34/EC. This Directive sets up a procedure which imposes an obligation upon Member States to notify the EU Commission and each other of draft technical regulations concerning products before those rules are adopted in national law.

This S.I. is introduced as part of the EU Regulation No. 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers. Non-prepacked foods are foods which are offered for sale without packaging or which are packed on the premises from which they are sold and include meals sold in a restaurant or in a takeaway. The proposed S.I. specifies that food business operators must provide written particulars of

any EU identified allergen (see list below) in food which they advertise, present or make available for sale or supply. This 'allergen information' must be freely available and easily accessible before the sale or supply of the food and in a manner such that there is no possibility of confusion as to which food the information relates. In the case of food advertised, presented or made available for sale or supply by means of distance selling (e.g. internet sales), this information must be provided before the purchase is concluded and at the moment of delivery.

The S.I. is intended to come into operation on the 13 December 2014.

View details of the notification
<http://bit.ly/1nDj1W0>

EU list of substances or products causing allergies or intolerances

1. Cereals containing gluten, namely: wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, kamut or their hybridised strains, and products thereof, except:
 - (a) wheat based glucose syrups including dextrose;
 - (b) wheat based maltodextrins;
 - (c) glucose syrups based on barley;
 - (d) cereals used for making alcoholic distillates including ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin;
2. Crustaceans and products thereof;
3. Eggs and products thereof;
4. Fish and products thereof, except:
 - (a) fish gelatine used as carrier for vitamin or carotenoid preparations;
 - (b) fish gelatine or Isinglass used as fining agent in beer and wine;
5. Peanuts and products thereof;
6. Soybeans and products thereof, except:
 - (a) fully refined soybean oil and fat;
 - (b) natural mixed tocopherols (E306), natural D-alpha tocopherol, natural D-alpha tocopherol acetate, and natural D-alpha tocopherol succinate from soybean sources;
 - (c) vegetable oils derived phytosterols and phytosterol esters from soybean sources;
 - (d) plant stanol ester produced from vegetable oil sterols from soybean sources;
7. Milk and products thereof (including lactose), except:
 - (a) whey used for making alcoholic distillates including ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin;
 - (b) lactitol;
8. Nuts, namely: almonds (*Amygdalus communis* L.), hazelnuts (*Corylus avellana*), walnuts (*Juglans regia*), cashews (*Anacardium occidentale*), pecan nuts (*Carya illinoensis* (Wangenh.) K. Koch), Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*), pistachio nuts (*Pistacia vera*), macadamia or Queensland nuts (*Macadamia ternifolia*), and products thereof, except for nuts used for making alcoholic distillates including ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin;
9. Celery and products thereof;
10. Mustard and products thereof;
11. Sesame seeds and products thereof;
12. Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at concentrations of more than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre in terms of the total SO₂ which are to be calculated for products as proposed ready for consumption or as reconstituted according to the instructions of the manufacturers;
13. Lupin and products thereof;
14. Molluscs and products thereof.



New Regulations

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

S.I. No. 353 of 2014

The European Communities (Official Controls on the Import of Food of Non-Animal Origin) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations, 2014

FSAI Publishes New Monitoring Data on Sodium and Potassium Levels in Processed Foods

The FSAI has published monitoring data on the sodium and potassium content of processed foods for the period of September 2003 to July 2014. This monitoring is carried out in collaboration with the Public Analyst Laboratory (PAL) in Galway, as part of the FSAI's salt reduction programme, which began in 2003. Ten categories of processed food are sampled and monitored to determine mean levels of sodium and potassium. These categories of processed food are monitored at intervals which allow sufficient time for industry commitments on salt reduction to filter down into products available on the market. This is in line with the FSAI policy of gradual and sustained reductions in the salt content of processed foods. The interval for sampling typically ranges from two to five years.

The data generated from this monitoring programme was initially used to support the FSAI salt reduction programme and provide evidence of industry commitments to salt reduction. However, the data has also been used to support FSAI contributions to the WHO-EU Salt Action Network (ESAN), the European Union Framework on Voluntary National Salt Initiatives, the European Commission High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity, tender procurement processes for food products by some state bodies, academic research and clinicians working with patients on low sodium or potassium diets.

The relationship between salt intake i.e. the sodium (Na) component of salt, and hypertension (high blood pressure) is well established and based on a large and growing body of evidence which includes clinical trials. As such, reducing salt consumption in the Irish diet is important to help decrease the incidence of hypertension, the primary risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease includes heart attacks, strokes, and the need for heart surgery and is a leading cause of premature death and disability in Ireland.

Recent estimates of salt intake for the Irish population provided through the "National Adult Nutrition Survey" (which exclude discretionary salt) indicate that among 18-64 year olds, mean daily intakes of salt from processed foods are 7.4 g, with men (8.5 g) having higher intakes than women (6.2 g). Adults aged 65 years and over have an estimated mean daily salt intake of 6.3 g, with men (7.3 g) having higher intakes than women (5.4 g).

Results from a recent study, the Cork Children's Lifestyle Study, which investigated



the wellbeing, diet and exercise levels of Cork children between April 2012 and June 2013, have been published. In the study, 1075 children from 3rd and 4th classes from 27 primary schools in Cork city and Mitchelstown were recruited. In almost half of the children salt intakes were above the maximum WHO recommended daily allowance of 5 g/day. Salt intake was also significantly higher in children who were overweight or obese compared to normal weight children.

The voluntary nature of the FSAI salt reduction programme has yielded some significant reductions in the salt content of foods. The monitoring data collected by the FSAI has demonstrated that in some food categories, such as bread and breakfast cereals reformulation by the food industry has significantly reduced salt contents. However, reduction in salt across all categories of processed foods, in particular processed meats, has not achieved the expectations of the FSAI or the commitments of the food industry.

With the rising obesity epidemic there has been a move towards a more joined up approach at national, EU and international levels to not only reduce salt, but also unnecessary sugar and fats in our food. At a seminar in May 2013, the FSAI announced that the time was appropriate for the food industry to drive its own programme of reformulation of all foods. Food and Drink Industry Ireland has developed a 'Livewell Platform' which is designed to drive this agenda forward and provides the opportunity to transfer the responsibility for realising future salt reduction to the food industry. However, the FSAI will continue to maintain its independent annual monitoring role with the PAL, and independent commentary on the commitments and achievements of the industry.

Details of the monitoring data can be found on our website at: <http://bit.ly/1lcENeL>

Details of the May 2013 seminar can also be viewed on our website at: <http://bit.ly/1xymy7>



EFSA Opinion on Acrylamide in Food

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published (for public consultation) a draft opinion on acrylamide formation in food. The latest EFSA Opinion confirms the view previously expressed by the FSAI, which is supported by the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), that levels of dietary exposure to acrylamide indicate a potential concern for human health and levels should be as low as reasonably achievable.

In 2002, Swedish scientists and the Swedish National Food Authority reported the presence of acrylamide in a range of fried and baked foods, and further research showed that the substance is formed during the browning process that occurs naturally during baking, frying or roasting of starchy foods, such as potato or cereal based foods. Small amounts of acrylamide are formed whenever starchy foods are cooked in this way, whether during commercial preparation of food, or when food is cooked in the home. Therefore, people have been eating acrylamide in their foods since humans learned to cook.

Since the discovery of acrylamide in food, a great deal of work has been undertaken worldwide to better understand its potential toxicity to humans and also the ways in which its formation can be minimised. In terms of toxicity, the latest EFSA Opinion confirms that the main potential concerns for human health arise from studies in laboratory animals which have shown that it can lead to increases in formation of tumours in those animals, although human studies have not shown acrylamide to be a human carcinogen. However, given the potential concern, it is important to minimise consumer exposure to acrylamide as far as possible.

Food businesses have undertaken a considerable amount of work over the past 10 years to determine the ways in which acrylamide formation can be minimised. This has resulted in the production of an Industry Toolbox which details ways in which manufacturing processes can be altered for a range of different foods known to be



susceptible to acrylamide formation so that levels can be kept as low as possible.

The FSAI and food authorities in all European countries, undertake monitoring programmes on the presence of acrylamide in foods on the market. The results from these surveys are compared with so-called indicative values that have been agreed with the European Commission as being normal levels found in a range of foods on the European market. Data collated by the FSAI show that levels of acrylamide in foods on the Irish market are in line with those on the market in other countries.

The FSAI has also been working with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) to explain the way in which samples of foods should be taken for acrylamide analysis to ensure data is comparable from year to

year, and also to provide training to EHOs about the various techniques for acrylamide reduction that are available in the acrylamide toolbox so that this information can be passed on to food businesses.

In addition to carrying out monitoring activities, the FSAI produced a factsheet on acrylamide in food in 2009 and this also contains information on the ways in which acrylamide formation can be minimised, both in commercial settings and also when food is cooked in the home.

The FSAI is not changing its dietary advice, or advising that consumers avoid particular foods as a result of the latest EFSA Opinion. However, we continue to advise that consumers maintain a healthy balanced diet, rich in fresh fruit and vegetables and low in fat. High consumption of fried fatty foods should be avoided and if foods are fried, roasted or baked they should not be over-browned, and where available, manufacturers' cooking instructions should be closely followed.

Once the EFSA consultation has been completed and its opinion finalised, the FSAI will work with the European Commission and other Member States to examine whether any measures could be introduced across Europe to further reduce consumer exposure to acrylamide.

Read more information on the EFSA Draft Opinion and public consultation on their website <http://bit.ly/1mRpsEn>

Download the FSAI Factsheet on Acrylamide in Food from our website http://www.fsai.ie/resources_publications.html

Report Shows EU Controls on Fruit and Vegetable Imports is Protecting Consumers

A report published on 20 June by the European Commission confirms that the system of controls at EU borders on fruit and vegetable imports from non-EU countries is protecting consumers from potential food safety risks. In addition to the 'routine' controls carried out on these imports, some commodities are subject to an increased level of controls due to the risk associated with them. This report presents the results of controls carried out by EU countries in 2013. Over 100,000 consignments subject to reinforced controls reached EU borders in 2013. Of those, 11,808 were sampled for laboratory analysis (an increase of 11% compared to 2012) and 483 (4.1%) were found to be non-compliant with EU legislation

(as opposed to 7.1% in 2012) and therefore prevented from entering the EU market.

Some products achieved satisfactory levels of compliance and were removed from the list of imports targeted for controls. The report is published in the framework of Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 on an increased level of official controls on certain imports of food and feed of non-animal origin, which contains the list (reviewed on a quarterly basis) of imports subject to increased border controls.

View the report on the European Commission website at <http://bit.ly/1nLyEWS>

Find out more about EU import controls at <http://bit.ly/Viop57>





Dates for Your Diary

Small Food Business Start-up Seminar – Cork

Following on from the success of our small food business start-up seminars in Dublin and Galway, which took place in January and May, we will be holding another seminar in Cork on **Thursday 9 October 2014**, at the Silver Springs Moran Hotel.

The seminar is free to attend and takes place over a half-day. The aim is to assist those working in small food businesses or those who are thinking of setting up a food business. Various experts from the FSAI, the Environmental Health Service and Teagasc will give information on a variety of topics. A small food business owner will also outline their recent experience in setting up a food business.

There will be a number of Q&A sessions throughout the morning if you want to put a question to the experts. The experts will also be available after the event closes for further discussion.

For more information and to register for this event please go to our website at www.fsai.ie/events

Who to Talk to Event 2014

The FSAI will have a stand at this year's 'Who to Talk to' event which takes place on **Wednesday 10 September 2014**, at Limerick Institute of Technology, Thurles. It is a free event open to small businesses and entrepreneurs looking for information on training, education, finance etc. There are also workshops and seminars on the day, on a variety of topics.

If you would like more information on this event please contact the Local Enterprise Office, Tipperary (Tel: 0761 06 5000) or email leo@tipperarycoco.ie or visit www.tipperarycoco.ie



Taking Care of Business - Dublin

The next 'Taking Care of Business' Event will take place at Dublin Castle, on **Thursday 16 October 2014**. Over 30 State bodies, including the FSAI, will be available at this free event to provide information and advice on a range of services for business. By attending this event you will meet informally with representatives from a variety of State bodies, get practical information and advice, find out ways to save your business money and get supports and tools to assist you in your business.

You can read more about this event and register, on the 'Taking Care of Business' website www.takingcareofbusiness.ie

Event Round-up Breakfast Bites

The most recent presentation in our series of 'Breakfast Bites' was held on 24 July. The topic was 'How to Develop a New Food Product' and was presented by Ciara McDonagh from Teagasc's Food Industry Development Department. Ciara works with small food businesses and start-ups, providing advice on how they can turn their ideas into real food products. On the morning, she gave an overview of the main stages involved in developing a new product, focusing on the technical requirements and important scale-up factors.



Mr. Ray Ellard, FSAI, with Ms. Ciara McDonagh, Teagasc, who presented on food product development at the Breakfast Bites session

Visitors to FSAI

Students from Wageningen University Visit FSAI

A group of undergraduate nutrition students from the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands were welcomed to the FSAI by Prof. Alan Reilly on 8 July. Their visit was part of a study tour to Ireland to learn about public health nutrition and initiatives underway in Ireland to tackle obesity and issues around health and nutrition labelling.



Prof. Alan Reilly, CEO, FSAI, speaks to students from Wageningen University

Visit to FSAI from the Republic of Indonesia National Agency of Food and Drugs Control

Ms. Betty Noegraha and Ms. Wiwi Hartuti, from the National Agency of Drugs and Food Control, Republic of Indonesia, undertook a two week visit to the FSAI during June and July. The purpose of their visit was to get an insight into the activities and workings of the FSAI. They had a special interest in the European legislation on food contact materials, how it is enforced in Member States and the role of the public analyst laboratories, as this particularly related to their work in Indonesia. During the two weeks they also visited the Dublin Public Analyst Laboratory, the Dublin Port Authorities and the National Standards Authority of Ireland.



Ms. Betty Noegraha (right) and Ms. Wiwi Hartuti (left), the National Agency of Drugs and Food Control, Republic of Indonesia, pictured with Prof. Alan Reilly, CEO, FSAI, during their visit



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FAQ

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 FSAINEWS, we feature a Frequently Asked Question. **This issue's question is:**

What are the **New Labelling Requirements under the New Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Legislation?**

From 13 December 2014 the new legislation on the provision of food information to consumers (Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011) will apply. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions on these new requirements:

What mandatory information must appear on the label of a prepacked food?

The following mandatory information must appear on the label:

- (a) the name of the food*
- (b) the list of ingredients
- (c) any ingredient or processing aid listed in Annex II or derived from a substance or product listed in Annex II causing allergies or intolerances used in the manufacture or preparation of a food and still present in the finished product, even if in an altered form
- (d) the quantity of certain ingredients or categories of ingredients
- (e) the net quantity of the food*
- (f) the date of minimum durability or the 'use by' date**
- (g) any special storage conditions and/or conditions of use
- (h) the name or business name and address of the food business operator referred to in Article 8(1)
- (i) the country of origin or place of provenance where its absence may mislead the consumer as to the true origin or provenance of the food or where country of origin is specifically required under legislation
- (j) instructions for use where it would be difficult to make appropriate use of the food in the absence of such instructions
- (k) with respect to beverages containing more than 1.2 % by volume of alcohol, the actual alcoholic strength by volume*
- (l) a nutrition declaration (see pgs 4 and 5 for more information on the nutrition declaration)

*must appear in the same field of vision

**In these new rules the date of minimum durability or 'use by' date no longer needs to appear in the same field of vision as the name and net quantity

Are there any exemptions from the requirement to give these mandatory particulars?

Yes, there are some exemptions to the provision of mandatory particulars. The exemptions are detailed in Article 16 of the Regulation. In addition, Article 19 lists foods which do not require a list of ingredients and Annex X lists

foods which are exempt from the requirement to provide a date of minimum durability.

Who is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information provided on the label?

The food business operator (FBOs) under whose name the food is marketed is the operator responsible for the food information. FBOs within the businesses under their control must not modify the information accompanying the food if such modification would mislead the final consumer or otherwise reduce the level of consumer protection and the possibilities for the final consumer to make informed choices. FBOs who do make changes to the food information are responsible for those changes. FBOs must not knowingly sell food that is not compliant with this Regulation even if they are not responsible for the labelling of the food e.g. retailers.

How must allergen information be displayed on the label?

Allergenic substances or products used as ingredients must be listed in the list of ingredients with a clear reference to the name of the allergenic substance or product as they are listed in Annex II of the Regulation (see list of these allergens on p 7). They must be emphasised through a typeset that clearly distinguishes them from the rest of the list of ingredients, for example by means of font, style or background colour.

Example:

In this example, allergenic ingredients are in bold and italic

Ingredients: Flour (***wheat***), sugar, ***eggs, milk***, cocoa powder

Is there a minimum font size specified for the mandatory information?

Yes, mandatory information must be displayed with a font size where the x-height (as defined in Annex IV) is equal to or greater than 1.2 mm. A printer/designer should be able to advise on this. For packaging or containers with a surface area of less than 80 cm² the x-height must be equal to or greater than 0.9 cm.

What is required on the label for business to business sales?

For business to business sales, where the prepacked food is intended for the final consumer but marketed at a stage prior to sale to the final consumer, or where the food

is intended for supply to mass caterers for preparation, processing, splitting or cutting up, food information can be provided on the commercial documents referring to the food, where it can be guaranteed that the documents either accompany the food or were sent before or at the same time as the delivery. However, the following pieces of information **must appear** on the external packaging in which the prepacked foods are presented for marketing:

- Name of the food
- Date of minimum durability or the use-by date
- Any special storage conditions and/or conditions of use
- The name and business name and address of the food business operator

For business to business sales where the food is not intended for the final consumer or mass caterers, the food business supplying the food must ensure that those other food business operators are provided with sufficient information to enable them, where appropriate, to meet their provision of food information requirements.

What information must be provided for foods sold loose e.g. foods served in restaurants, delis, canteens and foods sold without any packaging?

Under the new rules, the only requirement for foods sold loose is that any allergenic substances or products (as listed in Annex II) present in the food must be made available to the consumer. The Department of Health has published draft national rules (see pg 7) which will require FBOs to provide this information in written format to the consumer. Once this national legislation has been published, the FSAI will produce a guidance document to help FBOs to comply with the new requirements.

In addition, under the current national rules on food labelling, the product name must be indicated for foods sold loose and this is likely to be maintained when national legislation is introduced to give effect to Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011.

Where can I get a copy of the legislation and find more information?

The Regulation and further information and guidance is available on our website at <http://bit.ly/1qUGv7s>

Congratulations to Dr Christina Tlustos!

The FSAI wishes to congratulate our colleague Dr Christina Tlustos on the conferral of her PhD, on 12 June, from University College Cork. Her thesis assessed the dietary background exposure of the Irish adult population to dioxins and PCBs, particularly taking into account additional exposure due to the 2008 Irish dioxin food contamination incident.



Dr Michael Murphy, President, UCC, with Dr Christina Tlustos, FSAI, at her conferring ceremony

Christina has also recently become a new member of the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes, Flavourings and Processing Aids (CEF). This panel deals with questions on the safety of use of materials in contact with food, enzymes, flavourings

and processing aids, and also with questions related to the safety of processes. It works in conjunction with The Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources Added to Food (ANS) in carrying out EFSA's work in the area of regulated food ingredients and packaging.

Consultation on Openness and Transparency at EFSA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has launched a public consultation on the discussion paper "Transformation to an Open EFSA". The aim of this consultation is to collect comments and suggestions on the paper from interested parties before drafting a policy document on Openness and Transparency at EFSA.

The paper sets forth a conceptual framework, a step-by-step methodology and a plan for the transformation of EFSA into an Open Science organisation over the next five years.

The Open EFSA initiative aims to explore how EFSA can better meet society's expectations in EFSA's second decade as the EU food safety system's scientific risk assessor. It also aims to understand the implications that increased openness and transparency could have for EFSA's organisational set up.

Further details of the consultation are available on the EFSA website at <http://bit.ly/1p67qik>

The consultation will run until 15 September 2014.

Recent Publications

The following publications were recently produced by the FSAI:

- Sous Vide and Food Safety - Factsheet
- Audit of SFPA Official Controls in relation to Biotoxin and Microbiological Monitoring of Live Bivalve Molluscs - Audit Report, Summary FSAI Close-out Audit and Corrective Action Plan
- Audit of Official Controls in Food Supplement Establishments (HSE) and Corrective Action Plan
- Audit of Official Controls in the Horticultural Produce Sector (DAFM) and Corrective Action Plan
- *E. coli* – How to Protect the Children in your Care (Updated)

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



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