

## New Control System for Food Packaging

**Food packaging is usually associated with protecting foods from contamination, but sometimes food packaging itself can add unwanted substances into foods. Earlier this year, a major recall of breakfast cereal, tainted by its packaging, cost an American manufacturer about €48 million.**

In 2011, new controls for suppliers and users of food packaging will be introduced. The FSAI announced details of these new food safety controls at its seminar on food contact materials, in November. The purpose of the seminar was to provide the industry with an understanding of both existing and new regulatory controls in Ireland.

Speaking at the seminar – attended by over 100 representatives of the food and food packaging industries – Dr Bernard Hegarty, Director of Service Contracts at the FSAI said that, in addition to existing legislation and guidelines for food contact materials, from 2011, the National Standards Authority of Ireland will check that Irish food packaging manufacturers and suppliers are complying with relevant legislation. This will be in addition to the checks that already take place in food companies by other agencies.

“Failure to comply with legislation covering food packaging can result in expensive product recalls to industry and loss of consumer confidence” said Dr Hegarty.

### Further Information

For more information on the legislation covering food contact materials, visit [www.fsai.ie/legislation.html](http://www.fsai.ie/legislation.html) or contact our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77 or [info@fsai.ie](mailto:info@fsai.ie)



*Dr Bernard Hegarty, FSAI and Dr Ron Colwell, H.J. Heinz, pictured at the FSAI's Seminar on Food Contact Materials, held in Dublin on 16 November.*

- 1 New Control System for Food Packaging
- 2 Nanotechnology – the latest technological wave
- 3 Want to Make a Complaint?
- 3 Do you use our website?

- 4 New Rules in Gluten Labelling will Benefit People with Coeliac Disease
- 5 Food Safety Workbook for Farmhouse Cheesemakers
- 5 Irish Attitude to Food Safety More Positive than European Average
- 6 Scientific Report on VTEC Updated

- 7 Visitors from Abu Dhabi
- 8 Legislation Update
- 10 Butchers Reminded to Follow FSAI Advice on Use-by Dates
- 10 Ireland's Multi-Annual National Control Plan

- 10 Date for Your Diary
- 11 FAQ: Is nutrition labelling mandatory on all food labels?
- 11 EFSA Guidance on Data Exchange
- 12 Seminar on Nanotechnology
- 12 Recent Publications

# Nanotechnology – the latest technological wave

**The application of nanotechnology in the food and feed industries offers many potential benefits for both consumers and society. The speed of this new technological application means that something can be invented one day and be on the market the next day. This is in stark contrast to previous new technologies, where it could take many years for a new product to reach the market. Participants at a recent seminar organised by the FSAI heard that nanotechnologies enable the manipulation of matter at the nanoscale level that results in new properties and characteristics that can be beneficially exploited in food production and processing.**

Some of the potential benefits for consumers include foods with lower fat, salt or sugar levels that taste similar to conventional foods; improved packaging material that incorporates nanosilver to keep food fresher for longer or nanosensors that tell consumers if the food inside is spoiled and that can facilitate improved traceability; and innovative food contact surfaces and materials that allow for improved food hygiene standards during production and processing. The potential to increase bioavailability of food additives and ingredients through the application of nanoencapsulation and to enhance the uptake of micronutrients in human and animal nutrition was also discussed at the FSAI seminar by an international line up of speakers.

While work on the development of nanofoods is still at an early stage this is likely to change in the not too distant future. There are reports of some nanoproducts being on the market but we are lacking a definitive inventory of foods or food contact materials on the EU market that incorporate nanotechnology applications. Nanoparticles have a relatively large surface area that enhances reactivity and functionality compared to their larger counterparts, features exploited in areas such as food contact materials and food packaging.

Traditional food manufacturing processes result in the creation of nanosized particles in emulsions and biological matrices that have been always present in foods. Such natural nanoscale substances have been consumed for many years without harmful effects being reported, for instance milk contains micelles ranging from 50 to 500 nm in diameter. However, nanotechnologies may also present new risks as a result of their novel properties. There are a wide variety of nanomaterials and while many of these may well prove to be harmless, others may present a risk to human health.

Our current understanding of how engineered nanomaterials, that may be incorporated into foods, behave in the human body is not sufficiently advanced to predict with certainty any possible impacts on human health. We have limited data on the functionality and toxicological impact of such nanomaterials, particularly in areas relating to the risks posed by ingested nanomaterials. Such information is required in order to effectively assess the safety of products before they are allowed onto the market. In order to properly develop, modify or in particular to implement legislation, our scientific knowledge base needs to be expanded and improved. The European Food Safety Authority is currently working on guidelines for the risk assessment of food related applications of nanotechnology that will form the basis for EU regulatory control. In addition to taking measures to ensure the safety of nanotechnology derived food, a major current challenge is the need to detect and characterise nanoparticles in complex food matrices. If it is not possible to measure such particles they will be extremely difficult to regulate.

## The European Food Safety Authority is currently working on guidelines for the risk assessment of food related applications of nanotechnology that will form the basis for EU regulatory control.

The introduction of nanotechnology in the food sector and its acceptance by consumers will depend to a large extent on the confidence people have in the effectiveness of regulatory systems in place. A recent EU-wide survey on consumer attitudes and knowledge of newer technologies showed that many people had very little knowledge of nanotechnology. Similarly in an EU-wide survey on food related risks, concern about nanoparticles in foods was identified as a key issue for consumers.

As the application of nanotechnology in the food sector emerges as a new discipline, we need to learn from the experience with GM foods and ensure timely and proportionate regulation while, at the same time, not stifling innovation and development. Public engagement is essential as consumer attitudes are critical to the success of innovations: it was against this background that the FSAI hosted its recent seminar that provided a forum for a greater exchange of views between all stakeholders.



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

**Alan Reilly**  
CEO



# Want to Make a Complaint?

**As a consumer or a food business operator, there are times when you need to make a complaint. If you are unhappy with the FSAI, an inspection or a food business, you have the right to complain, for your complaint to be investigated and any wrongdoings addressed. By making your complaint through the correct channel you can make sure you have your say.**

## To Complain about the FSAI

You have a right to complain if you are unhappy with the service we provide to you. To make a formal complaint, please contact our Customer Feedback Coordinator by post, email or telephone:

**Customer Feedback Coordinator**, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

**Email:** customerfeedback@fsai.ie **Telephone:** 01 817 1300

You also have the right to appeal, if you are not satisfied with the way in which we handle your complaint. To appeal, please contact:

**Customer Appeals**, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

**Email:** customerappeals@fsai.ie **Telephone:** 01 817 1300

We are committed to providing a quality service to our customers. Our Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan (available from [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie)) set out the standards of service you can expect to receive from us. We will acknowledge formal complaints within ten working days and respond to you in writing as soon as possible. We will deal with all complaints fairly and independently and will do our best to put things right if we have made a mistake.

## To Complain about an Inspection

You have the right to complain if you are unhappy with the outcome of an inspection of your food business, or are unhappy with the conduct of an inspector.

Inspectors from official agencies inspect food businesses on our behalf. These official agencies are:

- The Health Service Executive [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)
- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food [www.agriculture.ie](http://www.agriculture.ie)
- Local Authorities [www.enviro.ie](http://www.enviro.ie)
- The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority [www.sfpa.ie](http://www.sfpa.ie)
- The National Standards Authority of Ireland [www.nsai.ie](http://www.nsai.ie)

If you wish to make a complaint about an inspection or inspector, you should first contact the relevant official agency to find out how their complaints procedure works.

If, after completing the official agency's complaints and appeals procedure, you are still unhappy with the way in which your complaint has been handled, you can contact the FSAI or the Office of the Ombudsman ([www.ombudsman.gov.ie](http://www.ombudsman.gov.ie)). The Ombudsman can investigate complaints against Government departments, local authorities and the Health Service Executive – but you should first complete the formal appeals process of the public body, with which you have a complaint.

## To Complain about a Food or a Food Business

If you're not happy with the standard of hygiene in a food business, you find that food isn't fit to eat, or you are unhappy with a food label, you should make a complaint – either to the food business, or to the FSAI.

To make a complaint to the FSAI you can:

- Call or email our advice-line (1890 33 66 77; [info@fsai.ie](mailto:info@fsai.ie)), or
- Complete our online complaint form at [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie)

Complaints about food businesses are investigated by inspectors working on our behalf. In order to investigate your complaint, we will ask you for your name and contact details so that the inspector can reach you if they need more information; and so that they can give you feedback on the investigation. Your name and contact details are not given to the food businesses.

If you are making a complaint about a food, it helps if you provide us with as much information as possible. For example, where you bought the food, the manufacturer's name and address, the best-before or use-by date and the batch code.

## Any Questions?

If you have any questions about making a complaint, please call our advice-line on 1890 33 66 77 or email us at [info@fsai.ie](mailto:info@fsai.ie)

**Food Safety**  
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND  
FSAI Website Visitor's Survey - [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie)

1. How did you find the FSAI website?

- ☐ Chance visit
- ☐ Via link from another site
- ☐ On recommendation
- ☐ Deliberate search

2. How often do you visit the FSAI website?

- ☐ Daily - once a day or more
- ☐ Weekly - not every day but at least once per week
- ☐ Monthly - not every week but at least once per month

## Do you use our website?

Our website is one of the methods we use to provide clear and accurate information on food safety to our customers. We'd love to hear your thoughts on it, so please visit [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie) to fill in our short survey.



# New Rules in Gluten Labelling will Benefit People with Coeliac Disease

**Coeliac disease affects as many as one in a hundred people in Ireland. But only about 15% of people with the condition have been clinically diagnosed. People with coeliac disease react to gluten – a protein found in wheat, rye and barley. Some people with coeliac disease are also sensitive to oats.**

When people with coeliac disease eat foods containing gluten, the gluten damages the small intestine reducing the person's ability to absorb essential nutrients from their food. If gluten is removed from the diet, the damaged intestine begins healing immediately. Therefore, to keep healthy and well, anyone with coeliac disease needs to strictly limit the amount of gluten they consume for the rest of their lives.

## Different Sensitivities

Sensitivity to gluten varies greatly between people affected by coeliac disease. Some individuals with coeliac disease can tolerate foods containing gluten for several months, without developing any symptoms. Others are extremely sensitive and react dramatically and immediately after eating even trace amounts of gluten. For example, if a person who is highly sensitive to gluten eats a gluten-free casserole which was stirred with the same spoon that was used to stir a casserole containing gluten, they could be made extremely ill – while a person who is only mildly sensitive to gluten would have no reaction to this cross-contamination.

## Diet

Regardless of how sensitive individuals with coeliac disease are to gluten, it is very important to follow a diet for life that strictly limits the intake of gluten. This diet will maintain health and well-being, as coeliac disease can be a silent disease, showing no obvious symptoms. However, research shows that compliance with this diet is much better in those who react severely when they eat foods containing gluten, compared with those who only have a mild reaction.

## New Legislation

New legislation on food labelling will ensure that from January 2012, gluten-free foods and very-low gluten foods are clearly identified for consumers.

Until the end of December 2011, food labelled as gluten-free can contain up to 200mg/kg of gluten. But, from January 2012, food labelled as gluten-free can contain no more than 20mg/kg of gluten, while

food labelled as very-low gluten can contain no more than 100mg/kg of gluten.



This new legislation means that gluten-free foods will contain ten times less gluten than currently permitted in foods labelled gluten-free. These new rules will be of enormous benefit to people who need to control the level of gluten in their diet. The more sensitive individuals can ensure they only consume gluten-free foods, while the less sensitive individuals may also include some very-low gluten foods.

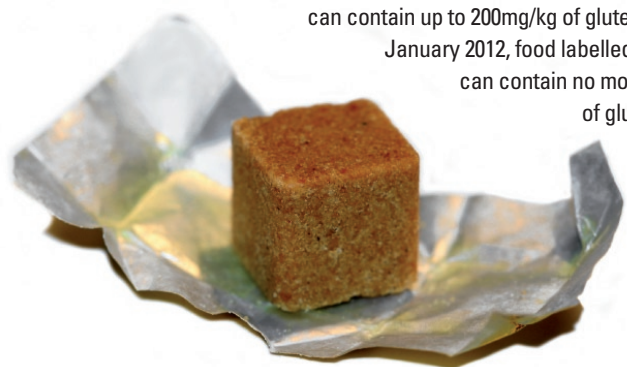
## Clear Labelling

The importance of clear labelling of foods that contain gluten cannot be overstated. It is relatively easy to identify foods that obviously contain the gluten cereals, such as breads, pastas, biscuits and cakes. But many people do not realise that gluten cereals are also present in less obvious foods, such as sauces, burgers, sausages,

stock cubes, dressings for salads, ice-creams, seasonings on dry roasted nuts and soups. The new gluten labelling legislation covers all of these difficult food choice areas that people affected by coeliac disease face on a daily basis.

## More Information

- The Coeliac Society of Ireland: [www.coeliac.ie](http://www.coeliac.ie)
- FSAI's advice-line: Tel 1890 33 66 77 or email [info@fsai.ie](mailto:info@fsai.ie)
- Guidance Note No. 24 on Legislation on Gluten-free Foods and Avoidance of Cross-Contamination during Manufacture of Gluten-free or Very-Low Gluten Products. Available at: <http://bit.ly/a1MJGV>





# Food Safety Workbook for Farmhouse Cheesemakers

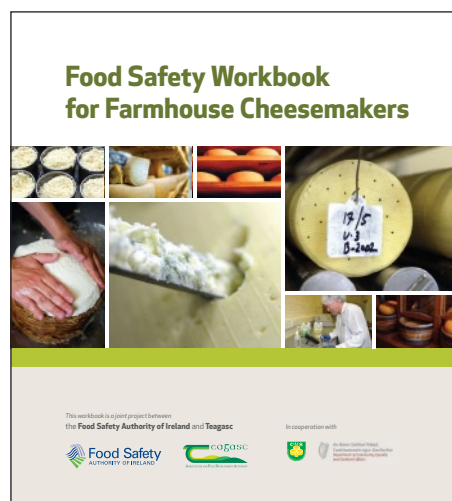
**A new workbook has been produced to help farmhouse cheesemakers meet their legal obligation to develop and implement food safety management systems which are based on the principles of HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point). This is a joint project between the FSAI, Teagasc, CÁIS (Association of Irish Farmhouse Cheesemakers) and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.**

The workbook takes a step-by-step approach to describing and recording individual operations in cheesemaking, from raw milk production right through to storage and dispatch of cheese. It will help cheesemakers identify hazards associated with each step and to verify that hazards are being controlled.

As hygienic premises and staff practices (prerequisite requirements) form the foundation of HACCP-based procedures, the workbook contains a comprehensive checklist to enable operators to check that all relevant practices are in place. A sample cheesemaking/production log is included to help in recording important food safety control data, such as key temperatures, times and acidity levels.

Hard copies of the workbook are being posted to all farmhouse cheesemakers around the country. The FSAI will be providing assistance with the completion of these workbooks, either through one-to-one consultations or group workshops, as deemed appropriate.

If you are a farmhouse cheesemaker and do not receive a copy, please contact our advice-line on 1890 336 667 or email [info@fsai.ie](mailto:info@fsai.ie).



## Irish Attitude to Food Safety More Positive than European Average

**The findings of a new Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to food-related risks show the Irish have a more positive attitude to food safety than the European average. Just 6% of consumers here cite food safety as a potential concern, compared to 11% of consumers across the 27 Member States.**

Irish consumers also have more confidence in national and European food safety agencies as sources of information about food risks, with Ireland's level of confidence at 77% compared to the European average of 64%.

When asked to prioritise their specific food related concerns, Ireland, along with Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Malta and the Baltic states opted for quality and freshness of food as their top concern.

The survey also found that while the majority of Member State respondents associated food and eating with pleasure, Irish consumers took a more pragmatic approach to their perception of food, with 66% associating food with satisfying their hunger.

Commissioned by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the survey was carried out on a representative sample of nearly 27,000 individuals, aged 15 or over in all 27 Member States during June, 2010.

Full results of the Eurobarometer survey can be found on EFSA's website: [www.efsa.europa.eu](http://www.efsa.europa.eu)



**E U R O B A R O M E T E R**

# Scientific Report on VTEC Updated

In 1999, the FSAI published a report, 'The Prevention of *E. coli* O157:H7 Infection - A Shared Responsibility', to raise awareness in all sectors of the food chain about the threat posed by this newly emergent pathogen, and how to control it. Since the original report, *E. coli* O157:H7 and other verocytotoxigenic *E. coli* (VTEC) have continued to evolve as a serious public health issue. The aim of the second edition of the report is to provide stakeholders from farm-to-fork with an overview of current knowledge about VTEC in Ireland, together with current thinking on how the risk posed can be best managed.

## The Illness

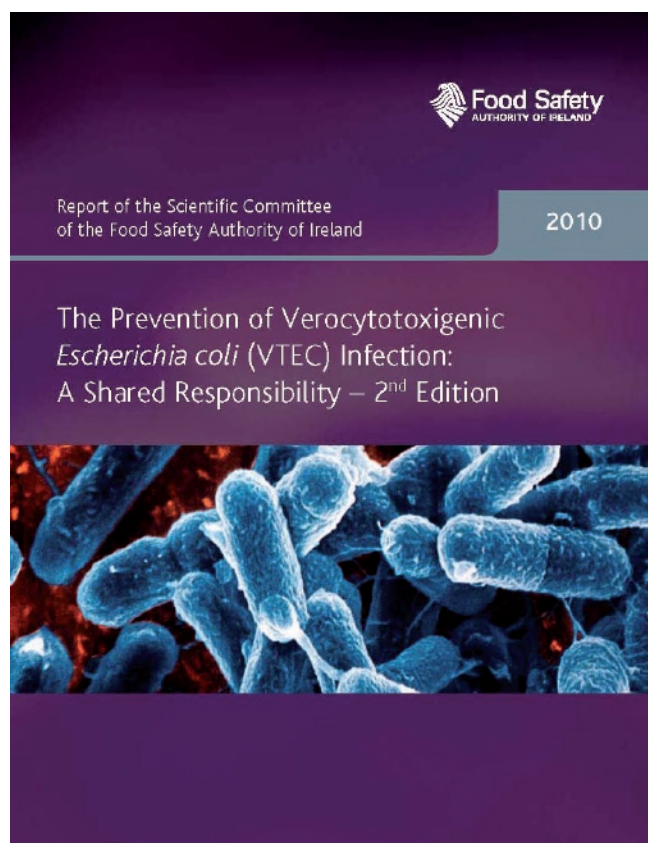
Most people with VTEC infection suffer from diarrhoea or bloody diarrhoea. However, in about 20% of cases, life-threatening complications can occur, of which haemolytic uraemia syndrome (HUS) is the most common. Approximately half of HUS patients require renal dialysis and some 3-5% die. Young children, the frail elderly, and people suffering from chronic diseases or with a weakened immune system are the most susceptible to VTEC infection.

Reported cases of VTEC infection in Ireland have ranged from a low of 1.6 cases per 100,000 in 2004 to a high of 5.7 cases per 100,000 in 2009. Although *E. coli* O157:H7 is still the most commonly reported serogroup in Ireland, other serogroups accounted for 31% of all VTEC cases in 2009. The reason for the overall increase and the continued shifting of the burden of infection towards non-O157 serogroups is unclear, though it may in part be attributed to an increased awareness and better surveillance.

## The Source of the Problem and How to Control It

Cattle, sheep and goats (and derived foods) are still considered the main source of VTEC infection, either through direct or indirect transmission. VTEC can survive for several months in faeces and in soil, providing opportunities for recycling among food animals and direct contamination of ready-to-eat food crops.

*E. coli* O157 used to be referred to as the 'burger bug' and although undercooked minced beef is still considered an important source of VTEC infection, other foods have been implicated in outbreaks.



Some of these outbreaks were due to a breakdown in process controls, while others were due to the inherently risky nature of the food. Therefore, the risk posed by VTEC contamination of foods will only be reduced if appropriate steps are taken at all stages in the food chain.

Those involved at each point in the food chain – farmers, processors, distributors, caterers, retailers and consumers – have a responsibility to ensure that the risk of VTEC contamination is minimised. This can be achieved by applying good agricultural and good manufacturing practices, implementing a food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point), and through good hygiene practices.

The risk of VTEC contamination can be eliminated from most foods by effective process controls being applied by food businesses and

Foods linked to VTEC outbreaks			
Meat and Meat Products	Dairy Products	Fruit and Vegetables	Other
Beef burgers	Raw milk	Seed sprouts (radish, alfalfa, cress)	Drinking water (public and private water supplies)
Fermented meats (e.g. dry salami and pepperoni)	Pasteurised milk	Salad	Mayonnaise
Blade tenderised beef	Cheese (from raw or pasteurised milk)	Unpasteurised apple juice	
Cooked meats	Yoghurt	Lettuce	
	Unpasteurised cream	Spinach	
		Potatoes	

good hygiene and thorough cooking by consumers. However, the risk of VTEC cannot be eliminated from certain foods, including: raw milk and dairy products made from raw milk; rare or undercooked meat, especially minced, diced, rolled joints or blade/needle tenderised meats; fermented uncooked meats (e.g. some salamis); and unpasteurised juices (unless freshly prepared). These are highlighted in the report as foods which the particularly vulnerable groups, such as young children, the frail elderly, and people suffering from chronic diseases or with weakened immune systems, should not eat.

#### What's New or Increasingly Important?

- While *E. coli* O157:H7 remains the most common VTEC associated with human illness, serogroups commonly linked to human infections now include O26, O103, O145, O111 and O91.
- Waterborne transmission has been recognised as increasingly important in Ireland. Where a food business uses water from a private group scheme or a private well, it is essential that the source is adequately protected from contamination; that any disinfection/treatment systems in place are properly maintained and monitored; and that regular testing of the water at point-of-use is carried out. Water supplies can be particularly vulnerable at times of heavy rainfall.
- Operators of open/petting farms, agricultural shows and other events in settings where faecal contamination from animals may pose a risk, should ensure that the catering facilities are suitable for the safe preparation and service of food. They should ensure that sufficient hand washing facilities are made available, to both the staff and the public, and that clear signage is erected to remind people of the importance of washing their hands before eating food.
- Farmers who open their land for organised recreational events where catering is carried out (e.g. concerts, camping) are advised to keep farm animals off the fields for three weeks prior to the event, remove visible droppings and keep farm animals off fields during use. The organisers of recreational events in farm settings, where catering is carried out, should work with farmers to ensure that the environment is suitable for the preparation and service of food.
- Spreading of untreated organic agricultural materials and organic municipal and industrial materials on land to be used for ready-

to-eat food crops, spreading of treated or untreated organic agricultural materials and organic municipal and industrial materials on land after the planting of ready-to-eat food crops, and spreading of untreated organic municipal and industrial materials on grassland used for grazing livestock, should not occur.

- Abattoir owners should have supplier specifications for receipt of animals for slaughter which ensure that only animals that are sufficiently clean and dry are accepted. Farmers and hauliers have a role to play in meeting these specifications.
- Meat processors that mechanically tenderise meats, by the use of blades or needle injection into muscle tissue, should be aware that this practice can introduce VTEC present on the surface of the meat into the interior. They should specifically address the risks associated with VTEC in their HACCP-based control plans.
- The presence of VTEC in raw foods will not result in obvious spoilage and its presence is likely to be intermittent. However, processors, caterers, retailers and consumers can play their role in preventing illness by using basic good hygiene practice, i.e. preventing cross-contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods, storing chilled foods below 5°C and thoroughly cooking meats which have been minced, diced, rolled and blade/needle tenderised.
- The high morbidity rate associated with VTEC and its ability to easily pass from person-to-person, particularly in crèches, nursing homes and institutional settings, make it a high priority for public health policy. Outbreak management and follow-up must be coordinated efficiently in order to provide a rapid, effective response to any threat. The national recommendations by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre regarding exclusion from work of high-risk food handlers should be strictly followed. Cooperation by food businesses and members of the public is vital.

VTEC are an evolving group of pathogens which can cause severe and life threatening illness. The risks posed can be minimised by appropriate concerted action throughout the food chain. To ensure this message reaches all sectors, the FSAI will follow-up publication of this report with sector-specific leaflets highlighting key control measures.

This report is available on our website: <http://bit.ly/exzayR>

## Visitors from Abu Dhabi

The FSAI and the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA) recently signed a memorandum of understanding that aims to strengthen cooperation between the two agencies in the area of food safety. Staff of the ADFCA visited the FSAI in November, to explore means of cooperation and to gain an understanding of our core business functions.



*Pictured at the recent visit to the FSAI by the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA) are (l-r): Dr Frank Monahan, UCD; Dr Gerry Downey, Teagasc; Mr Hassan Mohamed Al Marzouqi, ADFCA; Prof Alan Reilly, FSAI; Dr Mariam Hareb Sultan; Ms Rima Zumot; Mr Saeed Al Kaabi; and Ms Asma Abdi Mohammed, ADFCA.*



# Legislation Update

## Irish Legislation

### Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 (Amendment of First Schedule) Order, 2010 (S.I. No. 494 of 2010)

This statutory instrument amends the First Schedule to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. This Act places responsibility on the FSAI to enforce food legislation which is either:

- specified in Part I, II or III of the FSAI Act or
- is an Act or Statutory Instrument made under the European Communities Act, 1972, and deemed to be food legislation.

The S.I. amends the list of legislation which is specified in the Act in order to reflect newly introduced EU Regulations or newly published Irish S.I.s which transpose EU legislation, or revoke and replace previous S.I.s.

### European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 497 of 2010)

These Regulations introduced by the Department of Health and Children, contain enforcement provisions to give further effect to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, which was transposed by the European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 369 of 2006). They amend Regulation 18 of S.I. No. 369 of 2006, to include the requirement that the courts, unless there are special and substantial reasons not to do so, order that parties convicted of an offence pay any costs/expenses incurred by the FSAI and/or an official agency.

### European Communities (General Food Law) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 498 of 2010)

These Regulations published by the Department of Health and Children, contain enforcement provisions to give further effect to Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety, insofar as those provisions relate to food. The Regulation is transposed by the European Communities (General Food Law) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 747 of 2007). This S.I. amends Regulation 25 of S.I. No. 747 of 2007, to include the requirement that the courts, unless there are special and substantial reasons not to do so, order that parties convicted of an offence pay any costs/expenses incurred by the FSAI and/or official agencies.

### European Communities (Labelling, Presentation and Marketing of Wines) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 507 of 2010)

These Regulations published by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food transpose the EU regulations governing the labelling and marketing of wine.

A person who markets or imports wine must label a wine in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 607/2009 as amended, and maintain the necessary specified records.

A summary offence under this S.I. may be prosecuted by: the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; the Revenue Commissioners, or the Health Service Executive.

### Sweeteners in Food

European Communities (Additives, Colours and Sweeteners in Foodstuffs) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 522 of 2010) and European Communities (Additives, Colours and Sweeteners in Foodstuffs) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 534 of 2010).

These S.I.s, published by the Department of Health and Children, give effect to Directive 2009/163/EU which amends Directive 94/35/EC with regard to neotame, and to Commission Directive 2010/37/EU which amends Directive 2008/60/EC with regard to laying down specific purity criteria for neotame.

Neotame is a highly intense sweetener with a sweetness potency ranging from 7,000 to 13,000 times that of sucrose. It may be used as a replacement for sucrose or other sweeteners in a broad range of food products and can be used alone or with other sweeteners. In addition, neotame can modify the flavour of foods and beverages. Directive 2009/163/EU permits the use of neotame in the same food applications as the other currently permitted intense sweeteners and it is assigned the E number: E 961.

## EU legislation

### Food Additives

Commission Directive 2010/69/EU amending the Annexes to Directive 95/2/EC on food additives other than colours and sweeteners was published in the Official Journal of the EU, on the 23 October 2010.

In accordance with Article 31 of Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008, until the establishment of the EU lists of food additives, as provided for in Article 30 of that Regulation, is completed, the Annexes to Directive 95/2/EC may be amended, where necessary, by measures adopted by the Commission. This amending Directive takes account of developments in the field of food additives since the adoption of Directive 95/2/EC, including extending the use of some food additives – e.g. L-cysteine (E920) is now permitted by this Directive for use in biscuits for infants and young children – as well as authorising the use of a number of new additives and assigning 'E' numbers to those new additives. Included in the list of new additives are:

- Polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) as a film-coating agent for food supplements that are in the form of capsules and tablets: E 1203
- Cassia gum acting as gelling agent and thickener: E 427

The Regulation came into effect on the 12 November 2011 and Member States must implement its provisions of the by 1 April 2011 at the latest.

Commission Directive 2010/67/EU amending Directive 2008/84/EC laying down specific purity criteria on food additives other than colours and sweeteners, was published in the Official Journal on





21 October 2010. As well as amending the purity criteria for certain food additives, it adopts purity criteria specifications for newly adopted food additives.

## European Union publications

### Food Supplements: National Contact Points

The European Commission has published on its website an updated list of competent authorities of the Member States within the meaning of Article 4(6) of Directive 2002/46 on food supplements.

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/supplements/food\\_supplements\\_authorities.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/supplements/food_supplements_authorities.pdf)



### Fortification, Vitamins and Minerals: National Contact Points

The European Commission has published on its website an updated list of competent authorities of the Member States within the meaning of Article 17(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1925/2006 on derogations for vitamins and minerals and their forms not included in the Regulation.

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/vitamins/comp\\_auth\\_1925\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/vitamins/comp_auth_1925_2006_en.pdf)



### Aflatoxins in Food

The European Commission has published a guidance document for enforcement authorities, which focuses mainly on the official control of aflatoxin contamination in food products which are subject to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1152/2009 (import of certain foodstuffs from certain third countries due to contamination risk

by aflatoxins). The provisions in the guidance document are also applicable, where relevant, to the control of aflatoxins in food products not subject to the Regulation.

<http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/chemicalsafety/contaminants/guidance-2010.pdf>



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

### S.I. No. 475 of 2010

Diseases of Animals Act 1966 (Notification and Control of Animal Diseases) (Amendment) Order, 2010

### S.I. No. 476 of 2010

Diseases of Animals Act 1966 (First Schedule) Order, 2010

### S.I. No. 488 of 2010

European Communities (Food and Feed Hygiene) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 2010

### S.I. No. 494 of 2010

Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998 (Amendment of First Schedule) Order, 2010

### S.I. No. 497 of 2010

European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010

### S.I. No. 498 of 2010

European Communities (General Food Law) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010

### S.I. No. 507 of 2010

European Communities (Labelling, Presentation and Marketing of Wines) Regulations, 2010

### S.I. No. 522 of 2010

European Communities (Additives, Colours and Sweeteners in Foodstuffs) (Amendment) Regulations, 2010

### S.I. No. 534 of 2010

European Communities (Additives, Colours and Sweeteners in Foodstuffs) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2010

# Butchers Reminded to Follow FSAI Advice on Use-by Dates

**When selling chicken fillets previously packaged in gas flushed bulk packs, butchers should follow the advice given in the FSAI's factsheet: Retail Display of Poultry from Opened Gas Flushed Packs. The factsheet gives guidance on best practice for opening gas flushed bulk packs, storage temperature and applying use-by dates.**

These recommendations are made following the publication of the FSAI's survey into the microbiological quality of raw chicken fillets, which were received by butchers in gas flushed bulk packs, and

sold loose to the consumer. Of the 138 samples tested, 15% were unsatisfactory for aerobic colony count and 5% were unsatisfactory for *Pseudomonas* spp. at the point of sale. Unsatisfactory levels of these bacteria indicate that the fillets may be a concern with respect to spoilage rather than safety. Given that consumers may then store these fillets in the fridge at home, there is a strong possibility that some of these fillets would show signs of physical spoilage (smell, taste or appearance) when the consumers went to prepare and cook them.

Although the survey found that the majority of butchers (92%) stored chicken fillets at the recommended temperature of 5°C or cooler; 8% did not provide a use-by date (as required by law) and 23% provided a use-by date for which they had no basis.



## Ireland's Multi-Annual National Control Plan

**Official food controls have evolved over the past number of years to afford a high level of protection of consumers' health and interests in relation to food consumed, produced, distributed and marketed in the European Union.**

Incremental changes to legislation have focused on ways to harmonise official feed and food controls with the introduction, in 2007, of a requirement for all Member States to introduce integrated multi-annual national control plans. The provisions of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 aim to integrate national official food controls covering all stages of production, trade, and placing on the market – essentially a farm-to-fork approach. The regulation sets out the general approach that must be taken, and the principles that must be adopted, by the authorities in Member States that have responsibility for monitoring and enforcing food and feed law, and those relating to animal health, animal welfare and plant health.

### Ireland's Plan

In 2007, Ireland developed its first five year Multi-Annual National Control Plan, for official controls across the food and feed chain, to also cover animal health and welfare, and plant health. It demonstrates how Ireland ensures that the activities by all of the official agencies involved in food control are effectively coordinated, and provides stakeholders with information on Ireland's food and feed official controls.

The overall objective is to deliver a food control programme that is risk-based and proportionate, that protects public, animal and plant health, and consumers' interests without imposing unnecessary burdens on the food sector. This is achieved by collaborating with all stakeholders, by coordinating the enforcement of food legislation across all national agencies, and by ensuring that enforcement actions are underpinned by the best scientific evidence available.

### Submission to the European Commission

Member States must submit a report on how their plan is implemented to the European Commission each year. The 2009 report from Ireland was recently submitted. It demonstrates that Ireland enforces food and feed law, and monitors and verifies that relevant requirements are met. It shows that systems of official controls and other appropriate surveillance and monitoring activities – covering all stages of production, processing and distribution of food and feed – are maintained.

Reporting on how the plan is implemented in Ireland provides valuable information on controls in the food and feed chain and highlights if adjustments to the plan are required. This ultimately leads to improved controls across all sectors.

The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission checks overall compliance with food and feed legislation in Member States and uses national food control plans as the basis for its national audit programmes. The overall control programme in Ireland was audited by the FVO in 2008, with a follow-up mission in May 2010. Ireland compared favourably against similar audits in other EU Member States.

### Further Reading

Annual Report 2009 on Ireland's National Control Plan. Available at: <http://bit.ly/d46nDs>

## Date for your Diary:

### CATEX 2011

**Date:** 8-10 February

**Location:** RDS, Dublin

**Who should attend:** Those working in the food service and allied sectors.

Visit the FSAI's information stand at Stand C18.

[www.catexexhibition.com/](http://www.catexexhibition.com/)





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

## Is nutrition labelling mandatory on all food labels?

**No.** Nutrition labelling is only mandatory when a nutrition claim is made about the food. For example, the food is marketed as 'low in sugar', 'high in fibre', 'low in salt', or a 'source of vitamin C'. Manufacturers may also voluntarily include nutrition information on a label, even if no nutrition claim is made. However, whether given voluntarily or as a result of a claim being made, nutrition labelling must follow the rules set out in Directive 90/496/EC on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs, as amended.

### Format

Nutrition labelling information should be given in the form of a table – unless space is limited, in which case the information can appear in a line.

Nutrition information should be displayed in one of two formats: Group 1 or Group 2. The Group 1 format gives information on energy, protein, carbohydrate and fat.

The Group 2 format gives information on energy, protein, carbohydrate, sugars, fat, saturates, fibre and sodium. The units to be used for each nutrient are specified in the legislation. Information must be given per 100g of product (or 100ml for liquids), while information per typical serving can also be provided if desired.

Group 1		Group 2	
Nutrition information	Per 100 g	Nutrition information	Per 100 g
Energy	170kJ/40kcal	Energy	826 kJ (194kcal)
Protein	2.0g	Protein	8.7g
Carbohydrate	5.3g	Carbohydrate of which sugars	39.4g 0.3g
Fat	12.g	Fat of which saturates	1.3g 0.7g
		Fibre	5.7g
		Sodium	0.6g

Information can also be included on starch, polyols, monounsaturates, polyunsaturates

and cholesterol. These should be listed in the nutrition table as components of carbohydrates in the case of starch, or of fat for the remainder. The amounts of vitamins and minerals listed in the legislation can also be included, provided they are present in the food in a significant amount; that is, present at or above 15% of their RDA (recommended daily amount). The amounts of vitamins and minerals can be given with either the Group 1 or Group 2 format, and must include the % RDA.

Nutrition information generally relates to the food as purchased, i.e. before preparation or cooking. However, it may be more useful to give the information for the prepared product, in which case the label must clearly state that this is the case and give clear instructions for preparation of the food.

### Further Reading

Directive 90/496/EC on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs, as amended. Available at: [http://www.fsai.ie/legislation/food\\_legislation.html](http://www.fsai.ie/legislation/food_legislation.html)

Labelling of Food in Ireland 2007. Available at: [www.fsai.ie/resources\\_publications.html](http://www.fsai.ie/resources_publications.html)

## EFSA Guidance on Data Exchange

In November, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published its Guidance on Data Exchange. This guidance complements the Standard Sample Description Guidance published in January.

Data collection is an important task of EFSA and a fundamental component of risk assessment. EFSA receives large volumes of data from across the EU, and so mandated a Technical Working Group on Data Collection to develop a harmonisation proposal for the collection of analytical measurement data for the presence of chemical substances in food, feed and water.

The Guidance on Standard Sample Description for Food and Feed, specifies the data elements to be recorded about samples and analytical results. The working group aimed to build a description as general as possible to facilitate its application to a wide range of measurements taken for food and feed safety assessment. This second Guidance on Data Exchange specifies the procedures to efficiently transmit and exchange data between Member States and EFSA, including file formats for data transmission (e.g. XML) and specific data transmission protocols to support electronic data exchange.

These two guidance documents are the culmination of working group's work over the past 16 months. Together they define the information content and transmission mechanisms by which standardised EU-wide

data can be collated by EFSA for chemical and pesticide data. It is anticipated that these will be extended and adapted to cater for microbiological data.

EFSA recognise that the ability of each Member State to transmit data to EFSA according to the standard data model will vary. Both documents should therefore be viewed as guidance for Member States, to be used when planning the future development and evolution of local, regional and national systems. The harmonisation of data transmissions from Member States is a fundamental step for the development of an effective EFSA data warehouse.

### Further Information

Please contact: [eodea@fsai.ie](mailto:eodea@fsai.ie)

- Guidance on Standard Sample Description (29 Jan 2010). Available at: [www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1457.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1457.htm)
- Guidance on Data Exchange (5 Nov 2010). Available at: [www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1895.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/scdoc/1895.htm)

## Seminar on Nanotechnology

The FSAI hosted a seminar in November, on the use of nanotechnology in food production, processing and packaging. The seminar was attended by representatives of Government departments and agencies, academia, food industry and other stakeholders. The line-up of national and international speakers elaborated on the science behind nanomaterials and their various applications (nanotechnologies) as well as the challenges facing researchers, regulators and policy makers in ensuring that this relatively new scientific discipline reaches its full potential safely.



*Pictured at the seminar (l-r): Dr. Pat O'Mahony, FSAI, Dr. Bernadene Magnuson, Cantox Health Sciences International, Dr. Anne Theobald, EFSA, Dr. Richard Canady, International Life Sciences Institute, Dr. Gordon Chambers, Dublin Institute of Technology and Dr. Michael Ryan, Science Foundation Ireland*

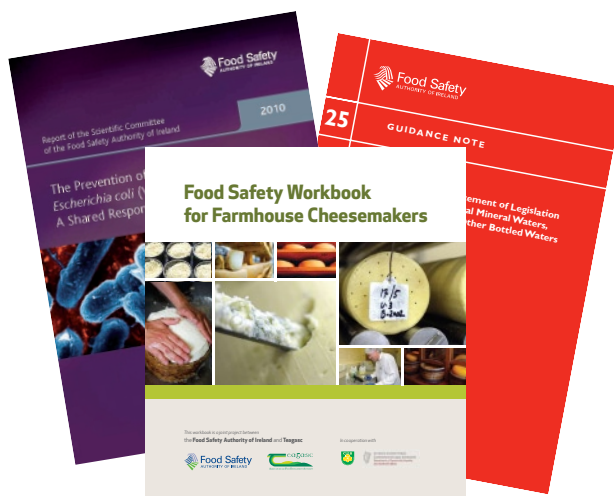
## Recent Publications

The following publications have recently been produced by the FSAI:

The publications are available on our website at:

[http://www.fsai.ie/resources\\_publications.html](http://www.fsai.ie/resources_publications.html)

- Food Safety Workbook for Farmhouse Cheesemakers
- Guidance Note No. 25 – Guidance for Enforcement of Legislation Applicable to: Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Bottled Waters
- The Prevention of Verocytotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) Infection: A Shared Responsibility – 2nd Edition



**Editor:** Helen Crowley and Judith O'Connor  
**Contributors:** Anne Marie Boland, Tim Camon, Nicola Canning, Alice Kenny, Lisa O'Connor and Eileen O'Dea.

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**FSAI:** Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

**Tel:** (01) 8171300 **Fax:** (01) 8171301

**E-mail:** [newsletter@fsai.ie](mailto:newsletter@fsai.ie) **Website:** [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie)



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## Mailing List

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

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Please return this completed form to: Eleonore Donohoe, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.