

Seminar on Health Claims and Food Supplements

The FSAI recently hosted a seminar on Health Claims on Foods and Food Supplements in Ireland. The event, attended by over 150 industry and food experts, aimed to explain the complex rules and conditions in relation to health claims made on food and food supplements.

The seminar's morning session focused on nutrition and health claims from the perspective of the food industry, regulators and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). It also concentrated on the enforcement of the legislation. The afternoon session was of particular interest to the food industry. A workshop was held on the legal requirements for food supplements, and the newly revised *Guidance Note 21: Food Supplements Regulations and Notifications* was distributed to all the attendees.

Nutrition and health claims made on foods and food supplements are regulated under Regulation 1924/2006, which aims to harmonise and control health claims made on foods and food supplements across the EU. EFSA are currently evaluating over 44,000 health claims submitted by food businesses from across the EU, with the ultimate objective of producing a list of approved claims that it has validated for use. Some 40 nutrition and health claims have now been approved by EFSA for use in the EU. These approved claims have undergone a rigorous scientific assessment, to safeguard consumers against being misled by exaggerated or false nutrition and health claims.

In the opening address, Prof Alan Reilly, Chief Executive, FSAI stated that once a claim is authorised, it can be used on products that can be distributed in all 27 countries that make up the EU – offering significant prospects for Irish food businesses and access to a pool of some 50 million consumers.

"The ultimate objective of this regulation is to protect consumers from being misled by false health claims on food and food supplements,

and to ensure that any approved claims are scientifically proven and reliable. Claims that exaggerate a food's expected health benefit or are not adequately substantiated will no longer be permitted. To date, some 38 claims have been rejected and products are not permitted to continue bearing these specific claims. Examples of such rejected claims include a chocolate that helps you to grow and a black tea that helps focus attention," Prof Reilly said.



Dr Judith Bryans, Nutrition Working Group of the European Dairy Association; Prof Alan Reilly, CEO, FSAI; and Dr Mary Flynn, FSAI pictured at the FSAI's recent seminar on Health Claims and Food Supplements in Ireland.

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Protecting Consumers' Health – Time to Refocus our Food Testing Work?

The early detection of outbreaks of foodborne disease, the identification of causative organisms and the contaminated food source are key to the protection of public health. The value of molecular typing of foodborne pathogens was again demonstrated in April and May this year. It permitted a positive link to be made between consumption of duck eggs and cases of salmonellosis caused, in this instance, by *Salmonella* Typhimurium DT 8 with a specific pulse field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) pattern. Without the precision of genetic fingerprinting, the specific source of the cause of the illnesses may have well remained a mystery.

This was not the first time that the molecular typing techniques used by the National Salmonella Reference Laboratory at NUI Galway came to the fore. Its state-of-the-art genetic fingerprinting for characterising foodborne pathogens is now central to our ability to link human illness to specific foods, food premises or animals and more importantly allow effective control and prevention strategies to be implemented.

Across the developed world, the standardised PFGE technique developed by the Pulsenet Programme in the US Centres for Disease Control is increasingly part of routine food surveillance. Standardisation of the techniques and the development of software to compare the results has enabled forensic microbiology of foodborne pathogens to move from the realms of research into the everyday. Similarly PFGE coupled with phage typing, resistance gene characterisation and multilocus variable number tandem repeat analysis are now regularly used to investigate the genetic relationship among strains of foodborne pathogens. By assisting the precise identification of the pathogens of public health significance and the identification and delineation of outbreaks, these techniques have proved their worth. Use of such techniques needs to become a standard and routine part of our national food control system.

Not all foodborne pathogens are subjected to molecular typing in Ireland. If these pathogens are to be effectively tracked forwards and backwards through the food chain, from retail and catering, through processing and farming, the use of definitive typing techniques has to become more widespread. From both consumer protection and economic perspectives, it makes eminent sense to develop one of our existing laboratories as a centre of excellence for this critical work. There is a strong case to be made to change our food microbiological laboratory analytical services in Ireland by getting one dedicated laboratory to concentrate solely on molecular typing.

During 2007 and 2008, approximately 11,000 food samples were analysed for the presence of *Salmonella* by the food microbiology laboratories within the Health Service Executive (HSE). Only one of these samples tested positive for *Salmonella*. Yet during the same

two year period the Health Protection Surveillance Centre reported 987 human cases of salmonellosis in the community. This disparity, between the identification of cases and the lack of identification of foodborne sources of *Salmonella*, questions the value of our current strategy of random end product testing as a means of protecting consumer health. Work has commenced in the HSE to target sampling resources in a more focused manner towards high risk foods and establishments. This work needs to be expedited so that the controls in place will complement food businesses' controls and allow for the early detection of pathogens in the food chain and prevent the spread of human illness caused by food.

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Also for the same two year period, the National Salmonella Reference Laboratory at NUI Galway using molecular typing of *Salmonella* isolates was able to identify clusters of cases, attribute illness to specific foods and highlight locations or sources of microbiological contamination. Molecular typing of all pathogens, whether found in humans, animals or food and regardless of whether found by private or official laboratories should become the norm in Ireland. In addition, just as in combating crime the police maintain a database of the fingerprints of suspects and the convicted, in combating foodborne illness we also need to develop a surveillance database of the genetic fingerprints (molecular typing) of the microbiological suspects whether isolated from animal, food and human sources. This is essential both for the protection of consumers' health and Ireland's reputation as a food producing country.



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

Alan Reilly
CEO

FSAI now on Facebook

We now have an official Facebook page where you'll find updates on the latest food safety news in Ireland. Become a fan and send us your comments at www.facebook.com/FSAI.



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facebook.

Bitter After-Taste on Eating Pine Nuts

Over the past two years the FSAI has received several reports from consumers who have suffered from a bitter after-taste on consuming pine nuts. All complainants described a metallic or bitter after-taste that started 1-3 days after consuming pine nuts. The after-taste only occurred on eating or drinking and progressively declined over the following two weeks. In all cases the symptoms resolved themselves with no apparent side effects. While consumers only reported the bitter taste after eating fresh pine nuts, similar symptoms have been reported elsewhere on eating processed pine nuts in pesto, or pine nuts that were cooked or roasted. The FSAI is not aware of any adverse health effects that are associated with the metallic or bitter after-taste symptoms.

Despite investigations into the bitter after-taste phenomenon by food safety agencies in the UK, France, Germany and the European Food Safety Authority, little is known about the cause. The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment in Germany has found that the aftertaste occurs after the consumption of seeds of the Korean pine (*Pinus koraiensis*), originating in China or Pakistan. They postulate that the symptoms could be caused by the presence of bioactive substances, such as triglycerides, or to the presence of proteins with effects that can induce a temporary distorted sense of taste or taste modification. Because the symptoms are reported to appear within 1-3 days after consumption, it may be that some metabolic breakdown products are formed in the body that can affect the taste receptors. Others have suggested that the after-taste may be

due to rancidity resulting from oxidation of fatty acids in the pine nuts. As the *Pinus* genus comprises species that are not classified as edible, it is always possible that adulteration is occurring and inedible species are being mixed with edible varieties.

The most recent consumer complaint received by the FSAI was in late May. The current lack of data and understanding on why and how this effect occurs limits the possibilities for advice on control and prevention. The FSAI will continue to consult with other food safety agencies and to monitor reports. If you wish to contact the FSAI on this issue or you have experienced this effect and would like your case recorded, please send details of the pine nuts you consumed and the length of time you experienced the bitter taste to info@fsai.ie.



International Association for Food Safety's European Symposium on Food Safety

The IAFP's 6th European Symposium on Food Safety was held in Dublin in June. In his keynote address, Prof Reilly stressed that in order to ensure food safety in a global market there is a growing need to build closer links between food safety authorities internationally, to develop systems for the rapid exchange of information on routine and emergency food incidents and to build trust in national food safety control programmes. In recent years there has been an expansion in the volume of foods traded internationally and a world-wide expansion in the length of the food chain. Problems that may have been localised in the past can now very quickly escalate to a global dimension. The consequences of placing unsafe food on the market can be severe for consumer health and the damage to national reputations and economic development can be devastating. The anticipation and identification of emerging risks associated with food traded internationally are challenging issues facing many national food safety control organisations. The way forward is to have robust national food safety control systems in place that can deal with food safety issues by rapidly assessing risks, communicating and disseminating information

and that can take appropriate management actions to protect consumers' health. Official national controls must be complemented by the implementation of risk-based food safety management systems at production and manufacturing level by food business operators.



Pictured at the opening of the Symposium (l-r) were: Prof Shea Fanning, Director Food Safety Research Centre, UCD; Dr Ibrahim Al-Mohizea, Vice President, Saudi Food and Drug Administration, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Mr Brendan Smith, TD, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and Prof Alan Reilly, Chief Executive, FSAI.

Nanotechnology in Food Production

With the exception of sections of the scientific and industrial communities, society in general is largely unaware of the advances made in research and development until or unless they bear fruit, usually in the form of commercial products or innovative medical treatments. This currently applies to the discipline of nanoscience and nanotechnology which holds the promise of considerable benefits in areas such as medicine, industrial goods and food production.

A survey carried out in the US in 2009 estimated that 49% of the US public knew nothing of nanotechnology, with 26% claiming to know 'a little'. A 2006 Eurobarometer survey showed that an EU average of 44% was aware of nanotechnology, ranging from 26% to 61%. Familiarity with nanotechnology in Ireland was the lowest of the 25 Member States surveyed at 26%. The Eurobarometer survey did conclude however, that Europeans did not generally perceive nanotechnology as risky, and they displayed more optimism about its development and regulation than citizens of the US and Canada.

Definition

Many types of nanomaterial are naturally found in the environment (e.g. dust particles) and in foods (fats, proteins and emulsions). Nanotechnology involves the generation and manipulation of materials at the nano-scale. These engineered nanomaterials have enhanced size-related mobility and may sometimes (though not always) possess novel physical and chemical properties when compared to their larger forms.

A nanometer is one billionth of a meter. The most widely accepted definition of nanomaterial at present is where at least one dimension measures between one and approximately 100 nanometers in size. However, while this definition sets size limits, it does not account for other physical and chemical characteristics that can be associated with size reduction and may in fact rely on the nature of the material itself more than its size. A more effective definition would ideally encompass both physical and functional aspects of nanomaterials which would clearly distinguish inert and often naturally formed nanomaterials from their engineered and more reactive counterparts.

Benefits and Risks

The incorporation of nanotechnology into food production has the potential to provide direct benefits to consumers and the food industry alike. It can be used to enhance the nutritional status of food by boosting the bioavailability of certain nutrients, while reducing the amount of fat, salt or sugar, and all without affecting desirable characteristics such as taste or shelf life. The inclusion of nanoparticles in food contact materials and packaging can improve overall food hygiene and stability while providing the tools to proactively detect and counter food contamination and spoilage. However, the main concern surrounding nanotechnology and all its potential uses is a lack of information. How do nanomaterials interact at the cellular level with humans? What is the fate or persistence of nanomaterials once inside the human system, or in the environment? How can we detect and quantify nanomaterials in various food matrices or in the human body? It is difficult at present to determine which, if any nanomaterials pose a risk to human health since analytical deficits do not allow for reliable

risk assessments. Notwithstanding this, it is widely accepted that manufactured nanomaterials, rather than those that occur naturally, should be prioritised for initial safety assessment with a case by case examination of their interaction with humans and the environment being necessary to build a risk profile.

Nanotechnology in Use

The current, and largely unheralded use of nanomaterials is limited to a number of cosmetics as well as industrial and electronic goods, with only a small number of foods (primarily food supplements) claiming to incorporate nanotechnology in their production. It was estimated in 2008 that approximately 500 commercial products were available on the US market. A 2010 report on nanotechnology by the Science and Technology Committee of the House of Lords, in the UK, estimated that up to 400 companies around the world were examining potential applications of nanotechnology in food and food packaging. With the exception of online shopping, it is difficult to identify food products on the EU market that incorporate the use of nanotechnology either in their production or packaging.

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Regulation

Currently, there is no specific EU legislation dealing with the incorporation of nanotechnology in the production or processing of food, though existing legislation is considered sufficiently robust to deal with any short term food uses. In addition, existing EU food legislation is being revised and strengthened to cater for a potentially greater use of nanotechnology by the food sector. The introduction of mandatory inventories of nano-products, proposed by a number of Governments around the world, along with the close cooperation of industry in the development of guidelines and standards should help to ensure a safe future for the technology.

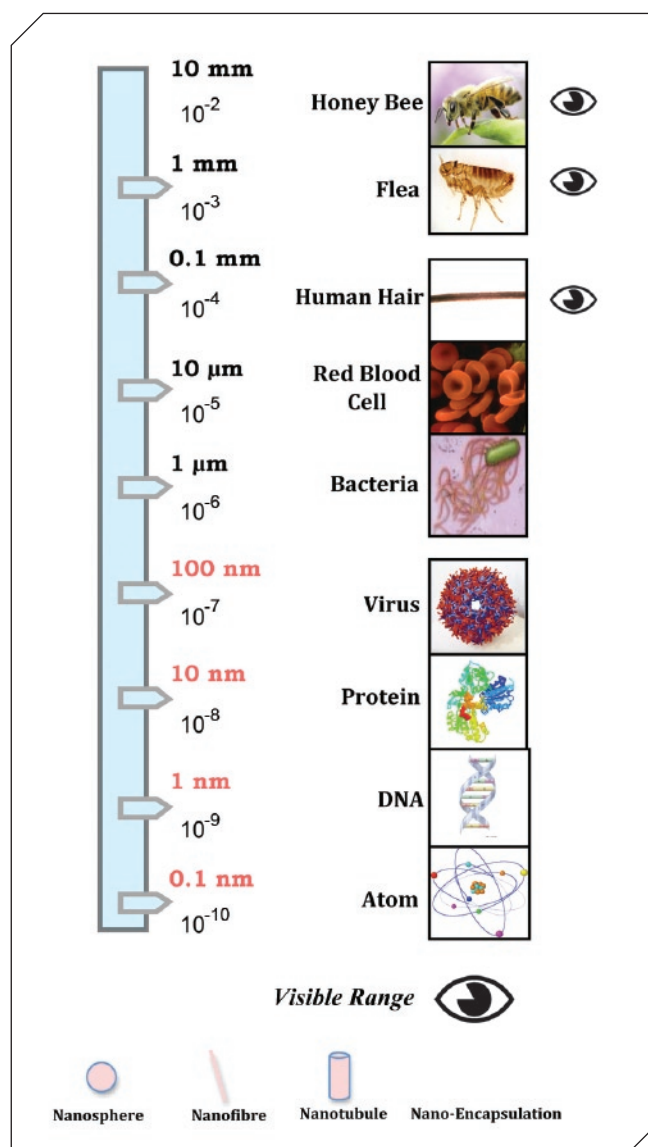
The Future of Nanotechnology

The future of nanotechnology with regard to the technological and societal benefits it can offer mankind is not in doubt. The EU Commission estimates that the value of nanotechnology could reach €2,000 billion globally by 2015, with the potential for 10 million jobs. The Commission is investing considerable funding into research on nanoscience with a view to maintaining Europe at the forefront of this technology. To secure its future, the general public needs to be reassured that nanotechnology is safe, and the Commission is leading the way in tackling the knowledge deficit in relation to risk assessment methodologies, and ultimately the safety of nanomaterials. This is an urgent issue in light of a 2009 report which found that research addressing the safety of nanotechnology has only attracted an estimated 5% of all funding available for the topic as a whole. The public also need to be kept informed about nanotechnology for them to fully accept it and in order to avoid a repeat of the GMO experience which continues to affect Europe.

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In Ireland

In 2008, the FSAI published a report of the Scientific Committee entitled "The Relevance for Food Safety of Applications of Nanotechnology in the Food and Feed Industries" which concluded with a number of recommendations. The final recommendation was that the FSAI should initiate contact with other government departments and agencies with a view to coordinating an approach to the regulation of nanotechnology and its many uses in Ireland. In October 2009, an introductory meeting took place at FSAI offices between various bodies responsible for policy making, regulation and research funding to discuss the status of nanotechnology research in Ireland, to identify national expertise and to determine if any regulatory gaps existed. Attending were the Departments of Health and Children (DoHC), Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (DAFF), Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) along with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Health and Safety Authority (HSA), Irish Medicines Board (IMB), Health Information & Equality Authority (HIQA), FORFAS, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and Enterprise Ireland (EI). The group is in regular electronic contact for the purpose of sharing information and plans to meet in 2010 to discuss progress on all aspects of nanotechnology and how it relates to Ireland. Ireland is fortunate to have an active and collaborative nanotechnology research community, counting some international experts among its members. Such a resource places Ireland in a favourable position to benefit from the inevitable global development of nanotechnology.



The Scale of Nanotechnology. Nanoparticle: one or more dimensions in the order of 100nm or less.



Pictured signing the Agreement are Mr Gerry McCurdy, Director, FSA, NI and Prof Alan Reilly, CEO, FSAI.

Agreement Signed between the FSAI & FSA NI

A cooperation agreement has been signed between the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland that aims to strengthen working arrangements between both agencies.

Following on from recent food scares that had serious impacts on consumer protection and trade North and South, the Agreement focuses on the management of food and feed incidents that straddle both jurisdictions. Both agencies agreed to initiate food control measures and joint actions, when food products that pose a risk to consumer health are discovered on the market in both jurisdictions. The agreement also includes details for communication of food incidents that occur outside normal working hours.

Restructured Meat Products

Restructuring is sometimes used by the food industry to transform low value meat, poultry and fish cuts and trimmings into products of higher value. However, restructuring is not a replacement for high quality meat cuts such as steaks and roasting joints taken from intact muscle. To produce restructured meat products sometimes requires the use of substances which will bind meat cuts or trimmings together in the presence or absence of heat. The binding of meat cuts and trimmings can be achieved using a variety of substances which allow manufacturers to produce portion-controlled standardised meat products with uniform shape, thickness and quality, using smaller pieces/cuts of meat and fish.

One of the most common binding agents is transglutaminase, a naturally occurring enzyme which is widely present in nature. The enzyme is also used in restructuring meat products such as sausages, hot dogs and restructured steaks. Transglutaminase is considered a processing aid¹ in the current EU legislation on food enzymes, Regulation (EC) No 1332/2008, as it has no function in the final product.

Another binding agent is a commercially available enzyme preparation based on thrombin and fibrinogen, both of which are obtained from animal blood plasma. When the thrombin/fibrinogen preparation is applied to meat it interacts with the meat proteins enabling binding of the meat pieces together. Unlike transglutaminase (which is considered a processing aid) this preparation was deemed to function as an additive and therefore required authorisation under the additives legislation prior to its use in the European Union. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) assessed the safety of use of this preparation, and in its opinion² in 2005, declared that there was no safety concern with its use. The European Commission then proposed authorising this enzyme preparation as an additive.

Authorisation of Food Additives

Since the amended legislation on food additives came into force in January 2010, a new simplified procedure called comitology has been introduced for authorisation of food additives in the EU. This new procedure allows the authorisation of new food additives and changes to the current uses of existing additives, following majority Member State approval and a right of scrutiny by the European Parliament³. In

May 2010, the European Parliament exercised their right of scrutiny and blocked the authorisation of the thrombin/fibrinogen preparation as an additive due to the potential for the use of the product to mislead consumers – as a result it cannot be used within the EU as it is not authorised under the additives legislation.

However, this decision did not affect the use of other binding agents (e.g. alginates, starches, carrageenan, transglutaminase). Alginate (E401) and carrageenan (E407) are approved food additives (binding agents) and any product in which they are used to bind meat or fish are required to be labelled in line with existing labelling requirements. Starches used to bind meats are considered to be food ingredients and as such must be mentioned in the ingredients list of any product in which they are used for this purpose.

Other Labelling Requirements

Other binders, such as transglutaminase, if used in the preparation of a food product, do not need to be mentioned on the product label as they are considered processing aids and do not have an effect in the final food product. However, the restructured meat products manufactured using the processing aids will themselves need to be labelled in line with the general labelling rules and in particular Directive 2001/101/EC which requires that the meat content and species is declared in a product containing meat as an ingredient. Other specific labelling may also be required depending on the substance used to bring about the binding.

It is clear that there are a number of processes available to manufacturers that allow the production of higher value products by combining smaller cuts of meat or fish. Some are regarded as processing aids, others as food additives or ingredients, and this will govern the labelling required on the product. In order to ensure consumers are not misled, the meat products themselves must be labelled in such a manner that the consumer is aware that the product is not an anatomical cut of meat.

1 A processing aid is any substance which is not consumed as a food by itself, intentionally used in the processing of raw materials, foods or their ingredients, to fulfil a certain technological purpose during processing and which may result in the unintentional but technically unavoidable presence in the final product of residues of the substance, provided they do not present any health risk and have no technological effect on the final product (the meat or fish). A processing aid accomplishes its task in the production process but has lost its function in the final product.

2 Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Food Additives, Flavourings, Processing Aids and Materials in Contact with Food on a request from the Commission related to the use of an enzyme preparation based on thrombin/fibrinogen derived from cattle and/or pigs as a food additive for reconstituting food. The EFSA Journal (2005) 214, p. 1.

3 The Regulatory procedure of scrutiny was introduced in 2006 by Council decision 2006/512/EC

ECDC meeting

In June, Dublin hosted the 3rd Annual Meeting of the European Food and Waterborne Diseases and Zoonoses Surveillance Network. Established by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the Network brought together over 100 experts in epidemiology and microbiology to work on developing systems and protocols aimed at improving early detection of and a coordinated response to outbreaks.

Pictured at the event, which was supported by FSAI, are (l-r): Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Children; Dr Joanna Takkinen, Chair of the Surveillance Network; and Prof Martin Cormican, NUI Galway, Irish representative on the Network and Chair of the FSAI's Scientific Sub-committee on Microbiology.



EFSA Adopts Positive Opinion on Steviol Glycosides

Steviol glycosides are a group of substances extracted from the leaves of the plant *Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni of the family Asteraceae (Compositae), native to Paraguay. The substances can be used as an intense sweetener and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has recently adopted a positive opinion on steviol glycosides, which in this instance are considered to be mixtures comprising of not less than 95% of two particular glycosides, namely stevioside and rebaudioside A.

Stevioside had previously been evaluated by the European Commission's Scientific Committee for Food in 1984, 1989 and 1999. The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) reviewed the safety of steviol glycosides in 2000, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2009 and established an acceptable daily intake (ADI) for steviol glycosides (expressed as steviol equivalents) of 4 mg/kg bw/day. The ADI is the amount of a substance that can be consumed on a daily basis over a lifetime without appreciable risk to human health.

The EFSA Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources added to Food (ANS) considered that toxicology studies on either stevioside or rebaudioside A were applicable for the safety assessment of steviol glycosides as both rebaudioside A and stevioside are metabolised and excreted by similar pathways, with steviol being the common metabolite for both. Like JECFA, the panel established an ADI for steviol glycosides (expressed as steviol equivalents) of 4 mg/kg bw/

day. Conservative estimates of steviol glycosides exposure in adults and in children, which were based on the use level of the sweetener in different foods as proposed by the manufacturers, suggest that it is likely that the ADI would be exceeded when the sweetener is used at the maximum proposed use levels. However, following adoption of the positive opinion, the European Commission will produce a proposed amendment to the existing European legislation on food additives to authorise the use of steviol glycosides as a sweetener in Europe.



Liaison Meetings



Attending the Service Contract Committee on Enforcement Consistency meeting in April (l-r) were: Dorothy Guina Dorman, FSAI; Martine Brennan, FSAI; Ray McLoughlin, SEHO, HSE Western; Declan Hamilton, PEHO, HSE Southern; Gerry Leen, SEHO, HSE Western; Eibhlín O'Leary, FSAI; Martin O'Rourke, SEHO, HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster; Sheelagh Mooney, EHO, HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster; Declan Mulhare, PEHO, HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster; David O'Brien, PEHO, Dublin Mid-Leinster; and Paul Henry, PEHO, HSE Dublin North-East.



The FSAI hosted a cross agency labelling enforcement working group meeting in March. Attending (l-r) were: Michael Leyden, Roscommon County Council; Damien Kelly, DAFF; Michelle Riblet, FSAI; Teresa Ryan, HSE; Andrew Flanagan, HSE; Peter Collins, DAFF; Ruth Daunt, Wicklow County Council; Anne Marie Boland, FSAI; John Byrne, DAFF; Aileen O'Sullivan, SFPA; and Elaine Croke, DAFF.

Legislation Update

Irish legislation

Marketing Standards for Crops and Oils

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have published the European Communities (Marketing Standards) (Crops and Oils) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 153 of 2010). This S.I. requires that at all marketing stages including import and export (unless otherwise provided for in EU legislation) of products of the fruit and vegetables sector which are intended to be sold fresh to the consumer, may only be marketed if they are sound, fair

and of marketable quality and if the country of origin is indicated.



The holder of products of the fruit and vegetables and processed fruit and vegetables sector covered by marketing standards may not display such products or offer them for sale or deliver or market them in any manner within the European Community other than in conformity with those standards and shall be responsible for ensuring such conformity.

Marketing standards currently exist for the following (set out in Commission Regulation (EC) No 1580/2007 as amended): apples; citrus fruit; kiwi fruit; lettuces, curled leaved and broad-leaved endive; peaches and nectarines; pears; strawberries; sweet peppers; table grapes; tomatoes.



The S.I. also sets out requirements in relation to the marketing standards for olive oils and olive-pomace oils. Under the legislation the use of the descriptions and definitions of olive oils and olive-pomace oils set out in Annex XVI to Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 are compulsory as regards the marketing of the products concerned within the European Community and, insofar as compatible with international compulsory rules, in trade with countries outside the EU.

Only the following olive and olive-pomace oils may be marketed at the retail stage: extra virgin olive oil; virgin olive oil; olive oil – composed of refined olive oils and virgin olive oils; olive-pomace oil.

Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs

The Department of Health and Children have published European Communities (Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 218 of 2010) which gives effect to European legislation setting out maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs, laying down the methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of the levels of mycotoxins, nitrates, dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, lead, cadmium,

mercury, inorganic tin, 3-MCPD and benzo(a)pyrene in foodstuffs.

The principal effect of these Regulations is to provide for the enforcement of the maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs set in Commission Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006, as amended, and to provide for the enforcement of the methods of sampling, and for the sample preparation and methods of analysis for the official control of the levels of certain contaminants in foodstuffs, for which methods are set out in the Annexes to Commission Regulations (EC) No 401/2006 as amended and Regulation (EC) No 1882/2006, 1883/2006 and 333/2007.



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

S.I. No. 153 of 2010

European Communities (Marketing Standards) (Crops and Oils) Regulations, 2010

S.I. No. 210 of 2010

European Communities (Classical Swine Fever) (Restriction on Imports from Germany) Regulations, 2010

S.I. No. 218 of 2010

European Communities (Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2010

EU legislation

Food Hygiene

Commission Regulation (EU) No 365/2010 (OJ L107, p9, 29/04/2010) of 28 April 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs as regards Enterobacteriaceae in pasteurised milk and other pasteurised liquid dairy products and *Listeria monocytogenes* in food grade salt has been published.

Food grade salt is a ready-to-eat food and as the presence and survival of *L. monocytogenes* in salt is unlikely in normal circumstances, this amending Regulation adds food grade salt to footnote 4 of Chapter 1 of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 which provides for the ready-to-eat foods in which regular testing of *L. monocytogenes* is not required.

Due to the methodological development, the analytical reference method of Enterobacteriaceae in pasteurised milk and other

pasteurised liquid dairy products is changed to ISO 21528-2. As analytical reference methods have an effect on test results the criterion limit of Enterobacteriaceae in pasteurised milk and other pasteurised liquid dairy products are also changed accordingly.

Following a recent change in taxonomy, the name of *Enterobacter sakazakii* in Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 is changed to *Cronobacter* spp. (*Enterobacter sakazakii*).



Labelling Organic Production

Commission Regulation (EU) No 271/2010 (OJ L84, p19, 31/03/2010) of 24 March 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, as regards the organic production logo of the European Union has been published.

Following an EU consultation on the internet, which ran from the 7th December 2009 to 31st January 2010, a new organic production logo of the European Union has been selected. This logo may only be used if the product concerned is produced in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 (on organic production and labelling) and its implementing regulations or Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and the requirements of this new Regulation.

The Regulation will apply from the 1st July 2010, however in order to avoid difficulties in the market the following transitional periods are introduced:

- Stocks of products produced, packaged and labelled before 1 July 2010 in accordance with either Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 or Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 may continue to be brought on the market bearing terms referring to organic production until stocks are exhausted
- Packaging material in accordance with either Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 or Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 may continue to be used for products placed on the market bearing terms referring to organic production until 1 July 2012, where the product otherwise complies with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.



Minimum size:
13.5mm x 9mm;
ratio height/
width 1:1.5

New Logo

The new organic production logo is set out in the Annex to Regulation (EU) No 271/2010) as well as specifications regarding use of colour and contrast background.

There is also a requirement that the logo must have a height of at least 9 mm and a width of at least 13.5 mm; the proportion ratio height/width shall always be 1:1.5.

Exceptionally the minimum size may be reduced to a height of 6 mm for very small packages.

Agreement Between FSAI and HPSC

Effective international cooperation is important for the control and surveillance of infectious disease. The aim of the International Health Regulations is to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. The regulations also require countries to strengthen their existing capacities for public health surveillance and response. Each country is required to establish a National Focal Point which, for Ireland, is the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

Food safety incidents can also constitute a public health emergency of international concern, and so the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) was established in 2004. This is a voluntary network managed by the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The FSAI is the National Focal Point for INFOSAN.

In May, the FSAI and the HPSC, as National Focal Points for INFOSAN and the International Health Regulations respectively, signed an

agreement on information sharing. The FSAI agrees to inform the HPSC of all INFOSAN emergency notifications issued by the WHO, or issued to the WHO by the FSAI. Likewise, the HPSC agrees inform the FSAI of all notifications related to food safety. Both National Focal Points agree to meet annually to discuss the implementation of this agreement and to update as necessary.

NSRL Publishes its Annual Report for 2009

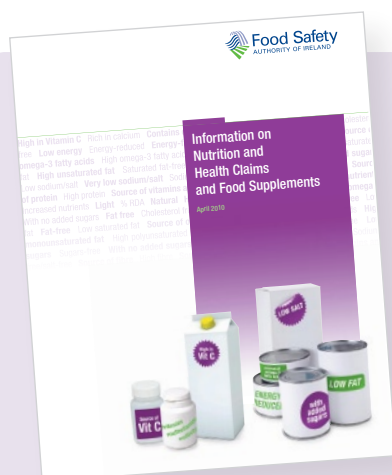
Based in the NUI Galway, the National Salmonella Reference Laboratory (NSRL) assists in protecting public health by precisely characterising or 'typing' *Salmonella* isolates it receives from clinical, food, animal and environmental sources. Using methods such as phage typing, serotyping, pulsed field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) and multilocus variable number tandem repeat analysis (MLVA), the laboratory helps identify and interrupt chains of transmission of *Salmonella* infection. The laboratory also provides typing services for *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Shigella* species.

Of particular interest in 2009 was the increase in number of isolates that represent a monophasic variant of *Salmonella* Typhimurium. Cells of *S. Typhimurium* (as with most other *Salmonella* serovars) usually have genes for two different types of flagella: phase 1 and phase 2. However, some 'monophasic variants' are only able to express one type of flagellar antigen. Although monophasic

variants have long been recognised, they have been relatively uncommon. In recent years, however, an increase in monophasic *S. Typhimurium* has been noted in Ireland and Europe. In 2009, *S. Typhimurium* and its monophasic variant accounted for 35% of the 336 isolates from human salmonellosis cases referred to the NSRL, and *S. Enteritidis* accounted for 26%. Over a third (35%) of cases

were believed to be travel related. *S. Enteritidis* was responsible for 55% of travel related cases, compared to 15% for *S. Typhimurium* and its monophasic variant.

The laboratory's annual report for 2009 is available from the NSRL's website at: www.nuigalway.ie/salmonella_lab



Training on Nutrition and Health Claims and Food Supplements

In April and May, the FSAI hosted seven interactive training workshops on nutrition and health claims and food supplements for environmental health officers and staff in public analysts' laboratories. The interactive training workshops provided an overview of nutrition labelling requirements, the framework to the nutrition and health claims legislation, the labelling requirements for food products bearing authorised nutrition and health claims, the framework of the food supplements legislation, the assessment process for food supplements notified to the FSAI, and labelling requirements for food supplements. Support material developed for the workshops is available from the FSAI website.

EFSA Initiatives on Data Harmonisation

Today, food safety monitoring in Europe is faced with an increasingly versatile food market. Tens of thousands of types of processed foods are available. Diets include thousands of composite foods prepared in homes, by catering services and in restaurants. The need to group the huge variety of foods according to different legislative requirements, while taking account of a variety of features such as biological background, source, processing method and even type of packaging and storage method, poses increasing challenges for carrying out food related exposure and risk assessments.

A number of existing databases cover various aspects of food, like nutrient composition, food consumption or the presence of potentially hazardous biological or chemical agents or compounds. Calculation of nutrient intake or contaminant exposure involves matching corresponding food records in two or more datasets. As the unique and unambiguous identification of foods by name is not practical, food records must be matched using the food information provided in each dataset through one or more food categorisation system. To date, most food classification and description systems have been developed in the context of distinct applications (such as food consumption, nutrient composition or the monitoring of contaminants or additives) with lacking compatibility.

Working Groups

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is seeking to harmonise the collection and collation of food consumption data across EU Member States and similarly to harmonise the collection of occurrence data in food, covering contaminants, zoonoses, pesticides, nutrients and others. The harmonisation of these various data collections involves procedures to clearly identify and describe foods in a uniform way, so that the information held in all datasets can be interrelated. Unambiguous categorisation of inherently ambiguous food names across disciplines and cultures is proving a challenging task.

To this end, EFSA has set up a number of working groups to achieve harmonisation, namely:

- Working Group on Food Consumption and Exposure (WG FCE)
- Working Group on Food Classification (WG FC)
- Technical Working Group on Data Collection (TWG DC)
- Working Group on the Handling of Left Censored Data (WG LCD)

The WG FCE has developed “General principles for the collection of national food consumption data in the view of a pan-European dietary survey” and is currently working on the establishment of a technical

Further information on these Working Groups is available on the EFSA website:

www.efsa.europa.ie.

General principles for the collection of national food consumption data in the view of a pan-European dietary survey.

Available at: www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/doc/1435.pdf

Management of left-censored data in dietary exposure assessment of chemical substances. Available at:

www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/doc/1557.pdf

Guidance on Standard Sample Description for Food and Feed.

Available at: www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/doc/1457.pdf

report on the use of the “Comprehensive European Food Consumption Database for the assessment of exposure”.

The WG FC is discussing different approaches for a harmonised food classification system and a colloquium “Unambiguous ambiguity – the challenge of describing food” has been organised to bring together international experts from different sectors for an open scientific debate on key issues related to the categorisation of foods.

The TWG DC has developed a “Guidance on standard sample description for food and feed”, which specifies the data elements and the data structure of the samples and the analytical results for chemical contaminants and residues in food and feed included in monitoring and control programmes (e.g. sample description, analytical methods and the analytical results).

The WG LCD has developed a report on the “Management of left-censored data in dietary exposure assessment of chemical substances”, which provides recommendations on the handling of data reported to be below the limit of detection (LOD) or limit of quantification (LOQ) in dietary exposure evaluation.

The FSAl is actively supporting EFSA in its activities and currently has representatives on three of these Working Groups.

Visit from Macedonia

Pictured at a recent visit to the FSAl are (l-r): Dr Martine Brennan, FSAl; with Dr Eljisa Asipi; Ms Iskra Jovanovska; and Dr Biljana Ivanovska from the Ministry of Health, Republic of Macedonia.





Pictured at Ulster's Placement Employers of the Year 2010 ceremony, held at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus on 22nd April (l-r) are: Ms Donna Traynor, BBC presenter; Dr Mary Flynn, FSAI; Ms Aileen Ward, FSAI; Ms Gemma Faulkner, placement student with FSAI (2008-2009); Mr Seamus McCoomy, University of Ulster; and Dr Sarah Burke, FSAI.

FSAI Highly Commended at Ulster's Placement Employers of the Year 2010

The FSAI was highly commended as an employer for student work placements by University of Ulster. This 2010 competition attracted more than 180 employer nominations in six categories. The FSAI was nominated by Gemma Faulkner, a BSc (Hons) Human Nutrition student who spent a year's placement in the FSAI from June 2008 to June 2009.

An independent panel assessed the 180 submissions and recognising the extremely high standard overall carried out the difficult task of short listing the candidates to 18 nominees, one of which was FSAI. This selection was based on the nominated placement partners who were judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the Ulster student employability during their 12 months placement.



Recent Publications

The following publications have recently been produced by the FSAI:

- Information on Nutrition and Health Claims
- Information on Nutrition and Health Claims and Food Supplements
- Guidance Note 21: Food Supplements Regulations and Notifications (Revision 1)
- Organic Food Leaflet (revision)

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



Editor: Judith O'Connor **Contributors:** Anne Marie Boland, Rhodri Evans, Mary Flynn, Karl McDonald, Pat O'Mahony, Emer O'Reilly, Alan Reilly, Christina Tlustos, Ciara Walsh, Aileen Ward, Sharon Williams

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