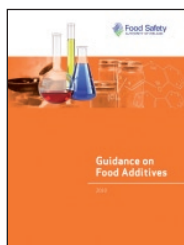




The Use and Control of Food Additives

Food additives are used to preserve food, or enhance its quality or appearance. The use of such substances in food is controlled by a comprehensive legislative framework that has been put in place across the European Community. This legislation, together with legislation on flavourings and enzymes used in food, has recently been updated with the adoption of the package of regulations covering the use of food improvement agents.



Guidance Document

Given the complexity of the legislation controlling the area, the FSAI recently produced a guidance document giving information to the food industry and enforcement officers on controls on the use of additives in food in Ireland. The document is available from the FSAI's website.

Seminar

To coincide with the publication of this guidance document, the FSAI hosted a seminar on the use and control of food additives. The event was attended by more than 80 delegates from the food industry and enforcement authorities. Speakers addressed a wide range of subjects related to control and use of food additives and flavourings.

Dr Iona Pratt, consultant toxicologist at the FSAI and Vice Chair of EFSA's Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources Added to Food, described the process involved in the risk assessment and authorisation of food additives. Dr Rhodri Evans and Emer O'Reilly, from the FSAI, provided information on the work undertaken by the FSAI and the official agencies to monitor the use of additives in foods in Ireland. Joy Hardinge, of AJH Consulting, spoke about the separate legislative controls – including the particular requirements for labelling – which

govern the use of flavourings in food. Finally, Dr Áine Hearty from the Institute of Food and Health at University College, Dublin, gave an overview of the work currently being undertaken to accurately assess consumer exposure to these substances.

All presentations are available on the FSAI's website: http://www.fsai.ie/news_centre/events/food_additive_seminar_2010.html

Training

As a follow-on to the seminar, the FSAI will roll out a comprehensive training programme for the official agencies, early in 2011. This training will focus on the legislative controls on food additives and flavourings.



Pictured at the seminar are (l-r): Joy Hardinge, AJH Consulting, UK; Iona Pratt, FSAI; Rhodri Evans, FSAI; and Áine Hearty, University College, Dublin.

- 1 The Use and Control of Food Additives
- 2 Achieving More with Less
- 3 Online Notification of Food Supplements
- 3 Food Labelling Training Workshops
- 4 National Campaign to Promote Vitamin D₃ Supplementation of Infants in Ireland

- 6 29% of Pre-Packaged Sandwiches Stored at the Wrong Temperature
- 6 Survey Questionnaires now Online
- 7 Update of FSAI's Salt Reduction Programme
- 7 Need Information?

- 7 Congratulations to our Facebook Winners!
- 8 Legislation Update
- 9 Visitors from Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 10 FSAI Passes ISO 9001:2008 Audit
- 10 FoodRisC: Benefit & Risk Communication

- 10 CIAA 'Meet the Parliament' Reception
- 11 Dates for your Diary
- 12 Golf Challenge: FSAI v safefood
- 12 Recent Publications

Achieving More with Less

Ireland is currently facing one of the most challenging economic periods in our history. Reform of the public sector is high on the political and social agendas. Efficiency and value for money will feature increasingly as the public sector comes under scrutiny. Those of us in food control will not be immune from examination. Regardless of economic circumstances, it is incumbent on us at all times to analyse what we do, the results we achieve, and to ensure that we are truly a public service.

There are almost 49,000 food businesses in Ireland, of which the vast majority take their responsibilities to produce and market safe food seriously. A high level of compliance with standards of food safety and food regulations is the norm. A number of food business operators feel that they are over-regulated and over-burdened with bureaucracy that hampers business activities. The national food inspection programme needs to be risk-based and the FSAI is collaborating with the Environmental Health Service of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in revising the risk categorisation of food businesses. The aim is to refocus a progressively limited resource on where the greatest outcome for the public can be achieved.

There is a pressing need to target resources towards high risk businesses and to focus on auditing food safety management systems for compliance with regulations. The importance of good and relevant food safety management systems within food businesses needs to be reinforced at inspections. At the same time, we must ensure a common sense approach to regulation, especially with small scale producers, and apply the flexibilities allowed within the law. Nevertheless, food safety and consumer protection cannot be compromised. We cannot afford to have gaps in controls from production to consumption; but neither can we afford to have overlaps.

Food sampling and testing is a major component of our national food control programme and we have to be certain that it is relevant. Sampling of products at the end of the food chain can be wasteful and should be limited to when there is a need for investigating complaints or on suspicion of non-compliance. The contaminant monitoring programme needs to focus on high risk foods and high risk businesses. The point of sampling should be as near as possible to manufacturing and distribution, to maximise its usefulness. Control or preventative action can then be quickly taken in the event of non-compliance and before wider distribution.

We need to expedite specialisation in our laboratories to alleviate duplication and to have a more integrated cross-agency laboratory network. All laboratories must test products using accredited methods so that inspectors can act upon results. The same methods should be applied to the same product regardless of the laboratory. We need a greater specialisation in molecular typing of pathogens in the food microbiology laboratories of the HSE, and the development of new accredited methods of chemical analyses to widen the scope of the programme.

Key to any food control programme is effective and proportionate enforcement. The range of food legislation to be enforced is increasing and with decreasing resources this is a challenge. Legislation needs to be applied consistently, so the use of annual multi-agency and single agency targeted programmes, with clear guidelines on non-compliances and follow-up action, is now a cornerstone of our enforcement programme.

We need to expedite specialisation in our laboratories to alleviate duplication and to have a more integrated cross-agency laboratory network. All laboratories must test products using accredited methods so that inspectors can act upon results.

A basic enforcement priority is to protect consumers' interests so that they are not being misled or 'ripped off' because of unjustified claims or food fraud. Labelling food products with unjustified claims is unacceptable. Passing off low value foods as high value foods or labelling non-Irish food as Irish is unacceptable. We need to continue to 'weed' out these practices so that consumers' interests are fully protected.

The food regulatory sector is not immune to change and we need to identify, on an on-going basis, reforms that may be required in the way we deliver services in the future. The task before us now is to collaborate with all official agencies under the umbrella of the service contract mechanism, to ensure that we work effectively and efficiently, targeting resources where they are most needed. We need to work with all agencies involved in enforcing food and feed legislation, to identify and manage the risks across the food chain. We also need to strengthen our system of compliance auditing, and of data collection and reporting.

Within Ireland, the agri-food sector is recognised as having the potential to make a major contribution to the growth of the national economy. The challenge for us as food control agencies is to mould a regulatory system which uses resources to greatest effect, serves consumers

by protecting their health and interests, whilst at the same time is flexible and proportionate so as not to stifle economic growth.



Alan Reilly

Alan Reilly
CEO

Online Notification of Food Supplements

Under S.I. No. 506 of 2007, any person placing a food supplement on the Irish market must notify the FSAI of their intention to do so.

Over the past few years, there has been a huge increase in the number of food supplements notified to the FSAI. As a result, we have set up a system where food business operators can now notify supplements online at: <https://supplements.fsai.ie>.

The advantage of the online system is that notifications are received immediately by the FSAI, and can be processed more quickly. In addition, the system retains details of the notifications, which provides the food business operator with a permanent record of their individual submissions.

How to Notify Online

Food business operators must first register as a user. This involves providing contact details for the company, as well as creating a username and password, which is used to log into the system.

Once you have logged on, you can:

- Access information on the FSAI's food supplement notification system
- Access information on legislation relating to food supplements
- Submit a food supplement notification
- View a draft submission
- View/revise previous submissions, and
- Update your profile

To submit a food supplement notification, you will be required to provide certain details regarding the product, such as the product's name, product description, name of the manufacturer/importer. As it is a legal requirement to submit a copy of the label as part of the notification procedure, you will also be asked to submit an electronic

version of the product label (up to 5MB can be uploaded). It is also possible to submit a hard copy of the label to the FSAI.

Once you have completed the submission page, you will be asked to preview your submission. You will then be able to:

- Edit the submission to correct any errors or omissions, or
- Submit your notification to the FSAI

Once you press the submit button, you will not be able to make any further changes. A reference number for your product will automatically be generated – please retain this number and use it in any correspondence with the FSAI.

Further Information

Further information on this notification procedure and food supplement legislation can be found at www.fsai.ie/science_and_health/food_supplements.html

Also, Guidance Note No. 21 on 'Food Supplements Regulations and Notifications (Revision 1)', is available from the Resources and Publications section of our website: www.fsai.ie/resources_and_publications/guidance_notes.html

Food Labelling Training Workshops

In September and October, the FSAI hosted five interactive food labelling training workshops for sea-fisheries protection officers and environmental health officers.

The training programme for sea-fisheries protection officers focused on labelling requirements for pre-packed and bulk fish and aquaculture products. The environmental health officer's programme focused on the labelling requirements for pre-packed and bulk products of animal and non-animal origin.

This series of labelling training workshops will conclude in November with two one-day workshops for the Local Authority Veterinary Service.

National Campaign to Promote Vitamin D₃ Supplementation of Infants in Ireland

During autumn 2010, the Health Service Executive (HSE) will roll out a campaign to implement the policy of the Department of Health and Children and the FSAI's evidence-based recommendations relating to vitamin D₃ supplementation of all infants in Ireland.

Vitamin D is an essential fat soluble vitamin found in a limited number of foods such as oily fish, fish liver products, fortified milks and margarines, as well as some fortified cereals. Vitamin D is an unusual vitamin, in that it can be produced in the body through the action of sunlight on the skin.

Deficiency

Vitamin D plays a vital role in bone health via its regulation of calcium metabolism. At its most extreme, vitamin D deficiency manifests as bone disorders – rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults. There is also a growing body of evidence to suggest that poor vitamin D status may contribute to the development of a range of chronic diseases prevalent in Ireland today, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, some inflammatory diseases (such as rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis), as well as certain cancers.

It is not possible to safely get all the vitamin D we need from the sun, and from October to March in countries at latitude greater than 42 degrees north – such as Ireland – little or no vitamin D can be produced. Additionally, a large number of people in Ireland do not consume vitamin D rich foods on a regular basis, and so it is unsurprising that emerging evidence suggests that various population groups in Ireland are at risk of inadequate vitamin D intakes.

Although vitamin D deficiency may be a concern for all population groups, infants are considered particularly high risk as they undergo rapid growth during the first year of life and rely on good nutritional status to achieve optimal development.

The re-emergence of rickets in infants and young children in several Dublin-based paediatric hospitals prompted the FSAI's Scientific Committee to explore the issue of vitamin D status and the potential

need for supplementation in Ireland. In 2007, the Nutrition and Novel Foods Sub-committee, together with a multidisciplinary working group, reviewed this issue in relation to infants. The conclusions were published that year in a report entitled 'Recommendations for a National Policy on Vitamin D Supplementation for Infants'.

Many factors contribute to the vitamin D status of an infant, and this report acknowledged that poor maternal intake during pregnancy leading to poor infant stores at birth, safety issues surrounding the exposure of infants' skin to sunlight, and the low levels of vitamin D in breastmilk compared with the added vitamin D in formula milks, were all important factors to consider.

Supplementation

Because it isn't practical or cost effective to screen all mothers and infants for vitamin D deficiency, a population health approach to vitamin D supplementation was warranted. The report recommended supplementation of all infants in Ireland with vitamin D₃ daily throughout the first year of life. A once daily oral supplement in a form suitable for infants (liquid/drop form) that provides 5 micrograms (µg) of vitamin D₃ only was deemed most appropriate. This recommendation was considered simple and straightforward to implement. Importantly it is safe, helping to ensure that all infants who are supplemented achieve an adequate intake of vitamin D, without increasing the risk of any infant consuming an amount above the safe upper level.

At the time the report was published, no such suitable vitamin D₃ supplement was available in Ireland. However, three suitable supplements are now available on the Irish market (see box). These have been notified to the FSAI and comply with relevant legislation, including regulations applicable to food supplements, food labelling and health claims. The amount of each supplement needed as well



Vitamin D and your baby

What you need to know

Whether you choose to breastfeed or formula feed, you should give your baby 5 micrograms (5µg) of vitamin D₃ every day.



For more information contact
your Doctor, Nurse or Midwife.



as the delivery system to achieve the 5 µg recommendation differs for each supplement. This may be confusing and it is important that parents and carers read on-pack guidelines carefully.

Policy

The FSAI's recommendation has been endorsed by the Department of Health and Children and the HSE. It is now national policy that all infants from birth to 12 months, whether breastfed or formula fed, be given a daily supplement of 5 µg of vitamin D₃. This policy was developed by a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders, which included

the FSAI, and outlines the rationale for supplementation and the communications strategy needed.

The policy was rolled out to HSE staff during the summer and will be followed by a public awareness campaign, targeting parents and carers, during autumn 2010. The Department of Health and Children advises that all healthcare professionals working in the hospital, community care and health promotion settings have a role and responsibility to provide all new and expectant mothers with information on the need for infant vitamin D₃ supplementation, along with the practical guidance on how to achieve this goal. This policy will help ensure all infants in Ireland receive the nutrition needed to achieve healthy bone growth and development.

Summary of Recommendations

- All infants, whether breastfed or formula fed, should receive 5 micrograms (µg) (200 I.U) of vitamin D₃ once daily throughout the first year of life
- Parents and carers should read on-pack guidance carefully to make sure they give the correct dose of vitamin D₃ to their infant

Further Information

- HSE: www.hse.ie/eng/services/healthpromotion/Vitamin_D_and_your_baby/
- Recommendations for a National Policy on Vitamin D Supplementation for Infants in Ireland: <http://www.fsai.ie/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=1222>

Vitamin D₃ Supplements Available in Ireland and Suitable for Infants

- Abidec Vitamin D₃ Drops, Chefaro Ireland, Ltd.
- Baby D, KoRa Healthcare Ltd.
- BabyVitD₃, Shield Health Ltd.

The choice of vitamin D supplement is a decision for the parent/care giver. Contact your pharmacist, nurse, doctor, or dietitian for advice.



29% of Pre-Packaged Sandwiches Stored at the Wrong Temperature

The FSAI recently published the results of its national survey into the microbiological safety of pre-packaged sandwiches, which tested 948 sandwiches for the foodborne bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes* and coagulase positive staphylococci. Although over 99% of the sandwiches were categorised as satisfactory, of concern was the fact that 29% of sandwiches were stored or displayed at temperatures higher than 5°C.

Temperature

Five sandwiches (0.5%) were classified as unsatisfactory or unacceptable/potentially hazardous. In fact, four of these were stored at temperatures higher than 8°C – with one stored unrefrigerated at 17.9°C.

The onus is on retailers to ensure that pre-packaged sandwiches are stored at the recommended temperature of 5°C or cooler.

Storing foods such as pre-packaged sandwiches at the wrong temperature can lead to food poisoning. In July 2009, 47 members of the UK police force suffered

staphylococcal food poisoning after consuming sandwiches that had been stored, unrefrigerated, in a van. Inappropriate storage of pre-packaged sandwiches in bedside lockers has also been reported in investigations into listeriosis outbreaks in hospitals. The FSAI's survey found that 24% of the sandwiches taken from healthcare settings (which could potentially be served to vulnerable people) were stored or displayed at temperatures higher than 5°C.

Use-by date

Nearly all (99%) of the sandwiches tested had been labelled with a use-by date, as required by law. However, two food safety issues were found: 1) the use-by date had expired for a small proportion (1%) of the sandwiches, and 2) the shelf-life given to some sandwiches may have been too long.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- 1) Retailers ensure that ready-to-eat sandwiches are stored or displayed at $\leq 5^{\circ}\text{C}$
- 2) Retailers ensure that ready-to-eat sandwiches are not sold once their use-by date expires
- 3) Manufacturers ensure that they apply an accurate and realistic shelf-life to ready-to-eat sandwiches and should follow the EU

guidance document on *Listeria monocytogenes* shelf-life studies for ready-to-eat foods. Where laboratory testing is undertaken to investigate shelf-life, testing should be carried out by an independent and accredited laboratory

4) Manufacturers of sandwiches continue to control *L. monocytogenes* in the manufacturing environment

5) Hospitals and other establishments which cater for the elderly should be aware that pre-packaged sandwiches can be a source of listeriosis and care should be taken to protect vulnerable patients from this risk.

The onus is on retailers to ensure that pre-packaged sandwiches are stored at the recommended temperature of 5°C or cooler.

Further Reading

- FSAI (2010). Microbiological safety of pre-packaged sandwiches (09NS1). Available at: www.fsai.ie/29092010.html
- European Commission (2008). Guidance Document on *Listeria monocytogenes* shelf-life studies for ready-to-eat foods, under Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs. Available at: http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/EU_Guidance_listeria_monocytogenes.pdf

Survey Questionnaires now Online

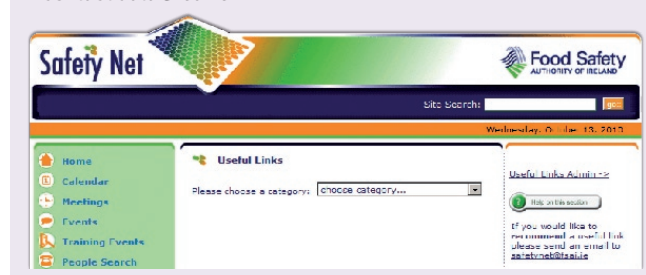
To increase the speed of data collection and the quality of data collected for national surveys, environmental health officers should now complete survey questionnaires online via Safety Net.

The first survey questionnaires to be completed online are: 10NS2 Bottled Water and 10NS4 Allergen Labelling. Sampling for both these surveys started in September.

Each survey questionnaire can be accessed on Safety Net by:

- Clicking on 'Useful Links' and
- Selecting the category 'National Survey Questionnaires'
- Or by simply following this link: https://safetynet.fsai.ie/useful_links/useful_links.asp?ul_cat=14

If you have any queries about using the online survey, please contact data@fsai.ie



Update of FSAI's Salt Reduction Programme

The FSAI's national salt reduction programme was initiated following the publication of its scientific report in April 2005 – 'Salt and Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations for Public Policy in Ireland'. This report highlighted that Irish people are consuming far in excess of the recommended daily allowance for salt and that excessive salt intake is a major factor in the number of deaths from cardiovascular disease and stroke.

It is estimated that Irish adults consume an average of 10 g of salt per day, which should be reduced to 6 g per day. The report outlined a range of recommendations, which included engaging with food industry stakeholders to secure gradual and sustained reductions in the salt content of processed foods available on the Irish market. In light of these recommendations, the FSAI established a voluntary salt reduction programme with the Irish food industry.

Industry's Progress

In September 2010, the FSAI published its annual progress update of its voluntary salt reduction programme with the food industry in Ireland. The programme currently has 58 companies and trade associations that are continuing to reduce the level of salt in processed foods on the Irish market. Achievements and undertakings from the industry to further reduce salt levels in processed foods have improved since 2009, with five new companies joining the programme for the coming year. Furthermore, the level of detail and data supplied to the FSAI by companies continues to improve.

However, the FSAI was disappointed that five companies and trade associations made no new written submissions to the FSAI for the last two consecutive years, and so were removed from the programme for the coming year. Also, a further 20 out of 25 companies (the majority of which were independent bakeries) and trade associations invited to join the salt reduction programme declined the offer or did not respond.

Whilst the industry has made significant reductions in salt levels in processed foods, the current economic climate is forcing many of them to change their priorities. The catering and hospitality sector in particular, continues to suffer in the economic downturn with many businesses tightening their belts and being forced to make cutbacks. The FSAI is finding that many of these businesses are viewing salt reduction as a non-priority. However, the FSAI will continue to encourage these companies to enter into the programme over the coming year and strengthen the industry's overall commitments to salt reduction.

Consumers

The FSAI accepts that the reductions in salt in processed food made by the Irish food industry alone will not be sufficient to reduce average daily salt intake by Irish adults to the target of 6 g per day by the end of 2012. In the interest of improving public health, the FSAI reiterates its position that consumers need to make a greater effort to reduce the amount of salt they add to their food in cooking, and at the table, if targets are to be met. It also recommends that consumers use their purchasing power to opt for low salt products, which in turn will influence the food industry to reduce the amount of salt used in their products.

Full details of individual food businesses' commitments to the salt reduction programme for the coming year are available on the FSAI's website.



Need Information?

Don't know where to start on your HACCP plan? Need information on microbiological hazards in food? Why not visit the FSAI's library at our offices in Lower Abbey Street, Dublin, where you can carry out your research using our resources?

We have access to a variety of food safety related electronic databases and journals (for example, Food Science & Technology Abstracts and the Journal of Food Protection), books and reports. We also have photocopying and printing facilities, as well as free wi-fi access.

If you wish to visit the library or would like more information, please contact us at library@fsai.ie or 01 817 1354.



Pictured in the FSAI's library are Eleonore Donohoe, Administrative Assistant, and Noleen Murtagh, Librarian, FSAI.

Congratulations to our Facebook Winners!

The FSAI had an information stand at this year's SHOP exhibition in the RDS, Dublin from 28-30 September. The exhibition attracts attendance from the retail, food and drink industries.

At our information stand, we ran a daily Facebook competition to win copies of the *Safe Catering Pack* – worth €60. The *Safe Catering Pack* is a resource for caterers and retailers to help them develop a system to manage food safety and to comply with the food hygiene legislation. The winners of the competition were: Pat Claffey, Ciara Goodwin, Venessa McMahon, Liam Lawlor, John Dee, Tracey Keoghlan, Maggie Heylin, Orla McGrath and Declan Molloy.



At our stand at SHOP in the RDS, Dublin are: Marita Porter and Anne Cowley, FSAI.



Find us on
[facebook.com/FSAI](https://www.facebook.com/FSAI)

Legislation Update

EU Guidance on Provisions on Flexibility Provided in the Hygiene Package

The European Commission recently published two guidance documents to provide better understanding of the provisions for flexibility provided in the Food Hygiene Regulations – Regulation (EC) Nos 852/2004, 853/2004 and 854/2004. One guidance document is for competent authorities, the other for food business operators.

The flexibility provisions contained in the Hygiene Regulations offer the possibility:

- to grant derogations/exemptions from certain requirements laid down in Annexes of the Hygiene Regulations;
- adaptations of certain requirements laid down in Annexes of the Hygiene Regulations;
- to exclude some activities from the scope of the Hygiene Regulations.

Derogations/exemptions mean that Member States are given the possibility to authorise food business operators not to apply specified requirements of the Hygiene Package in certain circumstances. The situations in which derogations can be adopted by Member States are limited.

When making use of flexibility provisions, Member States adopt national measures. For example, the Minister for Health and Children published the Health (Definition of Marginal, Localised and Restricted Activity) (Butcher Shop) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 340 of 2010) in July this year. This S.I. avails of the derogation granted in Article 1(5)(b)(ii) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, which provides that the



requirements of the Regulation do not apply where the supply of food of animal origin from a retail establishment is to another retail establishment and in accordance with national law is a marginal, localised and restricted activity.

Adaptations mean that Member States are given the possibility to adapt the requirements laid down in the Annexes of the Hygiene Package in specified limited circumstances. The responsibility for adapting the rules to specified local situations is left to Member States, as it is recognised that they are better placed to find appropriate solutions in such circumstances. However, such adaptations must ensure that the Hygiene Regulations' objectives are not compromised.

The guidance document for food business operators is in a question and answer format and focuses on:

- Traditional foods
- Meat and meat products
- Milk and dairy products
- Honey
- Fruit and vegetables

Both guidance documents are available on the FSAI's website:

- Competent authorities: http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/EU_Guidance_flexibility.CA.pdf
- Food business operators: http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/EU_Guidance_flexibility.foodbusinesses.pdf

List of Permitted Health Claims

The European Commission announced recently that it will restructure the process of the adoption of the list of permitted health claims on food products under Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods.

Because of the large number of health claims submitted to the European Commission (more than 44,000, which have been consolidated into a list of more than 4,600) and other operational delays, the Commission were not able to meet the deadline of 31 January 2010, for the adoption of the list of permitted health claims.

To date, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published two series of opinions and is due to publish a third one in the very near future. EFSA is expected to finalise its assessment by the end 2011, with the publication of a series of opinions.

The Commission has proposed that it will now establish the list of permitted claims in two steps. First, the list of permitted health claims for all substances other than 'botanicals' will be adopted in a single step. EFSA's opinions on all claims other than 'botanicals' are expected to be finalised by the end of June 2011. After this, claims regarding botanicals will be considered.

Unsubstantiated Health Claims

With a view to protect consumers from unsubstantiated health claims displayed on food remaining on the market until the completion of the evaluation, the Commission has announced that it favours a process facilitating a progressive adoption of the EU list of permitted health claims.

In the past months, many concerns have been raised by Member States and by stakeholders with regard to the potential distortion on the market between operators whose claims are rejected, and operators using claims for which assessment is still pending. In addition, a difference in the treatment of botanical ingredients under the legislation on health claims and that on traditional herbal medicinal products was underlined as a potential problem.



The Commission has asked EFSA to finalise its evaluation of all remaining claims, other than botanicals, by the end of June 2011. After this, the Commission will immediately follow-up with the necessary legislative measures.

It is intended that this approach will be beneficial for the consumer, who, once the list is adopted and fully operational, will be assured that all health claims on the market have been substantiated by science. Moreover, this new proposed process will increase legal certainty for operators and national enforcement authorities and reduce implementation burden.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/ndaclaims/ndaclaims13.htm>

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/claims/health_claims_en.htm

Guidance on and Transit Rules for Live Animals and Animal Products

The EU updated its guidance in August on the import and transit rules for live animals and animal products from third countries. This document is available on the Europa website at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/international/trade/guide_thirdcountries2009_en.pdf



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

S.I. No. 391 of 2010
European Communities
(Official Controls on the Import
of Food of Non-animal Origin)
Regulations, 2010

S.I. No. 398 of 2010
European Communities (Health
of Aquaculture Animals and
Products) (Amendment)
Regulations, 2010

Visitors from Bosnia and Herzegovina



We recently hosted a study visit of officials from the Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were in Ireland to learn more about food crises – how to manage a food crisis and how to communicate to consumers if one happens. From the Department of Risk Management of the Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (l-r) are: Dzemil Hajric, Assistant Director; Dragan Brenjo, Head of Department; and Dalibor Vidačak, Senior Associate.

FSAI Passes ISO 9001:2008 Audit

The FSAI has continued its commitment to quality and improvement, by passing a recent re-registration audit against the requirements of the quality management system (QMS) standard ISO 9001:2008. The audit was conducted by the National Standards Authority of Ireland over three days, with no non-conformances raised in the audit report. A great result and is due primarily to the commitment of all the staff to the QMS.

Pictured during the re-registration audit (l-r) are: Marita Porter, John Coady and Vanessa Cooling, FSAI; with Siun Ensko, NSAI.



CIAA 'Meet the Parliament' Reception

The CIAA (Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries of the EU) held their annual 'Meet the Parliament' reception in the Members' Salon at the European Parliament in Brussels on 5 October.

The theme for the evening was 'An Innovation Union for Europe's Food and Drink Industry', where one of the three stands presented information on the use of nanotechnology in food production and processing. The FSAI was invited to attend on the basis of its 2008 report: 'The Relevance for Food Safety of Applications of Nanotechnology in the Food and Feed Industries'.

Pictured at the CIAA event (l-r) are: Ms Mairead McGuinness, MEP, who hosted the event; Dr Pat O'Mahony, FSAI; and Mr Gay Mitchell, MEP.



FoodRisC: Benefit & Risk Communication

A consortium of 12 different organisations headed by University College, Dublin, has been successful in obtaining research funding from the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme. The consortium is supported by an Advisory Board of representatives from eight organisations in food safety and health communication, including the FSAI. The FoodRisC project is novel in seeking to not only identify the barriers to effective, balanced food risk and benefit communication, but to discover new approaches to overcoming such barriers – including the potential of social media, the use of tailored messaging, and the standardisation of key food risk and benefit configurations.

More information is available at: www.eufic.org/article/en/rid/foodrisc/



Pictured at the first FoodRisC Advisory Board meeting were (l-r): Prof Patrick Wall, Project Leader; Dr Anne-Laure Gassin, Director of Communications, European Food Safety Authority; Dr Josephine Wills, Director, European Food Information Council; and Prof Alan Reilly, FSAI.

FAQ

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

Do food handlers have to wear gloves?

No. Handling and preparing food with bare hands is perfectly acceptable, provided proper hand washing and training are carried out.

A common misunderstanding by both food business operators and customers is that it is a legal requirement for food handlers to wear gloves when handling and preparing food. In fact, the legislation on the hygiene of foodstuffs requires that every person working in a food handling area maintains a high degree of personal cleanliness and wears suitable, clean and where necessary, protective clothing. So, gloves are not legally required in all cases.

The problem with using gloves is that if staff are not given proper training in food safety, they may believe gloves are a barrier to food contamination. They may then carry out many non-food related tasks (for example, handling money, emptying bins, wiping counters) while wearing the same pair of gloves that they use to prepare food.

Also, if gloves are worn for a long period of time, without frequent changing and hand washing, bacteria on the skin will quickly multiply in the warm, moist environment created by the gloves. If the gloves tear, or are removed and food is handled without hand washing, a high number of bacteria can be transferred to the food.

Proper hand washing is extremely important, whether using gloves or not. It must be carried out frequently, using the correct technique. If using gloves, hands should be washed before putting gloves on, between glove changes and after gloves are removed.

Staff should be trained in the correct hand washing technique. Proper hand washing involves both friction and a hand washing agent to remove any transient bacteria or viruses from the hands. There is a natural flora of bacteria on the hands that will always remain after hand washing, but these are not of concern for food safety.

It is a legal requirement for food business operators to supply an adequate number of washbasins that are suitably located and

designated for cleaning hands.

These washbasins must be provided with hot and cold running water, materials for cleaning hands and for hygienic drying. Water used for washing should not be too hot. If the water is too hot, staff will not be able to hold their hands under the water for a sufficient period of time (generally 10-15 seconds is recommended) which will deter them from washing their hands.

Further Reading

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre's publication 'Preventing Foodborne Disease: A Focus on the Infected Food Handler' provides detailed information on hand washing, glove wearing and other issues relating to food contamination by food handlers. This is available at <http://tinyurl.com/29gep7g>



Date for your Diary:

Seminar on Food Contact Materials: Use and Control

Date: 16 November 2010

Time: 8:45 am to 2:00 pm

Location: Morrison Hotel, Ormond Quay, Dublin 1

Who should attend: food business operators, suppliers of food contact materials and enforcements officers.

The FSai is hosting a seminar providing information on a new control programme being introduced for suppliers of food packaging, and on the existing control programme for users of food packaging.

For an agenda and to register online, see the events section on our website: www.fsai.ie



Date for your Diary:

Nanotechnology and Food – Fad or the Future?

Date: 29 November 2010

Time: 8:30 am to 2:00 pm

Location: Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Golden Lane, Dublin 8

Who should attend: Those involved in food policy and regulation, as well as any individual or group with an interest in food production, processing or marketing.

National and international experts in nanotechnology will provide information on the science involved, the potential benefits, the potential risks to human health and the environment, as well as an overview of national and EU policy and regulation.

For an agenda and to register online, see the events section on our website: www.fsai.ie



Golf Challenge: FSAI v safefood

The annual golf challenge between the FSAI and *safefood* (the Food Safety Promotion Board) took place in Monkstown Golf Club, Co. Cork. This year *safefood* were the victors!

Pictured (l-r) are: Wayne Anderson, FSAI; Alan O'Keefe, safefood; Andrew Castle, safefood; John Brett, safefood; Dermot Moriarty, safefood; Richie Murphy, safefood; Ray Dolan, safefood; Pat O'Mahony, FSAI; Charlie Daly, FSAI; Judith Giles, FSAI; Gary Kearney, safefood; and Ciaran O'Sullivan, FSAI. Pat Farrell (not pictured) also played for the FSAI.

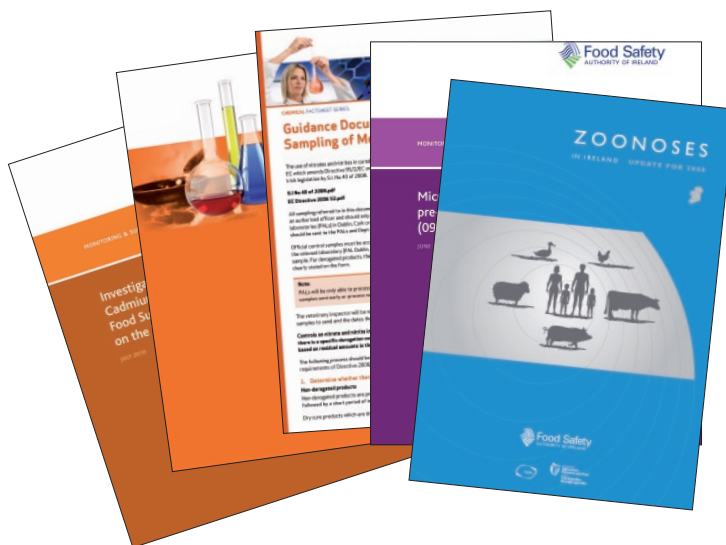


Recent Publications

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

- Guidance Document for Nitrate/Nitrite Sampling of Meat Products
- Guidance on Food Additives
- Investigation into Levels of Cadmium and Lead in Herbal Food Supplements Available on the Irish Market
- Microbiological Safety of Pre-packaged Sandwiches (09NS1)
- Zoonoses in Ireland, Update for 2008



Editor: Judith O'Connor

Contributors: Anne Marie Boland, Sarah Burke, Helen Crowley, Rhodri Evans, Anne-Marie Kierans, Karl McDonald, Noeleen Murtagh, Annalouise O'Connor, and Jane Ryder.

© 2010 'Permission is granted to reproduce information contained herein with appropriate credit'.

FSAI: Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

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

E-mail: newsletter@fsai.ie **Website:** www.fsai.ie



www.facebook.com/FSAI

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.

Please add the following person to your mailing list for future issues:

NAME

JOB TITLE

ADDRESS

EMAIL

☐ By Email

☐ By Post

Change of mailing details:

NAME

JOB TITLE

ADDRESS

EMAIL

☐ By Email

☐ By Post

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