

T & L UPDATE

BFFF TECHNICAL AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

JULY 2017 - ISSUE 89



British Frozen Food Federation

Registered Office: Warwick House, Unit 7, Long Bennington Business Park, Main Road, Long Bennington, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 5JR

Tel: 01400 283090 Fax: 01400 283098 Websites: www.bfff.co.uk www.coolcooking.co.uk

CONTENTS

ACTIVITY OF EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

EFSA Launch Applications Support Pilot	5
EFSA Regulated Products Applications Feedback Tool	5
ECJ Rules Against Maximum Levels for Vitamins	5
Investigation into Junk Foods Ads Aimed at Children	6
MEPs Oppose GM Approvals	6

ANALYTICAL & METROLOGY

Government Chemist Issues Strategy Document	7
AOAC Grants E.Coli Official Testing Method Status	7
'Early Warning' System to Predict Food Production Issues	7
Leatherhead Status as Provider of UKAS Techniques	8
Nanotechnology for Detection of Foodborne Viruses	8

ANIMAL WELFARE

A.I. in the UK and Advice on How to Reduce the Risks	9
Defra Issue Updates on Blue Tongue Virus in France	9
Launch of EU Platform on Animal Welfare	10
Defra Update on African Swine Fever in East Europe	10
400 Irish Lamb Carcasses Destroyed	10
Report on Lumpy Skin Disease in Cattle in South Europe	11
FSS Urges Prevention of Lead Poisoning on Farms	11
Report on Chemical Food Safety Incidents on Farms	11
Scientific Opinion on Slaughter of Pregnant Animals	12
Report on Pig Welfare Across the World	12
Belgian Region Bans Halal and Kosher Slaughter	13
New Zealand Animal Welfare Body Airs 'Concerns'	13

BREXIT

House of Lords Highlight Risk to British Exports	14
UK Meat Exporters May Face Trade Tariffs Post-Brexit	14
Scotland and Wales Plans to Help Food Sector	15
Sector Issues Statement on Priorities for Brexit	15
Calls on Government to Deal with Labour Shortages	16

CHEMICALS, CONTAMINANTS & FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS

MAFF Bans Pesticides Containing Tricyclazole Fungicide	16
Parliament Backs Authorisation of Glyphosphate Pesticide	17
Summary of Data Collection on Contaminant Occurrence	17
BPA Recognised as Endocrine Disruptor	17
Guidance to Ensure Compliance of Printed Cartons	18
EFSA Advice on Reporting of Pesticides Data	18
Potential New Methodology for Pesticide Assessment	18
Monitoring Report on Pesticides in Food	18
Defra Results of Pesticide Monitoring Programme	19
FSA Updates on Chemical Contaminants in Food	19

FOOD SAFETY AND ZOOSES

FSA Criticism Over Food Hygiene Variations	19
FSA Chief Scientific Advisers Report	20
EFSA Interactive Story Maps on Vector Borne Diseases	20
Good Hygiene at Primary Processing for Fruit & Veg	20
Commission Draft EU Regulation on Acrylamides	21
FSA Aide-Memoires for Use in Approved Establishments	21
Salmonella Strain Sickens 40 in Four Countries	21
Campylobacter Shows Decline in UK	22
Risk Communication Handbook for Food Industry	22
Errington Cheese Update	23
EU Food Safety Almanac Published	23

FOOD SECURITY, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Brazilian Meat Issue - Latest Updates	24
DNA Based Methodologies for Authenticity & Safety	24
FAO Investigate Mobile Tools to Tackle Food Fraud	25
Defra Updates List of Protected Names	25
JRC Issue Latest Food Fraud Reports	25

CONTENTS

GLOBAL STANDARDS

ISO 22000 Revision Reaches DIS Stage	26
Irish Food Board Introduce Quality Mark	26
BRC and Rentokil Announce Strategic Partnership	26

IMPORTS AND THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Early Warning System for Imports Not of Animal Origin	27
New Electronic Certification System for Organic Imports	27
Guidance on Food and Drink Exports	28
Geographical Indications Considered for Protection	28
Organic Imports from Norway and Iceland to Resume	28
DIT Launch New 'International Export Hub'	28

LABELLING AND GENERAL FOOD LAW

Defra Issue Country of Origin Guidance	29
Waiver for Free Range Eggs Ruled Illegal by EU	29
FSA Revised Food Law Code of Practice	29
5-C NutriScore to be France's Official Nutrition Label	30

NUTRITION, ADDITIVES AND HEALTH

Ireland to Restrict Junk-Food Marketing for Children	30
EFSA to Provide Advice on Sugar Intake by 2020	31
PHE Publish Salt Reduction Targets for 2017	31
PHE Blog on Obesity and 'Out of Home' Toolkit	32
DH Review of Public Health England	32
Guidance on Non-Broadcast Ad Placement Restriction	32
Consultation Responses of Sugary Drinks in Hospitals	32
Call for Urgent Adoption of Nutrient Profiles	33
Sugar, Salt & Fat Taxes are "Very Positive"	33
OHA Action Plan for Childhood Obesity	34
BNF Nutrition Training Course for Primary Schools	34
PHE Progress Report on Sugar Reduction	34

PROCESSING AND RETAIL

UK Online Shoppers Would Like 'British Only' Button	35
MRSA in 40% of Sampled Retail Pork	35
Case for 'Retail Revolution' to Tackle Obesity	36

REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT AND OFFICIAL CONTROLS

FSA Revision 6 of Food Hygiene Rating Scheme	36
FSS Statement About Hebridean Sea Salt	36
Defra List of Approved Organic Control Bodies	37

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

FSA Issue Innovation and Regulation Plan	37
Latest Food and You Survey Report	38
Edible Insects Could Help Tackle Climate Change	38
EFSA to Contribute for Allergens and Pathogens Projects	39
Hottest Chilli Pepper Accidentally Created in Wales	39

SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENT & CSR

FDF Results from Food Packaging Waste Survey	39
EU Debate and Publish Infographic on Food Waste	40
Companies to Commit to 100% Sustainable Juice	40
Producer Responsibility for Packaging Waste	40
EU Votes in Favour of New Palm Oil Measures	41
Farmer Group Call for Sustainable Chocolate Programs	41
Palm Oil Trader to Protect Indonesia's Forests	42
'Government Corruption' Behind Slavery in Fisheries	42

TECHNOLOGY & NOVEL FOODS

First Products Using Sweeter Sugar Launched in 2018	43
New Developments in Natural Sweeteners	43
Intelligent Packaging Developed in Brazil	43

T & L EXPERT GROUP

Expert Group Agenda - May 2017	44
Meet the Expert Group	46

FOREWORD

Welcome to this newsletter T+L 89 - our bi monthly round up of news that could have an impact on your business. Regular readers will note this extended issue covers 2 periods of news due to varying nature of the quantity of articles in the food world. As usual your feedback on what you like/what you don't like and what you would like to see more of is always useful.

As you are aware we have been trying to find the most effective and efficient way of making the Technical Expert Group papers available to all members as soon as is practicable. The best way to do this is to register with Denise or I for one of our e mail Member Interest Groups. These members who have signed up receive the papers at the same time as the TXG and allows you as members the opportunity for immediate feedback on areas of concern/follow-up. Of course there are some technical paper subjects that fall outside of the MIG scopes and in previous T+L updates we have tried to provide links to the papers embedded within the update. Unfortunately this has caused a few IT related problems so we will revert back to including a copy of our last agenda and asking you to contact us if you would like a copy of any of the papers mentioned or an update on any of our live open projects.

We have tried to include a summary of the most interesting articles from a variety of sources. This update includes the positive developments in the food sector. These include pathogen identification through new techniques using Whole genome sequencing technology (or Next generation sequencing)/improving the already successful FSA Food Hygiene Rating scheme together with sweetener and packaging developments. But we also have news of some of the negative issues that almost inevitably affect the food sector. E. coli in cheese/ the meat allegations from Brazil/ the free range labelling of eggs that may arise again due to avian influenza and more worryingly the developing situation in Thailand with slavery and ethical issue concerns.

Part of the BFFF role is to try to ensure members are making informed decisions regarding potential risks to their business and advice on contingency planning. The focus continues on global supply chains that remain under scrutiny due to some of the issues mentioned above. With concerns over the regulatory regimes in Brazil and Thailand – both major exporters of proteins, the impact of possible future restrictions in supply could have a major effect on commodity prices and contingency planning is advised. The stability of the free range egg market is another risk over the next 12 months if as expected the avian influenza disease returns.

As if this was not enough uncertainty the Brexit negotiations have started but to date nothing substantive has been reported reducing the uncertainty that the UK food sector faces. This is a long road with many complex facets that we cannot brief members on comprehensively, but we highlight here some of the developments for your information.

The increasing complexity of Brexit makes this area almost as unclear as the developments in nutrition! We again highlight with summary articles on salt/sugar/nutrient profiles and High Fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) foods. The debates continue as to how to solve the obesity issue and the role the food sector can play in resolving the issues. What is clear is that it is neither easy nor simple. The multifactorial root causes all need to be tackled if the 'problem' is to be solved and the lack of evidence based decision making leads to opinion led policy which has its dangers for business planning. Member businesses are all different and thus the individual approach to your engagement with this agenda will all be different but it is clear this is an area that continues to develop in consumer demand for healthier products in all market settings.

BFFF T+L continue to work on other medium term projects not mentioned here but found in our Technical Group papers- the definition of meat/audit burden/halal food/ food waste and packaging developments/FSA strategy and the food research organisations plans for the future. As above these papers are available for all members not just the BFFF technical expert group so if you would like a copy of these please let us know.

Please contact BFFF if you would like to receive additional / back copies of this newsletter



Denise Rion
Technical Manager
deniserion@bff.co.uk

We do hope that you find the T&L a valuable read.

Martin Forsyth
Head of Technical
martinforsyth@bff.co.uk



ACTIVITY OF EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

EFSA LAUNCH APPLICATIONS SUPPORT PILOT

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have launched a new support initiative for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) preparing and submitting application dossiers to EFSA.

In the next six months, SMEs in the areas of feed additives and novel foods (excluding traditional food) can request an administrative check of their draft dossiers prior to submission. The support will be provided via teleconferences.

The administrative check will ensure that draft dossiers from SMEs comply with the requirements specified in the regulatory framework before being submitted. The support applies only to the administrative aspects of an application. Scientific questions, advice and assessments are outside the scope of the pilot.

More detail can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/yb44lz7u>

EFSA LAUNCH REGULATED PRODUCTS APPLICATIONS FEEDBACK TOOL

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have created a new tool for applicants to give immediate feedback on the final scientific output dealing with their application in respect of regulated products such as food additives, GMOs, novel foods.

The new tool is a result of applicants asking for better ways to give direct and immediate feedback.

It consists of a short questionnaire that applicants will receive as a link when they are notified about the publication of the scientific output.

More information can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/y89mcq3f>

ECJ RULES AGAINST COUNTRIES SETTING MAXIMUM LEVELS FOR VITAMINS AND MINERALS

European Member States cannot set individual maximum levels for vitamins and minerals unless they are based on international safety data and risk assessments, according to a new ruling from the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

The ruling specifically relates to a French case brought to the court in which French authorities took legal action against Noria Distribution for distributing and selling products that exceeded maximum vitamin levels stipulated in French law. Despite the fact that the products were legal under wider EU legislation and could be legally sold in other Member States, the fact that France has individual laws which stipulated lower maximum allowed levels meant that the case was taken to the ECJ.

The ECJ has now said there needs to be a procedure for products legally sold elsewhere in the EU to be notified and evaluated based on safety in France, even if they exceed France's maximum levels. Furthermore, the ruling confirms that maximum levels need to be based on risk assessment and intake in the population and that when setting maximum levels, international risk assessments (such as EFSA's) need to be taken into account.

The new ruling, if followed, will mean that all European Member States should eventually harmonise maximum levels to around the levels that EFSA safety data suggests, which is not currently the case. However, it is uncertain whether France will apply the resulting case-law to change its legislation or leave to the courts to enforce the ruling. The final decision in the case will now be referred back down to French courts, however given the ECJ ruling, it would be impossible to rule any other way.



GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATION INTO JUNK FOOD ADS AIMED AT CHILDREN

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released guidelines for a new Europe-wide investigation into junk food ads aimed at children. This new protocol will advise member states on how to collect data on food marketing to children, in view of stricter and more coordinated measures against junk foods. It marks the next step in action against advertising of foods high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS), by creating a unified research tool for governments and stakeholders to conduct in depth studies into exactly where and in what fashion HFSS foods are being marketed to children.

The report states “all forms of advertising including media, digital platforms etc. to children and adolescents should not be allowed for products high in fat, sugar or salt. There is no justification for banning the advertisements of tobacco when unhealthy food and drink are a much bigger cause of death and disability”.

The data collection methods advised by the report combine what the WHO says were the most effective aspects of previous studies:

For television, researchers are advised to monitor the five most popular channels watched by under 16s on four days of the week (including the entire weekend) and record the advertising or product placement from 6am to 10pm.

For internet, researchers are advised to purchase internet usage data from market research companies and assess the most popular websites – for which there is no limit. Looking at every page on each site and playing ad games is also recommended.

The data collected from these methods would then be coded according to a plethora of different categories regarding the duration and nature of each advert. Category examples were as varied as celebrity endorsements to cartoon characters and health claims. All products advertised would then be analysed according to the WHO’s nutrient profile model.

It will now be down to the individual member states to implement the protocol. However, WHO go on to state that they are keen to see how the new guidelines will be enforced. For further detail the full guidelines can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/kuj4xgm>

MEPS OPPOSE GM APPROVALS

EU member states have voted against the introduction and renewal of GM grains in Europe but failed to reach a binding majority, leaving the president of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker to make the final decision.

The parliament voted on separate bills. First to relicense Monsanto’s MON810 maize, the only GM crop currently permitted for EU use and second to authorise two new strains of GMO in the EU: DuPont Pioneer’s 1507 maize and Syngenta’s Bt11 maize. 1507 and Bt11 are tolerant to toxic pesticides such as glufosinate ammonium, which has been restricted in the EU since 2013 because of the threat it poses to small wildlife such as voles and butterflies.

Results were as follows:

Renewal of Mon810:

- 12 member states voted against the proposal: Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia
- 10 member states voted in favour: Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom
- 6 member states abstained: Belgium, Germany, Croatia, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia

Authorisation of 1507 and Bt 11:

- 13 member states voted against: Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden
- 8 member states voted in favour: Estonia, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Finland, United Kingdom
- 7 member states abstained: Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Croatia, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia

UK studies claim to have shown great potential in second generation GM crops (including creation of seeds which produce Omega 3 fish oil), and many politicians believe Britain could benefit from becoming a GM research hub following the country’s departure from the EU. But many have criticised governments particularly the UK and Germany, for supporting the motion to allow new GMOs in the EU. The UK government’s vote does not however, reflect the feelings of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, all of which remain opposed to GM cultivation and banned its use in 2015.

The European Commission (EC) which backed the bills, could however still decide to authorise the new grains as the vote was not binding as the winning side did not reach the required 65% majority. Activists are now calling on President Jean Claude Juncker, president of the EC, to uphold the Parliament’s decision.

ANALYTICAL & METROLOGY

GOVERNMENT CHEMIST ISSUES STRATEGY DOCUMENT 2017-2020

The Government Chemist has issued a strategy document outlining their programme for the period 2017–2020 and the basis for longer term development. The programme is delivered as part of the National Measurement System programme portfolio overseen by the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. The document details the final specification of projects that have been reviewed and endorsed by the Government Chemist Programme Expert Group, an independent panel of experts who guide the work of the Government Chemist.

The strategy has been developed, following a comprehensive stakeholder consultation, to identify the most important issues in food regulation that the Government Chemist may need to address in the short term. Included is the proposal to build capability in molecular biology (next generation sequencing), NMR and protein mass spectrometry.

Looking forward, ground work is proposed to prepare a future Government Chemist for disputes arising from widespread application of point of use technologies.

The strategy can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/y7zgpwns>

AOAC GRANTS E. COLI O157 ASSAY OFFICIAL TESTING METHOD STATUS

3M's Molecular Detection Assay 2 - E. coli O157 (including H7) has been granted First Action status by AOAC International.

The 3M Molecular Detection System was introduced in 2011 and the firm claims it is used by food processors, labs, universities and government agencies in over 40 countries. Compared to first generation tests, the assay, which was introduced in April 2016, has a 30% faster processing time and instrument run time is one hour for E. coli O157. All assays can be run simultaneously and up to 96 samples can be tested in each run. It has ready-to-use and pre-dispensed reagents and colour-coded assay tubes by organism with matching software screens. These features give customers flexibility in their testing that allow them to make critical decisions faster.



Recommended industries include dairy, fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry and eggs, prepared and processed foods and seafood.

AOAC International facilitates consensus and technical standards for the analytical science communities. Food processors, universities, government and contract testing laboratories around the world rely on AOAC Official Methods of Analysis validation rigor when choosing chemical, microbial and molecular testing methods. The approval process for becoming an Official Method involves intense review by multiple, independent laboratories and subsequently by an expert review panel.

The full study conducted for the AOAC Official Method of Analysis validation of the 3M Molecular Detection Assay 2 for E. coli O157 (including H7) will be published in an upcoming edition of the Journal of AOAC INTERNATIONAL and will be made available online at <http://eoma.aoc.org>

COMMISSION LAUNCHES "EARLY WARNING" SYSTEM TO PREDICT FOOD PRODUCTION ISSUES

The European Commission has launched an "early warning system" which aims to detect agricultural production hotspot countries so it can mitigate the impact of drought and other disasters on food production. It covers 80 countries, mainly in Africa, and will use observational data of the earth as well as metrological analyses.

The Anomaly Hot Spots of Agricultural Production (ASAP) system has been developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and will produce monthly reports which identify countries where food is insecure and agricultural production is under threat. This could mean the need for aid support, changes to development programmes or the requirement for further investigation to counter any difficulties.

The launch of ASAP comes as the European Commission looks to combat the potential disastrous fallout from drought, freak weather and other natural occurring events which can lead to crop failure and other food production problems.

On top of its monthly warning reports, ASAP will produce more localised data every 10 days and crop monitoring indicators. It will work in tandem with existing warning systems operated by the United Nation's such as its Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Food Programme warning systems. It will also feed into other international mechanisms such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification and Crop Monitor for Early Warning.

LEATHERHEAD MAINTAINS STATUS AS FIRST PROVIDER OF UKAS ACCREDITED TECHNIQUES

Leatherhead Food Research has maintained its status as the first and only facility offering UKAS accredited generation and verification of cooking instructions across comprehensive equipment (testing laboratory number 9365).

Leatherhead Food Research first achieved UKAS accreditation for specific cooking instructions techniques in 2016 following a two-year application process. Procedures for both cooking instructions generation and verification were documented, methods validated and equipment calibrated for traceability to national standards for weight, time and temperature. Staff were trained to the same level to ensure consistent results and Leatherhead's quality management system enhanced to an industry-leading standard.

Significant investment in the business in 2016 by parent company Science Group plc, and a move to new premises in Epsom, enabled Leatherhead to invest in purpose-built, expanded facilities equipped with all new thermal ovens (gas, electric and fan assisted), gas and electric hobs, deep fat fryers and microwaves covering a comprehensive range of wattages. UKAS accreditation for the ovens, grills, hobs and deep fat fryers was reinstated post move. Leatherhead's microwave testing techniques follow the same documented quality management system procedures and the company is working towards UKAS accreditation for this service.

Leatherhead Food Research is audited against ISO 17025:2005 (general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories) and operates as a UKAS accredited testing laboratory (no. 9365) for: foreign body analysis and evaluation of muscle structure relating to mechanically separated meat (MSM) using light microscopy; cooking instructions testing (gas and electric thermal oven, electric fan oven, gas and electric hob, gas and electric grill and deep fat fryer techniques); and sensory triangle testing.



SCIENTISTS FIND NANOTECHNOLOGY FOR DETECTION OF FOODBORNE VIRUSES

Canadian scientists claim to have developed a “ground-breaking” nanotechnology sensing mechanism that can detect mild traces of a foodborne virus, potentially making it easier to stop epidemics.

Professor Suresh Neethirajan and his team, at the BioNano Lab in the University of Guelph, Canada, claim the breakthrough could help industry detect diseases in farm animals before the meat enters the food chain.

Professor Neethirajan said the current technique for detecting a foodborne virus was “quite a complex procedure” and often took a long time to reach a sound conclusion. “Viruses are very difficult to culture, so there is no real-time detection technique,” he explained. “So the method of the technology we have developed brings down the time of result to shipping samples from the food manufacturing plant to the lab.” “It enables you to test for foodborne viruses in the processing plant itself”.

“Conventional benchtop detection diagnostic techniques take about three to four days to detect, but we bring down the time of result to a few minutes. Our technique is also 500 times more sensitive than current benchtop-type instruments. It also has the ability to differentiate between the strain levels – for example norovirus versus hepatitis versus rotavirus.” Stated Professor Neethirajan

A combination of sodium formate and chloroauric acid was used to prepare gold nanoparticle films. When these particles made contact with foodborne viruses, such as norovirus or influenza, they were 500 times more sensitive when compared to commercial lateral flow kits used to detect foodborne viruses.

The researchers also claimed the size of the virus needed for detection was lower too: 116 times lower than the amount of virus needed to detect it with conventional testing techniques.



ANIMAL WELFARE

LATEST SITUATION ON A.I. IN THE UK AND ADVICE ON HOW TO REDUCE THE RISKS

Public Health England (PHE) advises the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has said there is no food safety risk for UK consumers.

A 10km Surveillance Zone is currently in place around one premises near Diss, South Norfolk but the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone has now been lifted across England.

Defra state on their website they strongly recommend that all keepers - whether they have commercial flocks or a few birds in their back garden - continue to follow good practice on biosecurity to reduce the risk of infection, including minimising movement in and out of bird enclosures, cleaning footwear, keeping areas where birds live clean and tidy and feeding birds inside.

Poultry gatherings across England can now go ahead, subject to some additional identity and health checks and biosecurity measures and all egg producers in England can now let their birds outside unless they are in a Protection Zone around a confirmed case. Keepers can sell products as free-range if they come from birds which meet all the free-range requirements.

Further detail and advice can be found here on the Defra website: <https://tinyurl.com/znnuty>



DEFRA ISSUE UPDATES ON BLUE TONGUE VIRUS IN FRANCE

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) have continued to publish updated situation assessments for bluetongue virus (BTV-8) in France.

Bluetongue virus serotype 8 (BTV-8) re-emerged in 2015 in Central France, despite being undetected in mainland EU for at least five years. As of 5th May 2017, France has reported over 2,300 detections, relatively concentrated in the centre of the country and mainly affecting cattle, albeit with mild or no clinical signs and very low prevalence.

As a result of these detections, restriction zones have been put in place to ensure only vaccinated or naturally immune BTV susceptible animals can move out of the zone. This restricted region now covers a large area of mainland France, as far as the North Coast and the region around Calais. The nearest positive detection was made earlier in 2017, but is located more than 150 km from the English coast.

Bluetongue disease is caused by a virus transmitted by biting midges, which are most active between May and October. Bluetongue virus can infect all ruminants (e.g. sheep, cattle, goats and deer) and camelids (e.g. llama and alpaca) but it is sheep who are most severely affected by the disease. Cattle, although infected more frequently than sheep, do not always show signs of the disease. The risk of incursion via infected midges is difficult to predict as it is highly dependent upon the level of disease on the Continent, the proximity to the UK and the climate.

Outbreaks of bluetongue affect farm incomes through reduced milk yield, sickness, reduced reproductive performance (failed pregnancies, abortion, central nervous system deformities in the calf or lamb) or, in severe cases, the death of adult animals. Bluetongue virus does not affect people and consumption of meat and milk from infected animals is safe.

BTV-8 vaccine has been available for the GB market since mid-July 2016, and British authorities have encouraged farmers to consider if vaccination would be an option in consultation with their private veterinary surgeon.

The latest qualitative risk assessment on entry of bluetongue into the UK can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9oytuao>

More information on bluetongue and the vaccine availability in GB can be found on the National Farmers Union (NFU) website: www.nfuonline.com/bluetongue

LAUNCH OF EU PLATFORM ON ANIMAL WELFARE

The European Commission issued on 6 June 2017 a Fact Sheet concerning the Launch of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare: Q&A on Animal Welfare policy. The fact sheet can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ybxd6z5a>

The Platform will gather 75 representatives from stakeholders, NGOs, scientists, Member States, EEA (European Economic Area) countries, international organisations and EFSA to exchange experiences and contribute to improving the welfare of animals.

The Platform is intended to assist the Commission with the development and exchange of coordinated actions on animal welfare with focus on:

- Better application of EU rules on animal welfare, through exchanges of information, best practices and the direct involvement of stakeholders;
- The development and use of voluntary commitments by businesses;
- The promotion of EU animal welfare standards at the global level

DEFRA ISSUES UPDATE ON AFRICAN SWINE FEVER IN EAST EUROPE

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have published an update of preliminary outbreak assessment for African swine fever in East European countries, including Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

African swine fever (ASF) is a devastating infectious disease of pigs, usually deadly for which no vaccine exists. It can be transmitted either via direct animal contact or via dissemination of contaminated food (e.g. sausages or uncooked meat). It does not however, affect humans nor does it affect other animal species other than pigs and wild boars.

Since the beginning of 2017 new reports of African Swine Fever (ASF) have been seen in several countries in East Europe. However, despite these outbreaks, APHA state that the risk of ASF introduction to the UK remains very low (that is, "rare but could occur"), as the disease itself is still relatively contained in the restriction zones, and there are EU rules in place to cover the safe trade in meat and other products of animal origin.

The full update can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybvkttzl>

Further information, including detail on the prevention and control measures laid down by the EU can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y6wyxees>

400 IRISH LAMB CARCASSES DESTROYED FOLLOWING INCREASE IN SARCOCYSTOSIS

More than 400 lamb carcasses have been destroyed in Ireland due to increasing incidence of sarcocystosis in lambs intended for the food chain. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is investigating the disease, which is thought to have originated in Donegal.

Inspectors condemned the meat to prevent it entering the food chain and potentially passing the illness to humans, who can contract it from eating under-cooked meat infected with the parasite that causes the disease.

The Department of Agriculture confirmed that its vets have condemned carcasses in several meat plants over a number of weeks because they were not fit for human consumption. "The carcasses were excluded from the food chain. The animals have been traced and possible causes are being investigated," the department said.

Lambs contract sarcocystosis from dogs who in turn get it from eating offal containing the parasite. It is mostly detected after the animals are slaughtered, when cysts can be seen on the meat. Symptoms of the condition in people include stomach aches, nausea, headaches, fever and diarrhoea. Where humans have contracted it in the past, infected meat was blamed. According to the Food Safety Authority the disease is rare and is "more prevalent in cultures where raw meat is commonly eaten". It does not have to be notified to the State's Health Protection Surveillance Centre. The Health Service Executive said that the last recorded outbreak was in Malaysia in 2012, when 93 people suffered symptoms.

The department has restricted the flock where the outbreak occurred, which means that sheep cannot be moved or sold. But there are concerns that the outbreak could threaten the Republic's €320 million sheep farming industry and exports of lamb if signs of the disease were found in Irish products sold abroad. If infected meat were to turn up in other countries, it could prompt their authorities to halt or limit imports from the Republic.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

EFSA REPORTS ON LUMPY SKIN DISEASE IN CATTLE IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have published a report on the outbreaks of lumpy skin disease in cattle in south east Europe. It concludes that the vaccination programme implemented in south-eastern Europe has successfully contained the outbreaks of lumpy skin disease in the region.

Lumpy skin disease is an infectious disease of cattle, which causes economic losses and occasionally is fatal. It is characterised by skin nodules. In 2016 EFSA recommended mass vaccination to minimise the number of outbreaks in regions already affected or at risk. In 2016 the disease was detected in seven European countries – Greece, Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo.

The full report can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/yayoayhw>

FSS URGES FARMERS TO PREVENT LEAD POISONING ON FARMS

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has partnered with Scottish Agricultural College Consulting Vet Services (SACCVS), the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) and the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the causes and symptoms of lead poisoning and help farmers prevent poisoning in their livestock.

Lead poisoning incidents increase in the spring as animals are turned out to pasture. This increases the chances of animals coming into contact with lead deposits from sources including old machinery, rubbish, vehicle batteries, bonfire ash, electric fencing or lead-based paint.

Symptoms of poisoning in cattle can include nervous disease, blindness, infertility and even sudden death. In the last two years, approximately 460 animals in Scotland have been affected by lead poisoning, with 38 dying as a result. Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) veterinary services identified eight incidents of lead poisoning on Scottish farms last year, including one case where 12 cows died with a further 74 affected. More than half of the incidents reported to Food Standards Scotland since 2012 have been caused by lead exposure and poisoning.

Incidents of lead poisoning can have a devastating effect on a farm. As well as not being able to sell the affected animal's produce, farmers can also face the costs involved in veterinary fees, stunted animal growth and loss of market value. Animals which have been exposed to lead can show high levels of poisoning in their meat, offal and milk. These can be above the safe limits laid down in food law, making them illegal for use in the food chain.

The FSS advise that if farmers suspect lead poisoning they should stop access to the affected area and remove the cause as soon as it has been identified. They should remove the livestock from the area and seek veterinary advice.

Tests for lead poisoning in livestock, produce or soil are inexpensive and straightforward to arrange through veterinary surgeons. The Scottish Agricultural College Disease Surveillance Centre can also be contacted for advice at www.sruc.ac.uk

The risk of lead contamination can be minimised by taking some straightforward measures.

- Check fields and barns regularly for vehicle batteries, burnt out cars and old machinery
- Make sure animals can't access bonfire ash, piping and flashing
- Watch out for fly-tipping
- Keep animals' soil consumption as low as possible
- Check for flaky lead paint and putty on outbuildings



QUARTERLY REPORT ON CHEMICAL FOOD SAFETY INCIDENTS ON FARMS

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have issued their quarterly report on chemical food safety incidents on farms for the period January 2017 to March 2017.

Amongst other incidents, the report details instances of lead poisoning diagnosed and investigated in birds and cattle and outlines risk management measures which should be taken. It also reports on a case of Copper poisoning in an adult ram, although it was not intended to be sold for food production.

The full report can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/lefmng6>

SCIENTIFIC OPINION ON WELFARE INSIGHTS ON SLAUGHTER OF PREGNANT ANIMALS

The European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) Animal Health and Welfare Panel (AHAW) published on 30 May 2017 a Scientific Opinion on animal welfare aspects in respect of the slaughter or killing of pregnant livestock animals (cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and horses).

Following a request from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, the Panel assessed whether and when livestock fetuses of different animal species experience pain. According to EFSA's expert judgment, on average 3% of dairy cows, 1.5 % of beef cattle, 0.5% of pigs, 0.8% of sheep and 0.2% of goats in the EU are slaughtered during the last third of gestation. Reasons may vary, from farmers not being aware that animals are pregnant, to considerations linked to animal health and welfare or economic reasons.

The scientists agreed that fetuses don't experience pain in the first two thirds of gestation because the relevant physical and neurological structures develop only during the last part of gestation. The probability of fetuses experiencing pain during the final third of gestation was assessed and the opinion proposes practical measures for reducing the number of pregnant animals slaughtered.

A summary of the main conclusions can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ycafc5e> along with the full scientific opinion: <http://tinyurl.com/y84wqg8f>

NPA REPORT ON PIG WELFARE ACROSS THE WORLD

The National Pig Association (NPA) has compiled a report that compared animal welfare standards in major pig producing countries throughout the world. The NPA's Animal Welfare Matrix, compiled by senior policy advisor Georgina Crayford, outlines the different welfare labelling schemes and legislative requirements in place across selected key pork producing countries – the UK, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Poland, the US, Canada and Brazil. Sweden is also included because of its high animal welfare standards.

Highlights of the document include:

- Sow stalls, banned in the UK in 1999 and partially banned across most of the rest of the EU, are still legally permitted in the US, Canada and Brazil
- In the UK, 40% of sows are outdoors and 90% of indoor sows and 60% of finishing pigs are kept on straw. But very few, if any, pigs are kept outdoors or on straw indoors in the rest of the EU, apart from in Sweden, or the rest of the world
- The use of antibiotics for growth promotion has been banned in the EU since 2006. The practice is permitted in the US, Canada and Brazil, however.
- The use of ractopamine (a feed additive to promote leanness) has been banned in the EU since 1996. But it is approved for use in pigs in the US, Canada and Brazil.

The document also compares tiered animal welfare labelling schemes in place in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. This is significant as Farming Minister George Eustice is looking closely at tiered welfare labelling schemes elsewhere in the EU as he considers using a domestic agricultural policy to incentivise higher animal welfare standards in the UK.

The NPA believes the document is particularly important in the context of the debate over new post-Brexit trade deals and animal welfare standards. Georgina said: "The purpose of the document is to highlight where these differences exist. When negotiating trade deals with third countries, it is vitally important that the UK pig sector is not undercut by imports of pork from countries with lower welfare standards. We must insist on equivalent standards. Equally, we are adamant the Government must not gold-plate our already high standards, as this would only risk pushing up costs and sucking lower standard imports in."

You can read more on the NPA's animal welfare matrix here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7r2vpjg>



BELGIAN REGION BANS HALAL AND KOSHER SLAUGHTER

Belgium's Walloon region has voted to ban halal and kosher meats by outlawing the slaughter of unstunned animals. The environment committee of southern Belgium's Walloon Parliament voted unanimously for the ban, which will take effect on 1 September, 2019. Some figures in government wanted an immediate ban on the slaughter of non-stunned animals, but by means of a compromise, it is hoped that this transitional period should allow slaughterhouses to adapt to the new technique for the ritual slaughter as well as adequate training of the staff.

Further bans on halal and kosher slaughter could be rolled out across Belgium too, as the regional parliament in Flanders, Belgium, has also proposed a ban. Countries including New Zealand, Switzerland, and Denmark already have laws banning unstunned slaughter. In the UK, more than 100,000 people signed a petition demanding the practice was banned here, delivering the document to Downing Street in November 2016.

Both Islamic halal and Jewish kosher rituals require the butcher to swiftly slaughter the animal by slitting its throat and draining its blood, a process condemned by animal rights campaigners, who argue it is more humane to stun animals before killing them. However, the Department of Halal Certification in Ireland claims stunning can be cruel and affects the draining of blood from a carcass, creating poor quality meat.

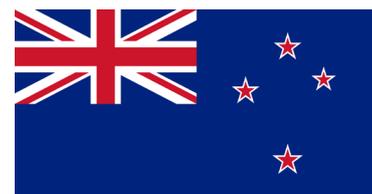
The controversial move has sparked a furious reaction from Muslim and Jewish groups, who claim the ban is an abuse of religious freedom. European Jewish Congress (EJC) president Moshe Kantor called it "the greatest assault on Jewish religious rights in Belgium since the Nazi occupation of the country in World War II". He said the ban "attacks the very core of our culture and religious practice and our status as equal citizens". The EJC said it would fight to ensure the ban in Belgium was overturned, claiming it was a flagrant abuse of the EU's freedom of religion laws.



NEW ZEALAND ANIMAL WELFARE BODY AIRS 'CONCERNS'

Concerns over selective breeding practices in New Zealand's commercial pork and poultry farms have been raised in a report from the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC).

The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) was established under New Zealand's Animal Welfare Act to provide independent advice on animal welfare to the Minister for Primary Industries.



NAWAC raised concerns in its report that pork and poultry producers were using imported genetics from multinational organisations, meaning they lacked influence over the "selection pressures" applied to livestock.

New Zealand produces 100 million birds per year making chicken, numerically, the largest meat industry in the country, NAWAC claims. As such, NAWAC said any compromise on animal welfare would be "far-reaching". One area of concern is that chickens are bred beyond a point that is "compatible with survivability".

While the majority of hatched chickens are slaughtered within a few weeks, NAWAC said the rapid growth of chickens kept to adulthood has a negative effect on fertility, mortality, movement and aggressiveness.

On pork, it is a similar issue. NAWAC takes concern with the pig genetics from multinational corporations who plan selections years in advance. It has called for greater transparency from the breeding companies.

According to NAWAC, tail biting is a big issue in New Zealand and as such, tail docking is prevalent. NAWAC has asked for industry to look at breeding pigs without tail biting tendencies to reduce the need to dock tails. While this may sound complicated, NAWAC pointed to research in 2005 from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that found pigs with a high enough heritability for selection. It has also called for industry to breed more robust piglets to improve to survivability rate, as many piglets are crushed.

In contrast, NAWAC said it was "satisfied" with the approach to beef and lamb selective breeding.

BREXIT

HOUSE OF LORDS REPORT HIGHLIGHTS RISK TO BRITISH FOOD AND DRINK EXPORTS

A House of Lords report into Brexit has highlighted the UK's current huge over reliance on local EU markets, or at least the Single Market and raises concerns that up to 97% of food and drink exports from Britain could be at risk.

The report on the implications of Brexit details comments and evidence given by a range of industry professionals including The British Meat Processors Association (BMPA), The National Association of British and Irish Flour Millers (Nabim) and The Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board (ADHB). Concerns include the high level of tariffs being a barrier to trade and/or making products uncompetitive on the EU market and possible delays at ports and other entry points for perishable goods like fresh fruit and vegetables as well as meat.

Once the UK leaves the EU, Theresa May has already signalled that it will also leave the Single Market, which means a whole host of new trade deals will need to be negotiated – and it's the detailed terms of these deals which are causing so much speculation and concern.

Industries could be looking at a future filled with complicated processes, high tariffs, and border controls. Meanwhile, the British government claims to be investigating a whole host of new opportunities in other international export markets, but there is such a lack of clarity on so many issues, speculation continuously mounts as to what Brexit will actually mean for those in the UK agri-food sectors and exporters currently over reliant on exporting within the European Union.

On average around 80% of Britain's agricultural exports go to the EU, while according to evidence given by the Food and Drinks Federation (FDF) to the Lords report, "the overwhelming majority of trade (over 70 per cent of exports and vital imports) is with EU member states—and 94% of imports and 97% of exports are with countries with which the EU has negotiated an FTA".

The report states that the Government is currently giving mixed messages to the agricultural sector. Its vision for the UK as a leading free-trade nation with low tariff barriers to the outside world does not sit easily with its declared commitment to high quality and welfare standards in the UK farming sector. Combining and delivering these two objectives will be a considerable challenge.

As it negotiates new trading relations with the EU and the wider world the Government will need to balance complex interests. It will need to secure a fair deal for farmers and maintain high standards for agricultural products in the UK, including farm animal welfare, while delivering affordable food to consumers and complying with WTO rules.

The full report can be accessed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7ke2g4w>

UK MEAT EXPORTERS MAY FACE MANY NEW TRADE TARIFFS POST-BREXIT

UK meat exporters may have to negotiate trade tariffs on a country-by-country basis with over 100 nations upon exiting the European Union (EU) on 29 March, 2019.

British trade officials are believed to have told World Trade Organisation (WTO) members of which there are currently 163 other countries including the 27 EU member states, that they plan to offer them the same trade terms currently offered by the European Commission. This means businesses exporting goods to the UK such as New Zealand lamb or Thai poultry will face the same import tariffs currently imposed by the EU.

There will be talks around new tariffs as, after Brexit, the UK will no longer rely on the European Commission to set tariff rate quotas on goods and services, including meat products. There is no set of umbrella trade rules or tariffs that UK meat producers face. Exporters, including meat traders, will face arbitrary tariffs that vary from country to country, creating an incredibly complex and potentially costly new trading landscape for the UK.

One thing many in the European meat industry are strongly opposed to is a hard Brexit that would see the UK give up full access to the single market and the customs union. Katie Doherty, policy director at the International Meat Trade Association (IMTA), said hard Brexit is a "huge concern" to the European meat industry. She added UK beef and lamb exports to the EU would face tariffs of 62% and 57% respectively, "rendering them not economically viable."



SCOTLAND AND WALES LAUNCH PLANS TO HELP FOOD SECTOR WEATHER 'UNCERTAIN TIMES'

Scotland and Wales have launched ambitious new plans to help power their food industries through the years of uncertainty that are expected now the UK has begun the process of leaving the EU.

In Wales, there's a new €24million (£21m) programme designed to create 370 new jobs and safeguard 2,000 more over the next five years. 'Project Helix', as it's been dubbed, will help fund research into global food production, trends and waste to help small and medium-sized manufacturers boost production and improve efficiency. New products and start-ups will be "fast-tracked", with a particular focus on those developed in response to health and well-being challenges. The initiative – designed to push the Welsh food and drink industry towards its growth target of 30% from 2014 to 2020 – will also take into consideration new challenges and opportunities facing the industry as a result of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

In Scotland meanwhile there's the new plan with similar goals. 'Ambition 2030' is based on three key pillars: skills, supply chain collaboration and innovation, to help cement food and drink as Scotland's most valuable industry. Food and drink is currently worth €16.6bn (£14.4bn) in Scotland but there's a new target to double that to €35bn (£30bn) by 2030. The home market – Scottish consumers and tourists – will remain vital, but following research into global trends the country's brands will also be targeting London and overseas markets with premium products.

The Scottish government also announced €11.5m (£10m) of fresh funding to target key markets, boost innovation and promote food and drink as a "career destination". The food and drink sector in Scotland has enjoyed "phenomenal success" in the past decade but these are "uncertain times" said the first minister Nicola Sturgeon. Revoking the free movement of people, for instance, could have a "profound impact on our food and drink sector", she explained.

Research published by Rabobank, forecast that the price of food imported from the EU is likely to increase by up to 8% by the time the UK leaves the union. The report – Weighing up Future Food Security in the UK: The Impact of the Brexit on F&A in Europe and Beyond – assesses three different future tariff scenarios, as well as other factors that will have an impact on food businesses in the UK and the EU, such as further weakening of the pound sterling and the movement of workers.

Further information about the Welsh 'Project Helix' can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/mxu2l6u> Scotlands 'Ambition 2030' can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/mgdfzp2> The Rabobank research report can be viewed in full here: <https://tinyurl.com/lqft5kr>

FOOD SECTOR ISSUES STATEMENT REGARDING PRIORITIES FOR BREXIT

The Food and Drink Federation, National Farmers Union and British Retail Consortium issued a joint statement to ministers and secretary of states, highlighting priorities for UK food and drink trade policy. The trade bodies called for a "smooth and orderly Brexit", by agreeing a transitional period for UK/EU trade. That would include avoiding "costly" customs checks, processes and procedures.

The industry bodies called for an ambitious bilateral free-trade agreement to be negotiated with the EU, which offered tariff-free, two-way trade. Securing any existing trade arrangements with the EU should be prioritised, they said, at least until they can be replaced with acceptable alternatives. They also urged government to engage in formal trade negotiations with non-EU countries, once the future relations with the EU were clear pointing out that trade deals with these nations should consider regulatory differences.

Key objectives:

- Ensure a smooth and orderly Brexit by agreeing transitional arrangements that maintain frictionless trade in goods between the UK and the EU, avoiding costly and disruptive customs checks, processes and procedures
- Avoid customs duties on trade by securing an ambitious bilateral free-trade agreement with the EU that delivers two-way, tariff-free trade
- Establish the UK as an independent member of the World Trade Organisation, providing continuity and predictability by adopting the EU's current schedule of Most Favoured Nation bound tariff rates
- Secure the benefits for UK traders of existing EU preferential trade arrangements, including the UK's fair share of tariff rate quotas for agricultural imports, as well as of any preferential access for UK food and drink exports, at least until government can replace them with acceptable alternative arrangements.
- Engage in formal trade negotiations with third countries when the terms of the UK's future trading relations with the EU and other existing preferential trading partners are clear
- Establish cooperation with third countries on regulatory equivalence and ensuring that all new trade agreements take into consideration differences in regulations and standards when market access is negotiated
- Consult with stakeholders and undertaking detailed economic impact assessments when trade negotiations are opened and before any offers are exchanged.

CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH LABOUR SHORTAGES

The next UK government has been urged to address the “impending labour shortages” faced by the food industry pre- and post-Brexit, after the immigration minister claimed the problem had been overstated.

The Association of Labour Providers (ALP) has called on the government to design a model seasonal workers’ permit-based quota scheme to avoid the “devastating impact” a failing UK horticultural sector would have on the food supply chain.

The ALP made its comments in evidence submitted to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee inquiry into the challenges to the food supply chain from shortages of workers. It followed oral evidence given in March to the EFRA Committee by Robert Goodwill, minister of state for immigration at the Home Office. Goodwill said fears about the labour market had proven to be “a bit of a scare story”, adding that “we have not seen people being deterred from coming here”. Goodwill justified his argument by referring to the latest net migration figures, which for the EU ran at 165,000 for the year to September 2016. Overall net migration figures were 273,000 for the same period.

Back in April, the ALP submitted a further evidence-based submission to the inquiry, which included the results of a survey of its members. It found that 21% of labour providers did not expect to be able to source sufficient workers this summer. Furthermore, the survey revealed a third of labour providers believed the quality of labour was worse than 12 months ago – in contrast to fewer than one in 10 that said it was better. Meanwhile, four out of 10 client businesses have had to increase wage rates to attract workers.

“Government should not wait for labour supply to the UK horticultural sector to fail before rushing in a hasty and ill-thought-through seasonal agricultural workers’ scheme,” said ALP chief executive David Camp.

“Whether introduced in 2018 or 2019, such a scheme will be needed in the foreseeable future. ALP and other industry trade bodies will support the government in designing a model scheme.”

The concerns are also shared in a new briefing paper ‘Earning a Crust: A review of labour trends in UK food manufacturing’ which was co-produced in May by Manchester Metropolitan University for the Food Research Collaboration, an initiative of the Centre for Food Policy at City, University of London.

The report highlights that the sector, already squeezed by shortages, will worsen if the labour supply of European Union migrants dries up after Brexit, and says it will need to recruit up to 140,000 new workers by 2024. It found there are particular challenges facing businesses related to skills shortages, pay, job security, career progression, working conditions and the introduction and application of technologies. The authors said that government and industry should consider the impact of dominant supermarket chains and their relationship with manufacturers; the entrenched use of low-skill, low paid workers on casual, temporary or seasonal contracts; and the lack of information with which to inform policy and debate.

CHEMICALS, CONTAMINANTS & FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS

MAFF BANS IMPORTS AND AGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES CONTAINING TRICYCLAZOLE FUNGICIDE

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has announced it will ban all imports and agricultural pesticides containing the fungicide Tricyclazole in response to the strict new Maximum Result Limit set by the European Commission.

The announcement came shortly after the ministry set up a task force to ban the fungicide, which came just days after the European Commission announced that Cambodia’s milled rice industry must eradicate the use of the Tricyclazole by June or face import bans.

The Maximum Result Limit means that rice must not contain more than 0.01 milligram of the chemical per kilogram of the grain. According to the announcement, signed by Agriculture Minister Veng Sakhon, all farmers must stop using agricultural pesticides containing Tricyclazole and all businesses, retailers and wholesalers must stop importing and selling the fungicide. In addition, the department of agricultural legislation must stop registering and allowing companies to import the chemical.

Tricyclazole is used by farmers to control rice blast disease which can be extensive due to the ability of the fungus to thrive under favourable conditions.

EU PARLIAMENT BACKS REAUTHORISATION OF GLYPHOSPHATE PESTICIDE

The European Parliament has backed a re-authorisation of a pesticide believed to be carcinogenic for another 7 years, despite a widespread protest campaign calling for a full ban instead of a downsized “compromise” deal.

The weedkiller glyphosate is to be given market approval for another seven years, instead of 15 as originally requested, while its use should be limited to professionals only, the European Parliament said in a non-binding resolution. The body also advised the chemical shouldn't be used in public locations, such as parks and playgrounds.

Glyphosate is a widely-used, non-selective herbicide (or herbicide ingredient) registered for use on many food and non-food crops, as well as non-crop areas where total vegetation control is desired. It was discovered and brought to market as a herbicide by Monsanto in the 1970s under the trade name “Roundup”. Roundup is the world's best-selling weedkiller. Farmers and growers apply it to control weeds without harming their crops. It is also used as a crop desiccant (that is, it is sprayed on crops to dry them out and make them easier to harvest).

EU approval of the herbicide glyphosate was granted in January 2002, based on a review of health and environmental data but some studies have claimed in the past that the pesticide could carry health risks.

A European Commission proposal to renew the authorisation for glyphosate for the next 15 years was expected in 2012, but was delayed so that the decision could be informed by two key scientific opinions on glyphosate's safety from two bodies - the UN's specialist cancer agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA). The renewal of the EU authorisation for glyphosate was then delayed at EU level with conflicting scientific assessments.

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) in March 2017 concluded that glyphosate is not carcinogenic, although it has found that it causes serious eye damage and is toxic to aquatic life. This review will contribute to future authorisations. Future approval of glyphosate remains contentious in some Member States, although the UK supports the continued use of it.

A House of Commons briefing paper on the controversy around the EU's re-approval of this pesticide can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/yaljckkj>

EFSA SUMMARY OF THE 2016 DATA COLLECTION ON CONTAMINANT OCCURRENCE DATA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have published a summary of the 2016 Data Collection on Contaminant Occurrence Data. An analysis of the 2016 annual collection of analytical results on chemical contaminants in food and feed covering the sampling year 2015 was performed. Data are submitted annually to EFSA by European data providers to support EFSA's work programme in the area of contaminants.

Overall, 837 154 analytical results were submitted. The analyses were performed on 124 987 samples collected by different European organisations. The data providers were governmental and commercial organisations and more than 93% of the data were analytical results submitted by governmental organisations.

The report, which can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y89t9x53> provides an overview of the number of results reported by substance, country of the data provider, food or feed group and the distribution of results by country.

BPA RECOGNISED AS ENDOCRINE DISRUPTOR BY EUROPEAN CHEMICALS AGENCY

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has recognised that Bisphenol A (BPA) is an endocrine disruptor that could be linked to cancer, learning difficulties and diabetes.

France presented a proposal in accordance with Article 59(3) and Annex XV of the REACH Regulation on the identification of BPA as a substance of very high concern due to its endocrine disruptive properties for which there is scientific evidence of probable serious effects to human health which give rise to an equivalent level of concern to those of other substances listed in paragraphs (a) to (e) of Article 57 of REACH.

The dossier was referred to the Member State Committee on 22 May 2017 and discussed in the meeting on 12-16 June 2017 of the Member State Committee. They concluded that on the basis of evidence available in relation to alteration of reproductive function, mammary gland development, cognitive function and metabolism, BPA can be considered an endocrine disruptor for human health.

More detail surrounding the decision can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/yd3v5ojw>



BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE TO ENSURE REGULATORY COMPLIANCE OF PRINTED CARTONS

Food Drink Europe have recently published a useful best practice guidance to ensure the regulatory compliance of printed cartons intended for packaging food products.

The purpose of the guidance is to encourage an appropriate dialogue and sharing of compliance information between food producers and their packaging suppliers on the issues which should be considered in order to assess compliance. It also provides links to a number of regulatory and non-regulatory standards, including industry best practice guidance. The guidance applies only to printed cartons manufactured from board and can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/y8aqmsdk>

EFSA PUBLISH ADVICE ON REPORTING OF PESTICIDES DATA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published advice on the reporting of data relating to pesticides in foods and feeds. These provisions take into account the experience of both the previous reporting seasons and the new legislation applicable in 2016. In addition, new explanatory examples on the appropriate coding for specific food samples are provided.

According to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed, Member States have to monitor pesticide residue levels in food samples and submit the monitoring results to EFSA and the European Commission.

The advice can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybf7y4st>



EFSA PROPOSE POTENTIAL NEW METHODOLOGY FOR PESTICIDE ASSESSMENT

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have proposed a new approach for chemical risk assessment of pesticides.

Up to now, human epidemiological studies have suggested an association between exposure to certain chemicals and human diseases. However, as an association does not necessarily prove a cause-and-effect link, firm conclusions cannot easily be drawn from epidemiological studies. This means that such studies are in many cases of limited use in determining whether a chemical can ultimately represent a risk factor for a disease.

EFSA's pesticide experts have been exploring how results from epidemiological studies can be integrated into pesticide risk assessments and have tested a method that they claim could enable risk assessors to establish a biological cause-and-effect link between exposure to chemicals such as pesticides and ill health.

More information on the project can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ycx659gf>

EFSA PUBLISH LATEST MONITORING REPORT ON PESTICIDES IN FOOD

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have recently published their latest monitoring report 'The 2015 European Union report on pesticide residues in food'.

As part of its annual report, EFSA analysed the results of the EU-coordinated control programme (EUCP), under which reporting countries analyse samples from the same "basket" of food items. For 2015 the products were aubergines, bananas, broccoli, virgin olive oil, orange juice, peas, sweet peppers, table grapes, wheat, butter and eggs.

The report reveals that more than 97% of food samples collected across the EU in 2015 were within legal limits, with just over 53% free of quantifiable residues. The figures are in line with those recorded in 2014.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/yd53bx5q>

DEFRA ISSUES RESULTS OF PESTICIDE MONITORING PROGRAMME

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have published rolling results from the Government's monitoring programme in 2016 to check home-produced and imported food for any pesticide residues. Results have been added from November and December 2016, covering beans with pods, grapes, milk, okra, potatoes and prepared fresh fruit and can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/hz9nzmo>

Quarterly results from the same monitoring programme have also been released. These latest results are for the quarter 3 report. This quarter's programme surveyed 1,019 samples of 26 different foods: apples, apricots, beans with pods, bread, cabbage, cheese, fish (predator & sea), grapes, infant food, jam, leeks, lettuce, milk, okra, peaches & nectarines, pears, peppers, pork, potatoes, prepared fresh fruit, speciality vegetables, spices, spring onions, strawberries and tomatoes. The results show that 62 samples contained residues above the maximum permitted levels. The results can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/m37g8l2>

FSA PUBLISH LATEST LEGISLATIVE UPDATE ON CHEMICAL CONTAMINANTS IN FOOD

The FSA has published its latest legislative update focusing on chemical contaminants in food. The update summarises a number of issues that have been discussed at European Commission working group meetings and Standing Committees including:

- Draft Regulation on maximum levels for mercury;
- Discussions on revised benchmark levels (BML) on acrylamide in food;
- Discussion of maximum levels for 3-MCPD-esters and glycidyl esters in food;
- Recommendation on monitoring of mineral oil hydrocarbons;
- MLs for hydrocyanic acid (HCN) in unprocessed apricot kernels;
- PAHs in traditionally smoked meat and fish products.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9rj3xw5>

FOOD SAFETY AND ZOOSES

FSA ACCEPTS CRITICISM OVER FOOD HYGIENE VARIATIONS

The FSA has accepted criticism over wide discrepancies in food hygiene standards, from the consumer pressure group Which?

Which? claimed the chance of buying from a food business that failed to meet hygiene standards could be as high as one in three.

The study assessed the hygiene standards of 386 local authorities across the UK. It found that Hyndburn, Lancashire had the lowest rating of hygiene compliance, with 35% of medium and high-risk businesses meeting acceptable hygiene standards. Birmingham was second from bottom – out of 386 – with a 59% compliancy rate and in contrast, Erewash, Derbyshire had the best compliancy rate at 97%. Eden, Cumbria was second, with a 96% compliancy rate.

The FSA said it was taking “appropriate measures to act on authorities with the lowest levels of performance to help them to secure improvements”.

Which? also criticised the FSA's plan to use third-party food hygiene inspectors claiming third parties employed by businesses, in place of checks by public authorities, would not be a robust system and would raise conflicts of interest. But, the FSA said third-parties would play a key role in developing the future of regulation.



FSA chair Heather Hancock said: “We think Which? is incorrect to doubt the use of third-parties in assuring business compliance. We believe third-parties will have an important role to play in a robust and sustainable future system of regulation. However, any use of third-party assurance will be regulated by us and we will set clear and rigorous standards that we expect industry to comply with.”



FSA PUBLISHES THE SIXTH CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISERS REPORT

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has recently published its sixth Chief Scientific Advisers report which this time focusses on data science.

Data science is being increasingly realised within the regulation of food safety and is essential in enabling the FSA to ensure that food is safe to eat. The report shows how the Agency is bringing together a range of data such as economic conditions, social media and consumer preferences to help the FSA meet its statutory obligations.

Specifically, the report looks at several case studies, which show how social media can be effectively harnessed. One example is the work on predicting norovirus outbreaks through tweets. Inspired by early success of Google's Flu Trends, the FSA developed a predictive algorithm that compared social media data with foodborne illness statistics to provide early warnings of norovirus outbreaks. When the FSA detect an outbreak, they work with NHS Choices to limit the disruptive effect on essential services by rolling out interventions. Since there is no known cure for norovirus, intervention materials such as posting infographics on social media are designed to make people aware of how to stop the spread of the virus.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/yalsbzng>

EFSA PUBLISH INTERACTIVE STORY MAPS ON VECTOR BORNE DISEASES

EFSA has launched 36 interactive story-maps that provide user-friendly information on vector-borne diseases, from their geographical spread, to the risk of introduction in the EU to prevention and control measures. The story-maps have been developed as part of a scientific opinion that will support risk managers to prioritise control measures. The tool that experts developed to carry out their risk assessments (Mintrisk) is publicly available and anybody can see the data and information used by the experts to reach their conclusions.

A vector is a living organism that transmits an infectious agent from an infected animal to a human or another animal. Vectors are frequently arthropods, such as mosquitoes, ticks, flies, fleas and lice.

Diseases transmitted by vectors are called vector-borne diseases. Many vector-borne diseases are zoonotic diseases, i.e. diseases that can be transmitted directly or indirectly between animals and humans. These include for example Lyme disease, tick-borne encephalitis, West Nile virus, Leishmaniosis and Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever.

Some vectors are able to move considerable distances. This may affect the transmission ranges of vector-borne zoonotic diseases. Vectors can be introduced to new geographic areas for example by:

- travel of humans and international trade;
- animal movement, for instance of livestock;
- migratory birds;
- changing agricultural practices;
- or the wind.

Other factors may play a role in their establishment and persistence in new areas, including climatic conditions. The interactive story maps can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/yagbvbeo>

GUIDANCE ON GOOD HYGIENE AT PRIMARY PROCESSING FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The Commission have recently published a notice on guidance document on addressing microbiological risks in fresh fruits and vegetables at primary production through good hygiene.

The purpose of the guidance document is to assist growers (regardless of size) at primary production to apply in a correct and uniform way hygiene requirements related to production and handling of fresh fruit and vegetables (FFV).

It will provide guidance to growers on how to address microbiological food safety hazards through good agricultural practices and good hygiene practices in primary production (i.e. growing, harvest and post-harvest) of FFV sold to consumers raw (unprocessed) or minimally processed (i.e. washed, sorted, packed), including during transportation provided that these activities do not substantially alter their nature as laid down in the definition of Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

The guidance document can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/ydhudarh>



COMMISSION ISSUES DRAFT EU REGULATION ON ACRYLAMIDES

The EU Commission has provided a new draft of the proposal for a regulatory approach to acrylamide reduction to EU Member States. The new draft proposal was discussed at the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF) on 27 March 2017. Further technical discussions took place at the expert committee meeting for environmental and industrial contaminants on 3rd May 2017, before the draft was made publicly available for comment on the Commission website.

The public consultation text was further discussed at the 19th of June SCoPAFF meeting and the Commission is hoping to put the measure for a vote before the summer break at a specific July meeting. It is anticipated that the regulation will be formally adopted in November 2017 (there is then a 4th month transition period before the measures come into force). Discussions on the feasibility of establishing MLs for any food categories will start immediately after the Regulation is adopted.

The latest draft proposal can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/yane62rd> along with supporting annexes: <http://tinyurl.com/y7q728qj>

FSA PUBLISH AIDE-MEMOIRES FOR USE IN APPROVED ESTABLISHMENTS

In response to the findings of the Directorate General for Health and Food (formerly the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Local Authority Audit Team, the FSA have developed a range of aide-memoires for local authority officers to use when carrying out hygiene inspections of approved premises.

The audits recommended the development of aide-memoires to ensure sufficient and appropriate documentation of information and details, relevant to official controls in specific sector establishments.

It is intended that an authorised officer will use the 'Approved Establishments' aide-memoire in conjunction with an inspection form for comments and add the relevant 'bolt on form' to the business being inspected. However, the forms will also be of interest to all parties, including manufacturers and retailers.

The aide memoires, inspection forms and 'bolt on' forms can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/yblo9atn>

NOVEL SALMONELLA STRAIN SICKENS 40 IN FOUR COUNTRIES

A new Salmonella serotype that first caused illness in Greece has spread to three other countries, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Greece, Germany, Czech Republic and Luxembourg have reported 40 cases of the Salmonella serotype with an antigenic formula 11:z41:enz15, which has never been described before.



The Salmonella serotype was found during checks carried out in Germany in October 2016 on imported sesame seeds from Nigeria. Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) analysis concluded the Salmonella food isolate was identical to the human isolates and as a result, Germany issued a RASFF notification on 22 February 2017. ECDC said as sesame seeds have a long shelf life and cases have been reported recently, it is likely contaminated batches have been in the food chain for several months in a number of Member States.

A study in Greece of 11 cases with the new serotype and 22 cases of Salmonella Enteritidis indicated an association between disease and consumption of tahini (a sesame-based product).

In the Czech Republic two cases mentioned possible consumption of sesame-based products whilst Germany had four cases with an epidemiological link to Greece, either through travel or being visited by Greek relatives. Luxembourg reported one symptomatic and two asymptomatic cases, with the latest notification in February 2017.

Twelve countries (Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden and Switzerland) did not have any of the novel human Salmonella isolates.

The Salmonella isolates with the unusual antigenic type were first identified by the National Reference Laboratory for Salmonella and Shigella (NRLSS) in Greece. The pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) profile was then uploaded to the European Surveillance System (TESSy). By the end of 2016, the Greek National Reference Centre had around 200 Salmonella isolates waiting to be serotyped; therefore additional cases during that period could emerge later.

The Pasteur Institute in Paris confirmed results of a Greek laboratory, verifying a new serotype of Salmonella enterica subspecies enterica. If this is confirmed by additional testing, a name will be given to the new serotype.

CAMPYLOBACTER SHOWS DECLINE IN THE UK

There has been a 17% decline in laboratory reports of Campylobacter cases compared to the baseline figure, according to the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA). Results of modelling by the FSA estimate this equates to more than 100,000 fewer cases of Campylobacter across the UK compared to that baseline. There were 59,142 confirmed lab reports of Campylobacter in 2016 and 63,083 in 2015.

The baseline was calculated as the average of confirmed lab reports between 2009 and 2013 which was 71,261. The decrease is also scaled up to take account of underreporting at a rate of 9.3.

The agency also published the first set of results from the third-year survey of Campylobacter on fresh shop-bought whole chickens from August to December 2016. A total of 7% of chickens tested positive within the highest band of contamination (more than 1,000 colony forming units per gram). This was down from 12% for the same period in 2015 and 20% in 2014. Chickens that tested positive for the pathogen at any level was at 56%, down from 66% in 2015 and 78% in 2014. However, it was up from 50% during the third quarter of testing, from January to March 2016.

These are the first results since the survey was suspended and method changed from measuring the amount of Campylobacter on 25g of chicken neck skin - generally the most contaminated part. The current method involves measuring it on the 10g portion of neck skin only. It was changed as the old method could not be relied upon to give accurate retailer comparisons.

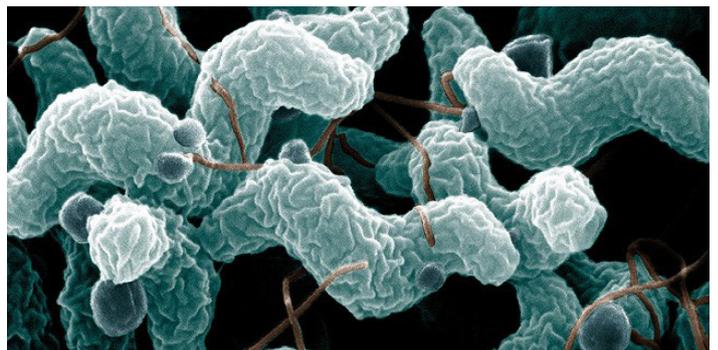
The FSA said it is changing the way it looks at levels of Campylobacter on chickens at the slaughterhouse by ending the current monitoring programme. The agency said this will not impact the retail survey and will be the method through which the large processors and retailers will be measured.

To focus on the processors which are not making significant improvements (generally small-medium sized poultry plants), the FSA is considering targeting specific sites with inspections. They have commended the effort and money the larger retailers and the major processing plants who supply them have put in, all of which they say, have shown significant improvement and many have achieved the target set to reduce the highest levels of campylobacter. The FSA focus will now be on encouraging the smaller retailers and processors, who generally haven't met target levels, to follow the lead of the major players and as such they are considering targeting specific sites with inspections.

Further information, along with the first set of third year survey results of Campylobacter on fresh shop-bought whole chickens can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/mln3ttg>

Meanwhile in Scotland, research shows Campylobacter is the biggest cause of food poisoning and that 55-75% of cases are associated with chicken. Health Protection Scotland said there had been a decline of 15.5% in laboratory reports of human cases of Campylobacter in 2016, compared to the previous year. A total of 5,296 laboratory reports of Campylobacter were received by HPS last year. This was a decrease of 968 (15.5%) compared to 2015 when 6,262 isolates were reported. Figures from 2016 represent a decline of 1,340 (20.2%) on the peak of 6,636 reports in 2014. Incidence rates are higher in children under one year compared with older children and young adults and then increase with the highest rates among those 50 years and older.

In contrast, Sweden has seen the number of people infected by Campylobacter double in the past five years. According to Swedish agencies almost 6,900 cases were reported last year after being infected in the country. Reasons for this include a large increase in production of chicken meat and consumption during the last couple of years and increased incidence of bacteria at the production stage. Sampling shows the prevalence of Campylobacter in chicken flocks and the presence of the pathogen in chicken meat was higher in Swedish chickens in 2016 compared to previous years.



EFSA PUBLISH UPDATED RISK COMMUNICATION HANDBOOK FOR FOOD INDUSTRY

The third edition of the joint Member State-European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) risk communication handbook, 'When Food is Cooking up a Storm: Proven Recipes for Risk Communications', has been published. This updated edition includes new case studies on caffeine and acrylamide in food, a new overview on communicating uncertainty in science and an updated chapter on using social media.

The aim of the publication is to help communicators in the food sector to design communication programmes supported by high-quality science and taking account of public values and preferences. It provides information on food safety, risk assessment methods and the tasks of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) as well as advice based on existing research and long-standing experience. The handbook can be accessed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8kslsg6>

ERRINGTON CHEESE UPDATE

At the end of March Health Protection Scotland (HPS) published the E. coli O157 outbreak report on behalf of the Incident Management Team (IMT) which was established to investigate the national outbreak in summer 2016.

The report confirmed that a total of 26 cases of the same strain of E. coli O157 were identified in the outbreak between July and mid-September 2016. Seventeen of the cases required admission to hospital and a three-year-old child died.

The report describes the detailed epidemiological, microbiological, food and environmental investigations and concludes that Dunsyre Blue cheese was the source of this outbreak. It also presents lessons learned and recommendations for improvement

The full report can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/kg2fup3>

Following the report being issued, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) published a statement highlighting the key findings. It concluded that the cheese was the source of illness, as 'potentially pathogenic E. coli were able to enter and survive the cheese production process at the food business. Positive results were obtained for cheese produced over a period of 4 months, indicating a systematic potential for STEC to enter the process and contaminate final products'. It went on to say that there were deficiencies in the monitoring and control procedures at Errington Cheese. It observes that the pathogen was also found in Corra Linn cheese and points out that this product could have remained on the market if the FSS had not issued a Food Alert for Action.

The FSS statement can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/k5yop4x>

A subsequent update from FSS advised that any products produced by the company prior to 15 September 2016 are subject to a Food Alert for Action (FAFA) issued on 9 November 2016, and will have been seized or destroyed. Any cheeses produced after that date are not subject to the FAFA.

South Lanarkshire Council has confirmed that it is satisfied with the new food safety management system (FSMS) at Errington Cheese, and has given the company approval to sell new cheese products. Lanark Blue cheese now being placed on the market has been produced under the revised FSMS.

The FSS notice can be viewed in full here: <https://tinyurl.com/ljc2qr4>

Founder of Errington Cheese, Hugh Errington, has pledged that he will continue his bid to clear the company of responsibility for the death of the 3-year-old girl from E. coli O157.



EU FOOD SAFETY ALMANAC PUBLISHED

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has released a 4th updated and revised version of its EU Food Safety Almanac. The Almanac includes information on each country's national institutions with simplified diagrams depicting the organisational structures and hierarchies. Institutions on a regional, local and central level are described as well as brief descriptions of national legal foundations in the area of food and feed safety. Pictograms are used to illustrate the areas of responsibility of each respective institution.

The almanac can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/6fvo8c7>

FOOD SECURITY, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

BRAZILIAN MEAT ISSUE- LATEST UPDATES

Further to on-site audits by the Commission Services at the beginning of May, the European Commission has asked Brazil:

1. To put in place full microbiological checks (Salmonella) before exporting poultry meat and meat-based products and preparations to the European market. This will be on 100% of goods. The shipment will have to be accompanied by the veterinary certificate and an attestation confirming the testing (used method + results). As soon as Brazil confirms the enforcement of the testing, the EU Commission will inform Member States and Border Inspection Posts.
2. To remove all horse abattoirs from the list of establishments approved for sales to the EU - As soon as Brazil confirms the delisting, the EU Commission will inform Member States and Border Inspection Posts.
3. Not to request the inclusion of new establishments on this list

Note, the prelisting system is suspended for any new approval of an establishment aiming at exporting to the EU. This means that the listing of new establishment will depend on the outcomes of the audits performed by the Commission services on the spot. The suspension of the prelisting system applies to ALL species.

It has been reported that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has suspended all imports of Brazilian fresh beef. This follows ongoing inspections since March by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) on 100% of all meat from Brazil.

These inspections highlighted reoccurring food safety issues: 106 lots (11%) were refused entry due to public health concerns, sanitary conditions and animal health issues. This equates to approximately 1.9 million pounds of Brazilian beef products.

From now, no shipments from Brazil will be allowed to enter the US until the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture takes corrective action, which will be subject to USDA approval. This is despite the Brazilian Government saying it would 'self-suspend' five beef production operations from shipping products to the US.

This is a change of direction to the stance originally taken by the US Agriculture Secretary, Sonny Perdue where he said an embargo would be an over-reaction to which there would likely be retaliation

A new audit is expected to be carried out in Brazil in October or November of this year to assess the progress made.

BFFF along with our colleagues at Graylings, are continuing to monitor the situation as it develops and will keep members updated should there be any new developments.

DNA BASED METHODOLOGIES FOR FOOD AUTHENTICITY, TRACEABILITY & SAFETY

SGS has developed a range of techniques and technologies to ensure its clients know exactly what is in complex food samples.

DNA-based methodologies have become a powerful tool for food analysis, the detection of potential adulteration, and as a deterrent to economically motivated adulteration. Traditionally, most methods usually target either one or a small number of ingredients and were based on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) amplification. This kind of targeting requires foreknowledge about which organism to search for and can be restricted by the narrow range of commercially available test kits. The results obtained by direct PCR detection only produce presence/absence results for the targeted species, but no additional information is obtained, such as whether any other species is present in the sample.



DNA-based approaches have recently been greatly improved by the application of new Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) techniques. At the end of an NGS analysis, millions of individual sequences are obtained making it possible to identify species in complex foods containing multiple ingredients. This is because each ingredient will produce a single and unique DNA sequence. Following comparison with databases (containing several thousands of species) NGS generates a complete list of all the species present in a sample, including each species' scientific name.

The new NGS techniques can also overcome the issue of DNA fragmentation caused during the manufacture of highly processed food products. Fragmented DNA can be caused by many manufacturing processes, like the high temperatures and/or pressures used for sterilization, which damage DNA and produce very short DNA fragments. An NGS approach, optimised to work with those short fragments, avoids false negative results although the DNA sequences must still be informative enough to discriminate among closely related species.

IAEA AND FAO INVESTIGATE MOBILE TOOLS TO TACKLE FOOD FRAUD

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are to look at mobile tools to combat food fraud and contamination.

The project will build on advances in field-deployable analytical equipment, such as adapting ion mobility spectrometry (a nuclear-based technology) to perform point-of-use screening to check for adulterants, contaminants and mould in food. It will also develop methods to use hand-held devices to test authenticity including guidelines for analyses and a database of authentic reference samples.

The goal is to make low-cost devices and methods available for authorities to use in streets and markets, particularly in developing countries. Traditionally, laboratories can detect different types of fraud and contamination quickly but capacity is limited in many countries and is not portable. The development of high performance hand-held computing devices, such as smartphones, has enabled a new generation of instruments that can be used outside the traditional laboratory environment. Portable tools and standard operating procedures will allow authorities to respond faster at critical checkpoints and protect the food supply chain from being inundated with tainted products.

The project will initially focus on methods to quickly analyse milk powder and vegetable oil, two commodities particularly vulnerable to adulteration. Gutter oil, the waste cooking vegetable oil recovered and recycled back into the food chain, is a problem in many countries.

Work started in May the first results are expected within two years. Participating countries include Austria, Belgium, China, India, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, UK, Uganda and the US. The project is also benefitting from two portable spectrometer machines purchased due to support from Germany.

DEFRA UPDATES LIST OF PROTECTED NAMES

Following the registration of Welsh Laverbread, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) have now published an updated list of protected names.

The full list of protected names can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/nglydzg> along with an updated list of applications being considered: <https://tinyurl.com/pzc9n5d>

If you're a food or drink producer, you can apply to the EU to have the name of your product protected under EU law. This protected status can take one of 3 forms; protected geographical indication (PGI), protected designation of origin (PDO) or traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG).

This means that another producer can't market their product using that name unless they both produce it in the area you have agreed with the EU and use the methods you have agreed with the EU. The process can be a lengthy one however, taking up to 4 years to get the name of your food or drink product legally protected by the EU.

More information about EU protected food names including how to register can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8zprxzy>

JRC ISSUE LATEST FOOD FRAUD REPORTS

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) has published its most recent summary of articles on food fraud and authenticity which this time round, is dominated by meat and fish, with various incidents of meat substitution and artificial enhancements.

Honey has also come under the spotlight once again with a report of artificial enhancement with industrial grade dye in Pakistan and the mixing of honey with corn syrup, sugar, honey fragrance and beeswax in Thailand. Also reported is Italy's push for country of origin labelling for grain, pasta and rice.

The full report can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycw7ogfi>

Note: The summary reflects media coverage and not the frequency of fraud in a particular country and/or concerning a product.

The above findings are in line with the EU Food Fraud Network Annual Report for 2016 which has also recently been published: <https://tinyurl.com/ybfsnrwn>

This report is based on voluntary information entered by member states into an IT application known as the Administrative Assistance and Cooperation System (AAC). Note: the AAC is only for cross-border non-compliances so does not include national level cases - In total 243 cases were recorded, with a significant increase in the third quarter of 2016. Mislabelling composition dominated cases with 42, the next highest being ingredient replacement with 11 and addition of undeclared substance and use of falsified documentation with nine cases each. (Note: mislabelling could or could not have a fraudulent nature). Meat and meat products (other than poultry) was the top category with 28 cases, followed by fish and fish products (22 cases), fats and oils (20) and poultry meat and poultry meat products (19).

IMPORTS AND THE SUPPLY CHAIN

FSA EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR IMPORTS OF FOOD AND FEED NOT OF ANIMAL ORIGIN

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) have developed an early warning system based primarily on analysis of the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) information issued by EU Member States for imports of food and feed not of animal origin.

The frequency of notifications for particular hazards and commodities from specific third countries allows the FSA to see how they might influence the Commission's consideration for changes to Annex I of Commission Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 (as amended) and other sampling legislation.

The FSA have identified the following products that have been subject to several RASFFs, in respect of the same country and hazard, between June 2016 and May 2017. Note however, there is no indication the Commission will consider these for increased EU controls under Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 or other safeguard measures.

Early warning system for imported food & feed General commodities – Foods not of animal origin (FNAO) only Period covered: June 2016 to May 2017						
Product	Country of origin	Hazard	RASFFs issued during the last:			Comments (S) = serious risk (UD) = undecided
			1 year	6 months	1 month	
Almonds	USA	Aflatoxin B1	4	4	2	Two RASFFs in May 2017 from Italy (S)
Egusi (dried melon / watermelon) seeds	Ghana	Aflatoxin B1	3	2	2	New signal: Two RASFFs in May 2017 from UK and Germany, both (S)
Egusi seeds	Togo	Aflatoxin B1	2	2	1	New signal: One RASFF in April 2017 from Italy, One in May 2017 from Germany, both (S)
Egusi seeds	Turkey	Aflatoxin B1	3	3	3	New signal: Three RASFFs in May 2017 from Germany, all (S)
Rice	India	Aflatoxin B1	4	4	1	One RASFF in May 2017 from Switzerland (S)
Rice	Pakistan	Aflatoxin B1	2	2	2	New signal: Two RASFFs in May 2017: [1]Denmark [1]France (S)
Soluble/instant Coffee	India	Ochratoxin A	3	3	1	One RASFF in May 2017 from Latvia (S)
Sesame seed	Sudan	Salmonella	9	9	1	One RASFF in May 2017 from Greece (S)
Palm oil	Nigeria	Unauthorised colour Sudan IV	2	2	1	New signal: One RASFF in Apr 2017 from The Netherlands (UD), One in May 2017 from Belgium(S)

EC LAUNCH NEW ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATION SYSTEM FOR ORGANIC IMPORTS

The European Commission has launched a new system of electronic certification for imports of organic products. The electronic certificate replaces the paper-based certificate of inspection which has been in place since 2008.

The e-certification system will contribute to enhancing food safety provisions and reducing potential fraud. It is also aimed at reducing the administrative burden for operators and authorities, and providing more comprehensive statistical data on organic imports. A 6-month transition period started on 19th April 2017 during which time both paper and e-certification are being used. However, as of 19th October 2017, only the certificates initiated and issued via the electronic system will be valid.

The electronic certificate is accessible through the Trade Control & Expert System (TRACES) - the existing EU electronic system for tracking movements of food products across the EU.

Accessible 24/7, TRACES has been shown to facilitate trade by enabling trade partners and competent authorities to easily obtain information on the movements of their consignments, and speeding up administrative procedures. It also proved to be an invaluable tool in facilitating the rapid reaction to health threats by tracing the movements of consignments and facilitating the risk management of rejected consignments. More information about the TRACES system can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/kp85nq4>

FDF AND FDEA ISSUE GUIDANCE ON FOOD AND DRINK EXPORTS

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) and The Food & Drink Exporters Association have launched a new guide aimed at helping food and drink companies to begin or accelerate their export business.

The five-step guide covers the core elements of the export process, provides useful tips and relevant contacts and is designed to aid manufacturers prepare and take advantage of new opportunities as the UK leaves the European Union. In addition to the new guide, FDF has encouraged Government to work with industry to scale-up its provision of specialist food and drink export support by putting in place a one-stop shop to support small and medium-sized exporters

The guide can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9ww9xwd>

200 GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS CONSIDERED FOR PROTECTION

200 European and Chinese geographical indications -100 from each side- are being considered for protection by the European Commission through a bilateral agreement, to be concluded

The proposed EU list of products to be protected in China includes products like Bayerisches Bier, Feta, Queso Manchego, Champagne, Gorgonzola and Polska Wódka while amongst the Chinese products aspiring to obtain geographical indications status in the EU there are for example, Yantai Ping Guo (Yantai apple), Hengxian Mo Li Hua Cha (Hengxian jasmine tea), Panjin Da Mi (Panjin rice) and Baise Mang Guo (Baise Mango).

The geographical indications can be found here <http://tinyurl.com/62k5vh3> (European) and here <http://tinyurl.com/y8xt7q3m> (Chinese)

Further information can be found in the press release here: <http://tinyurl.com/yc7zznop>

ORGANIC IMPORTS FROM NORWAY AND ICELAND TO RESUME

The European Commission have announced that organic products from Norway and Iceland including Norwegian organic salmon, can again be imported to the European Union and duly marketed as abiding by the EU's organic rules following the incorporation of the relevant regulations into the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).

The decision taken by the EEA Committee comes after 8 years during which organic producers from Norway and Iceland (the EEA countries concerned) were complying with outdated rules no longer applied within the EU. As a result of the adoption of this decision, imports of organic salmon produced and certified in accordance with the EU Regulations from the EEA countries were able to resume as of 18 March 2017.

More information can be found in the Commission press release: <http://tinyurl.com/k86mjme>

DIT LAUNCH NEW 'INTERNATIONAL EXPORT HUB'

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has sought to open up new markets to UK producers, launching its new 'integrated export hub' where companies large and small can find live export opportunities along with free advice and support to get exporting, including opportunities as far-afield from China to India and the Middle East. Some classic English food and drink exports include strawberries, Cheddar cheese and English Gin.

The free advice and support along with access to the export hub can be located here: <http://tinyurl.com/lh9dqvg>



LABELLING AND GENERAL FOOD LAW

DEFRA ISSUE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN GUIDANCE

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) have recently published guidance for food manufacturers on the labelling of meat, fish or seafood products with a country of origin indication.

The guidance provides details on when and what information is needed for country or place of origin labelling if supplied to the final consumer or mass caterer and includes the requirements for beef, poultry, mince meat, pigs and sheep as well as fish and seafood.

The guidance can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/ycv7d44o>

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has also published guidance on country of origin and place of provenance guidance for fresh, chilled and frozen meat of swine, sheep, goats and poultry which can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9bqo69a>

WAIVER FOR FREE RANGE EGGS RULED ILLEGAL BY EU COMMISSIONER

Commissioner for Agriculture Phil Hogan has ruled out any waiver on the EU's free range egg policy, which forced many producers to abandon the status in the wake of the bird flu crisis.

Since a fresh outbreak of avian influenza swept through Europe in 2016, forcing huge numbers of poultry farms to close and even destroy their stock, free range egg status had to be terminated in many parts of the EU.

According to EU policy, egg producers have a 12-week time allowance in case of emergencies such as bird flu in which to house their flocks indoors, thus breaking the technical free range standard. However, once the allowance period passes free range chickens can no longer qualify as free range. In response to the ruling, the British Free Range Egg Association (BFREPA) stated:

“He is absolutely right that at the moment it would be illegal to label eggs as free range from hens that were housed for more than 12 weeks. From BFREPAs point of view we would say that our members can't ever be left in the situation we've been in for the past year ever again. It is likely that bird flu will come back to Britain again one day, we don't know, it's an ever-evolving virus. We would like EU marketing regulations to be amended so that producers aren't disadvantaged by a situation that is effectively out of their control. They can't stop infected birds flying into the country. BFREPA will continue to lobby at a national and international level to alter the current legislation.”

Britain's egg producers found a way around the ruling however by continuing to sell eggs in free range boxes and adding stickers to each carton warning consumers of the situation.

However, BFREPA said the sticker solution was less than ideal. “It slightly got producers out of jail, since if the rules were enforced fully many of the producers couldn't have survived. We were reliant however on retailers honouring the prices promised for free range eggs, but if the situation continued for a long time would they honour that? We don't know.



FSA PUBLISH REVISED FOOD LAW CODE OF PRACTICE

The Food Standards Agency have published a revised Food Law Code of Practice (England) which updates and replaces the previous code issued in April 2015. The changes include:

- Facilitating consistent interpretation and approach by local authority officers delivering official controls, specifically in relation to risk scoring; by updating advice and clarifying the risk descriptors used in the food establishment intervention rating schemes;
- Providing additional guidance on the communication of food incidents and hazards, and addressing food criminality;
- Further clarifying qualification and competency requirements of local authority officers since the implementation of the previous Code revision.

The code of practice can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/yd4y2qop>

5-C NUTRISCORE TO BE FRANCE'S OFFICIAL NUTRITION LABEL

France has confirmed that the five-colour NutriScore will be adopted as the official (but voluntary) label in France. Four logos were rolled out in 60 supermarkets across France for 10 weeks in a bid to determine which one was most effective in promoting healthy eating.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has praised France for officially backing the scheme which “clearly stood out as the most consumer-friendly”.

The WHO said: “France’s recent decision to recommend the Nutri-Score system, a straightforward labelling system that uses colour codes to guide consumers at a glance on the nutritional value of food products, marks an important achievement for nutrition in the WHO European Region. It will build on other ongoing efforts in the country to create healthy food environments. Evidence now from France and elsewhere shows that this type of labelling can contribute to informing healthy choices, meeting growing consumer demands for information on healthier options and limiting the consumption of foods high in energy, saturated fats, sugar or salt, in the context of an overall improvement in the nutritional quality of diets.

Rules governing the European Union’s single market prevent individual member states from making such front-of-pack labelling but the UK’s traffic light logo has been widely adopted by British supermarkets.

France became the second country in Europe to officially recommend colour coded nutrition label, after the UK’s Food Standards Agency’s traffic light system. The two differ in that the French logo assesses the global nutrient profile of a food, attributing one colour accordingly, while the UK’s traffic light label does so on an individual basis, and could give the same product a green light for its salt content but a red light for saturated fat. The evidence base to support this decision can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/yaydslou>

NUTRITION, ADDITIVES AND HEALTH

IRELAND TO RESTRICT JUNK-FOOD MARKETING AIMED AT CHILDREN

Ireland is set to become the first country globally to restrict unhealthy food sponsorships aimed at children of primary school age, once a newly developed code of practice is launched. The code, developed jointly by the Department of Health, the HSE, food companies and advertisers alike, has the objective of reducing people’s exposure to the marketing of food and drinks that are high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS).

According to statistics, three out of five adults, and one in four children in Ireland, are overweight or obese and the numbers are rising at an alarming rate, meaning Ireland is on course to become the most obese country in Europe by 2030.

The aim is to change from the current “obesogenic” environment, where unhealthy foods are everywhere, to one that facilitates the consumption of much healthier food and drink. The new rules aim to limit the influence of marketing and advertising particularly towards children and unhealthy food choices. While the code is voluntary, it will be monitored by a body designated by the Minister for Health, a public register of companies signing up to the code will be kept and a complaints procedure developed.

Whether or not a food or drink is classified as HFSS is based on a technique of nutritional profiling developed in the UK. This model uses a scoring system, with points allocated based on the nutrient content of 100g of a food or drink.

The code covers online, print, outdoor marketing such as billboards and cinema marketing, as well as commercial sponsorship and retail product placement. As a general rule, the code says locations used by children, such as schools, creches and playgrounds, shall be free from all forms of marketing for unhealthy foods. HFSS food and drink should not be marketed on children’s media, it says. Where a media platform is not specifically targeted at children, food companies should act “with a sense of responsibility”.

Also, marketing in adult media, but which is aimed at children, shall not include the use of “licensed characters” or celebrities popular with children to promote unhealthy food. Promotions and competitions for HFSS food are also banned. Regulators are also seeking to introduce a 9pm watershed for the advertising of unhealthy foods on television and radio.

In broadcasting, Ireland was the first country to ban celebrity endorsement of unhealthy foods and a separate code applies to this.



EFSA TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON SUGAR INTAKE BY 2020

Following a request from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have announced that it will provide scientific advice on the intake of sugar added to food by 2020. It aims to establish a science-based cut-off value for daily exposure to added sugars from all sources which is not associated with adverse health effects.

The adverse health effects under consideration will include body weight, glucose intolerance and insulin sensitivity, type-2-diabetes, cardiovascular risk factors, as well as dental decay and crumbling. In its assessment, EFSA will look at the general healthy population, including children, adolescents, adults and the elderly. The resulting advice will guide Member States when establishing recommendations for the consumption of added sugars and in planning food-based dietary guidelines.

EFSA will establish an ad-hoc working group with expertise in dietary exposure, epidemiology, human nutrition, diet-related chronic diseases and dentistry. The five Nordic countries that initiated this mandate will be invited to the working group as observers.

EFSA will use its established methodology to develop a protocol on how to carry out the assessment. Known as Prometheus – PROMoting METHods for Evidence Use in Scientific assessments – the method shows how EFSA selects evidence, how this evidence contributes to the risk assessment and how EFSA reports on the entire process and its results.

In line with its commitment to openness and transparency, EFSA will engage with stakeholders throughout the assessment process. It will hold two public consultations, inviting feedback on the draft protocol in the first half of 2018 and on the draft opinion in late 2019, which will also involve a face-to-face meeting with stakeholders.

PHE PUBLISH SALT REDUCTION TARGETS FOR 2017

Public Health England (PHE) have published a report which contains 2017 targets for levels of salt in food products and drinks. These latest targets form part of the sugar reduction and wider reformulation programme – A Commitment in Childhood Obesity: a Plan for Action. Note: not all of the categories covered by the sugar reduction programme are included in the salt targets, e.g. confectionery.

To date, four sets of targets have been published (2006, 2009, 2011 and 2014) covering 76 specific food groups that contribute most to people's salt intakes. The targets published in 2014 with achievement aimed at 2017, were originally developed under the Public Health Responsibility Deal (PHRD). These provide guidance to industry on the levels of salt that they should be aiming to achieve and have resulted in gradual, stepwise reductions in salt levels being made across those categories included. The targets have also provided a basis for monitoring progress. These latest targets are set to be achieved by December 2017.

The aim is for all products or volume sales within an individual category to meet the targets however it is understood that the levels set for some categories are considered aspirational and will require acceptable technical solutions if they are to be achieved in full.

Because there can be technical or other associated difficulties, businesses can say they have met the target(s) for an individual sub-category if 95% of products or volume sales meet the targets and if efforts have been made to reduce salt in the remaining 5% of products or volume sales to a minimum.

All new products introduced to the market should meet, or fall below, the current maximum target for the relevant category. There are however a limited number of categories that do not have a maximum target - bacon, ham, mozzarella (used in food products), blue cheese, lightly salted butter, canned tuna, and canned salmon. Any new products in these categories are instructed to use the average figure as a maximum.

PHE states that the eating out of home sector is expected to make every effort to procure and/or make products that meet the relevant target(s) as outlined. However, some outlets may wish to commit to the maximum per serving salt targets designed specifically for the out of home sector.

The full report can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/yd4ewr7u>



PHE PUBLISH BLOG ON OBESITY AND 'OUT OF HOME' FOOD PROVISION TOOLKIT

PHE have published a blog on 'Health Matters: Obesity and the Food Environment'. The blog can be accessed here: <http://tinyurl.com/y8actqkm>

Health Matters is a resource for local authorities and health professionals. It focuses on PHE's new strategies in the 'encouraging healthier 'out of home' food provision toolkit', and summarises the evidence base, types of interventions, and emerging local practice. PHE and its partners have developed the toolkit as part of PHE's approach to dealing with obesity. It serves to support local councils and independent food businesses help children and families to choose healthier food. The healthier catering guidance, which accompanies the toolkit, provides tips for business on how to provide and promote healthier food and drink for children and families and reflects the latest Government dietary recommendations for sugars. More information on the toolkit can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ybag2978>

DH PUBLISH REVIEW OF PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND

The Department of Health (DoH) have published the outcome of a consultation into the review of Public Health England (PHE). The review concluded that PHE performs necessary functions and has made good progress with integrating the staff, cultures, working practices and physical assets of the variety of organisations from which it was created, building an organisation that provides expert advice on all aspects on health protection and improvement.

It makes 11 recommendations, some of which are directed at the Department as well as PHE, which seek to support PHE in further improving performance and delivering efficiencies.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/y8g7xmaw>

GUIDANCE ON NON-BROADCAST AD PLACEMENT RESTRICTIONS FOR HFSS FOODS

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) have published a new Code of Advertising guidance on the placement of non-broadcast advertisements.

Media placement restrictions prohibit age-restricted marketing communications from appearing in media for children and young people, and where children and young people make up a significant proportion of the audience.

In a bid to help protect the health and wellbeing of children, from 1st July 2017, these restrictions will include the advertising for food and soft drink products which are high in fat, salt and sugar. The rules, targeted at under-16s, will apply across all non-broadcast media including in print, cinema and, crucially, online and in social media.

Ads that directly or indirectly promote an HFSS product cannot appear in children's media and ads for HFSS products cannot appear in other media where children make up over 25% of the audience. Ads for HFSS products will also not be allowed to use promotions, licensed characters and celebrities popular with children but advertisers may now use those techniques to better promote healthier options. The Department of Health (DoH) nutrient profiling model will be used to classify which products are HFSS

The new Code of Practice guidance can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y9shdu8m>

RESPONSES TO NHS CONSULTATION ON REDUCTION IN SALES OF SUGARY DRINKS IN HOSPITALS

NHS England have published a response to a consultation in April on action to reduce the sales of sugar-sweetened beverages on NHS premises.

The consultation ran from 9 November 2016 to 18 January 2017 and collected a total of 480 responses. It set out two different policy proposals, and also sought alternative proposals to reduce the sales of sugar-sweetened drinks on NHS premises. The two proposed options were:

1. The introduction of a fee applied to any retailer of sugar-sweetened beverages on NHS premises
2. The banning of sugar-sweetened beverages from sale on NHS premises.

As a result of the consultation a twin track approach will be taken; the first is the launch of a voluntary sales reduction scheme from 21 April 2017 to reduce the total volume of monthly sugar-sweetened beverage sales to 10% per retailer, per NHS outlet, by March 2018. The second action will be the implementation of a ban on sales of sugar-sweetened beverages from 1 July 2018. The ban will apply to sales in and by NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, and by other retailers and suppliers on NHS premises.

The full consultation response and next steps document can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/yhme3de>

CALL FOR URGENT ADOPTION OF NUTRIENT PROFILES

An open letter penned by three leading health and consumer organisations - together with five food companies - calls for the 'urgent adoption' of nutrient profiles in the context of the EU health claims framework.

The letter claims that without nutrient profiles, approved nutrition and health claims can be put on any food and non-alcoholic product – and as such can be found on approximately 30% of packaged products sold in the EU. But many argue that nutrient profiles are needed to ensure 'essentially unhealthy' food and drink products that are high in sugar, fat or salt cannot carry a health claim.

The basic premise of the nutrient profiles was that they should ensure health claims could only be made on healthy foods fitting a set profile in terms of salt, fat and sugar. This was written into the 2006 regulation and an initial deadline of 2009 was set for their creation. However, six years on and the profiles still haven't been set and it is suggested that currently many inherently unhealthy products have attained a 'health halo' through the use of EFSA approved nutritional health claims, because despite the clear ruling from the European Commission that the use of claims on unhealthy foods would be banned, the lack of profiling criteria makes it impossible to police.

In 2016 research from Oxford University revealed that the average nutrient profile of foods carrying approved health claims is only marginally better than products without. Furthermore, when products were put through an existing nutrient profiling scheme designed to regulate health claims in a similar way to that which the open letter calls for in Europe - the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criterion (FSANZ NPSC) – only 43% of European foods carrying health claims passed the check.

In Europe many stakeholders and policymakers, including those in Germany and Italy, have been publicly hostile to the idea of enforcing nutrient profiles – with some claiming that profiles are scientifically impossible to set.

Signed by the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), the European Heart Network (EHN), Nestlé, Unilever, Danone, PepsiCo and The CocaCola Company, the open letter warns that the 'unprecedented severity' of the public health and nutrition challenges Europe faces means it can't afford to maintain a situation where the EU legal framework "does not fully empower consumers to make the choices that are best for them."

"Without the underpinning of nutrient profiles, the EU's legal framework for nutrition and health claims made on foods (Regulation EC 1924/2006) has been incomplete for the past ten years," warns the letter. "We believe that this situation is unsustainable and needs to be rectified as soon as possible."

"We call on the Commission to take decisive action by making a proposal for EU-wide nutrient profiles for nutrition and health claims without further delay," it says – adding that the EU needs to take action against obesity where it has the competences, and noting that it is impossible to ask food and drink firms to invest in innovation for health "and at the same time deny them the legal certainty and competitive level playing field that they need in order to make those investments."

SUGAR, SALT AND FAT TAXES ARE 'VERY POSITIVE'; SAYS HEALTH COMMISSIONER

The EU Health Commissioner has said that taxation on certain ingredients and products can be a "very powerful" tool for tackling health issues, including obesity. Campaigners have welcomed his comments but food industry representatives said small businesses would be hit hardest.

Speaking before a meeting of Europe's health ministers in Malta, Vytenis Andriukaitis noted that, whilst the introduction of Pigouvian taxes are a matter for member states, the European Commission is "very positive on these instruments".

"...it is a very important message that taxation instruments are very powerful instruments addressing key issues related to all risk factors – sugar, salt, trans-fats, alcohol and tobacco," he explained. "I am very proud that some countries have started to do it."

Spain and Estonia are the latest EU countries to announce plans for taxes on sugar-sweetened drinks, but as well as the UK there are also proposals on the table in Portugal, and Ireland. Most of the focus has been on drinks; Estonia's government, for instance, said the link between sugary drinks and weight gain is stronger than for any other food or beverage.

The World Health Organisation has also backed the concept, stating that a levy on sugary drinks would result in "proportional reductions in consumption", especially if the retail price were to increase by 20% or more.

In November, Margrethe Vestager, the EU competition commissioner confirmed that member states are free to impose taxes on products or activities that have a negative effect on the environment or human health so long as the measure doesn't unfairly favour certain goods.



OHA DRAWS UP ACTION PLAN TO TACKLE CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The Obesity Health Alliance (OHA), comprising 41 medical groups, health charities and public health bodies, including The British Medical Association, Diabetes UK and the Royal Society of Public Health has drawn up a 10-point action plan aimed at tackling childhood obesity. They state that to tackle obesity urgent action is needed in the following areas:

1. Protect children from all junk food marketing everywhere
2. Bring in the levy on sugary drinks
3. Reduced sugar, saturated fat, and salt in our food
4. Fewer promotions and displays of unhealthy food
5. Traffic light labelling on all processed foods
6. All schools to serve healthy meals and teach children how to cook
7. Local authorities to have freedom to take action on obesity in their area
8. Healthy food available in hospitals
9. Full training for health and social care professionals to tackle obesity
10. Funding for child measurement weight management programmes

Formed in 2015 the OHA support policy-making to tackle the social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to obesity and the inequalities in health caused by obesity. They do this by sharing insight and expertise among members, developing and advocating evidence-based policy recommendations and influencing decision makers and the media.

More about the OHA and what they are calling for, their jointly agreed policy positions, consultation responses and briefings can be found on their website: <https://tinyurl.com/y7gznucl>

BNF LAUNCH ONLINE NUTRITION TRAINING COURSE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) are to launch a new professional development platform for primary school teachers, in response to the results of research which shows that many teachers are getting little training in the area of nutrition; yet poor nutrition and an unhealthy lifestyle is detrimental to health and academic performance. It is intended to equip teachers to be able to implement engaging food lessons and healthy school initiatives, for the benefit of all their students.

'Teaching food in primary: the why, what and how', delivers seven different training modules, including: food origins, the Public Health's Eatwell Guide and healthy eating, nutrition understanding, food safety, and cooking in the classroom. It provides downloadable guides for reflective practice, and results in a BNF certification for those teachers who successfully complete the full course.

The course is being specifically created for initial and practicing primary school teachers. It is based on the requirements of the National Curriculum (England), the PHE Core Competences for Children and Young People and guidance to support primary school teachers deliver food teaching in schools (PHE/DfE). A course for primary schools in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is also to be made available. More detail can be found on the BNF website here: <https://tinyurl.com/ya977su4>

PHE PUBLISH PROGRESS REPORT ON SUGAR REDUCTION

Public Health England (PHE) have published a technical report outlining progress to date, industry guidelines, 2015 sugar baseline levels in 9 food categories and the next steps for sugar reduction.

This report sets out guidelines for all sectors of the food industry on how to achieve a 20% sugar reduction across the top 9 categories of food that contribute most to intakes of children up to the age of 18 years.

The guidelines for each food category detailed in the report include:

- overall levels of sugar per 100g of products needed to achieve the 5% and 20% reductions;
- average and maximum calorie or portion size guidelines for products likely to be consumed by an individual at one time.

The full report can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9naf5gh>

In addition, PHE have also published a collection of data explaining how PHE is approaching sugar reduction as part of its wider reformulation programme: <http://tinyurl.com/l5b5zl7>

PROCESSING AND RETAIL

MAJORITY OF UK ONLINE SHOPPERS WOULD LIKE 'BRITISH ONLY' FILTER BUTTON

Almost two thirds of UK consumers would like the option to view only British produce when they shop online, according to new research. The YouGov poll of 2,246 adults also discovered that 81% of respondents felt there should be the same amount of information regarding country of origin on websites as there is on food packaging in-store.

Meurig Raymond, president of the National Farmers Union (NFU), which commissioned the survey, said it would be "good practice" for retailers selling online to use a British flag on their listings page to highlight British products.

"We know from public surveys that shoppers want to buy more British food products produced on British farms. A British 'filter button' would give online shoppers the ability to easily choose British products."

In March, UK farming minister George Eustice said he was looking at the idea of an online search function in order to promote home-grown produce. However, it might not be straightforward given EU regulations on country of origin labelling (COOL).

Under current laws there is already mandatory labelling on poultry, pigs, lamb and beef, but member states can also introduce additional labelling for specific food categories, including an indication of origin, provided they can justify the move is to protect public health or consumers.

Recently, there's been a wave of interest in extending COOL. France has already begun trials of mandatory COOL for processed meat and dairy products for example and other countries have made similar requests to the European Commission. A majority of MEPs also want COOL extended to lightly processed meat and dairy products. But critics say extending COOL further is in conflict with the single market principle. Some even argue the labels distract consumers from making more sustainable food choices and could provide consumers with a false sense of security as it says little if anything about the quality of the final product.

MRSA IN 40% OF SAMPLED RETAIL PORK

A study carried out by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) has found that 40% of fresh pork sampled was found to contain livestock associated-MRSA (LA-MRSA).

The study, carried out to see if the rise in incidence of MRSA at Danish farms could be seen in pork, found methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) in 122 of 305 samples taken last year from retail using whole genome sequencing (WGS). In conventional Danish pork, the study found livestock-MRSA in 48% of samples and in 32% of organic meat. In the meat from abroad it was found in 28% of samples. Discovery of MRSA was mainly dominated by the type clonal complex (CC)398 while the types CC9 and CC1 are less frequent but have also been associated with farm animals.



Since the last study in 2011, the prevalence of LA-MRSA in Danish pork has risen from 10% to 48% and in the imported meat from 5% to 28%. The increase in pork is in line with the increase of LA-MRSA in pig herds, which rose from 16% in 2011 to 68% in 2014.

This is the first time the DVFA has studied LA-MRSA in organic pork and it said the presence of 32% in organic meat in 2016 is high, if compared with the prevalence of LA-MRSA in organic pig herds, which was only 6% in 2015.

A separate UK study looked at 103 (52 pork and 51 chicken) pre-packaged fresh meat products, labelled as being of UK farm origin, and found two pork samples contained MRSA in 2015. An analysis of genetic make-up showed it belonged to a type of MRSA known as LA-MRSA CC398, which has emerged in the last few years in Europe.

As part of DANMAP (Danish Integrated Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring and Research Programme) established in 1995 pork was investigated for MRSA in 2009-2011. Objectives include monitoring the consumption of antimicrobial agents for food animals and humans and to identify routes of transmission and areas for further research studies.

Results have been provided to the LA-MRSA expert group which is reviewing LA-MRSA initiatives such as risk assessments for MRSA in fresh meat and will include these findings in their work. A decision on more regular follow-ups or tests on different products depends on the results of the LA-MRSA expert group.

FSS CLAIM REPORT SUPPORTS THE CASE FOR 'RETAIL REVOLUTION' TO TACKLE OBESITY CRISIS

With current obesity levels standing at 30% and the projection that 40% of people in Scotland will be obese by 2030, it is no surprise that tackling the poor Scottish diet is a priority for Food Standards Scotland (FSS).

In January 2016, FSS agreed a package with proposals ranging from taxation to regulation around food and drink promotions. Portion size reduction and tougher targets for reformulation of foods and drinks were also recommended. In the UK approximately 70% of spend on food and drink is purchased into the home so influencing healthier purchases in this setting is seen as a key area to address.

FSS commissioned the University of Stirling research to understand the complex retail landscape which supports their recommendations to extend the sugar tax beyond soft drinks, reformulate products to reduce sugar and fat and salt, improve portion sizes, address less healthy food promotions and provide clearer consumer information in both the retail and out of home sectors.

The resulting report enforces FSS's view for the need for change in this sector and a 'retail revolution'. It agrees with previous findings showing that in Scotland around 50% of less healthy food categories are purchased on promotion compared with healthier foods (around 30%).

You can read the full report here: <http://tinyurl.com/ybn2jma8>

REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT AND OFFICIAL CONTROLS

FSA ISSUE REVISION 6 OF FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

The FSA have published Revision 6 of the brand standard for its Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). The Brand Standard provides guidance to local authorities on the implementation and operation of the FHRS and can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/yd64xvmj>

Local authorities in England operating the FHRS are expected to follow it in full. The aim is to ensure that where food business establishments are rated under the FHRS and where consumers see FHRS branding, they can be confident that the local authority is operating the FHRS as the Food Standards Agency (FSA) intends.

The guidance does not however apply to local authorities in Wales and Northern Ireland where legislation has been introduced to put the FHRS on a statutory footing. Guidance for local authorities on the operation of the statutory schemes have been issued under the relevant legislation for each country.

FSS ISSUE STATEMENT ABOUT HEBRIDEAN SEA SALT

An artisan sea salt produced in the Hebrides has been found to contain 80 per cent table salt. Award-winning Hebridean Sea Salt, which marketed itself as harvested 'by hand' in Loch Erisort on the Isle of Lewis, ceased production amid an investigation by the Western Isles Council and Food Standards Scotland. Its website and social media sites were taken down, while the product is listed as "not available" on its stockists websites.

The founder of the company Natalie Crayton claims the addition of sea salt crystals to local sea water when it is drying out, which she has been doing for 18 months, is called 'seeding' and is common practice among high-end brands and that she had declared it in SALSA food safety audits. However, other producers of sea salt have responded to this, expressing disappointment that the comment has 'tarnished' reputable companies that do not use this practice. The Maldon Salt Company, Halon Mon and Achill Island Sea Salt all point out that they do not use seeding in the production of their salt.

As a result of media coverage, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) issued a statement about the ongoing investigation. In the statement, they state "We would not normally disclose the details of an active and ongoing investigation. However, given the coverage of this case, we believe it is now in the public interest to disclose the issues that are under investigation. This is not simply a case of mis-labelling. Investigations discovered that over 80% of the salt found in Hebridean Sea Salt did not originate in the Hebrides, but was imported table salt. It is Food Standards Scotland's view that, whilst this is not a food safety issue, deception of consumers on this scale is not acceptable and could damage Scotland's well-deserved reputation for high quality, authentic food and drink products"



DEFRA ISSUE LIST OF UK APPROVED ORGANIC CONTROL BODIES

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have issued an updated list of all approved certification bodies for organic food in the UK.

All foods sold as organic must originate from growers, processors and importers who are registered with an approved certification body and subject to regular inspection.

The list can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/y8avkvn4>

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

FSA ISSUE INNOVATION AND REGULATION PLAN

Following on from a commitment in the government's Productivity Plan, departments and their associated regulators have published documents showing how their approach to regulation supports innovation.

The documents set out how the UK regulatory framework is working effectively to support innovation and disruptive business models (innovations that create new markets by discovering new categories of customers), and how regulators are using innovation to deliver their own work more effectively. They complement the government's approach to develop a modern Industrial Strategy for Britain.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) strategy 2015-20 identifies the potentially very radical impacts to food supply, within the next 25 years, recognising that there are growing challenges around food safety, affordability, security and sustainability. It sets out their support for innovative food production methods as a response to these challenges where they deliver benefits for consumers, taking into account the range of consumers' interests.

The document brings together all the different strands of work the FSA are doing into one overarching FSA innovation plan and is intended to provide assurance on the effectiveness of their approach to innovation. Areas covered include:

- How legislation and enforcement frameworks could adapt to new technologies and disruptive business models to encourage growth;
- An assessment of how new technology is likely to shape the sectors being regulated;
- Actions for how regulators could better utilise new technologies to generate efficiency savings and reduce burdens on business. Three priority areas have been identified where they see significant potential for the use of new technologies:
 1. Better understanding and control of foodborne pathogens - This focuses on development and application of new and rapid genomics and the associated big data tools.
 2. Better understanding of and engagement with people and businesses - This relates to use of big data across social media, citizen and other data sources.
 3. Step-changes in food system information and control – This considers new technologies such as big data, advanced materials (e.g. smart packaging to increase shelf life and protect the quality of food), sensors and rapid/automated information exchange and analysis.

The FSA also indicate in their strategy that they will work towards setting up a new Expert Committee on Innovation. They have also created a new Strategic Evidence Programme to help develop and utilise new applications of technologies. This programme is led by Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Guy Poppy.

The FSA strategy can be accessed here, along with those from other governmental departments: <http://tinyurl.com/ybaud6px>



FSA - LATEST FOOD AND YOU SURVEY REPORT PUBLISHED

The Food Standards Agency have published their findings for Wave 4 of the Food and You survey which includes data from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Food and You is the FSA's flagship consumer survey. It is an official statistic and is used to collect information about the public's self-reported behaviours, attitudes and knowledge relating to food issues. It provides data on people's reported food purchasing, storage, preparation, consumption and factors that may affect these. It is a biennial, random probability survey, with previous waves conducted in 2010, 2012, and 2014. The FSA uses the survey to inform their policies and it is also a rich resource for anybody interested in understanding consumer behaviour and attitudes towards food over a number of years.

Fieldwork for Wave 4 was carried out from May to September 2016 and consisted of over 3000 interviews across England, Wales and Northern Ireland among a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over. It continues some of the same question areas as the previous surveys and also includes new sections on wider food issues of concern. The specific objectives of Wave 4 were to:

- Explore public understanding of, and engagement with, the FSA's aim of improving food safety
- Identify specific target groups for future interventions (e.g. those most at risk or those among whom FSA policies and initiatives are likely to have the greatest impact)
- Describe the public attitudes towards food production and the food system
- Monitor changes over time (compared with data from Waves 1-3 or from other sources) of reported attitudes and behaviour
- Broaden the evidence base and develop indicators to assess progress in fulfilling the FSA's strategic plans, aims and targets

The survey found that consumers report a number of practices that are in line with FSA recommendations on food safety in the home, but also flagged areas where consumers are not following best practice advice.

The full report can be accessed here along with the reports from previous waves: <http://tinyurl.com/k9wu839>

RESEARCHERS CLAIM EDIBLE INSECTS COULD HELP TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Eating insects instead of beef could help tackle climate change by reducing harmful emissions linked to livestock production, according to researchers at the University of Edinburgh and Scotland's Rural College.

The team claims that halving the global consumption of animal products by eating more insects or imitation meat would free up 1680 million hectares of land - 70 times the size of the UK. But, while consumers' reluctance to eat insects may limit their consumption, even a small increase, such as using insects as ingredients in pre-packaged foods would bring benefits, they say.

Using data collected primarily by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, the scientists compared the environmental impacts of conventional meat production with those of alternative sources of food. They considered a scenario in which half of the current mix of animal products is replaced by insects, lab-grown meat or imitation meat.

They found that insects and imitation meat, such as soybean-based foods like tofu, are the most sustainable as they require the least land and energy to produce whereas beef is by far the least sustainable. In contrast to previous studies, lab-grown meat was found to be no more sustainable than chicken or eggs, requiring an equivalent area of land but using more energy in production.

Similar land savings could also be made by switching from the current mix of animal products to diets higher in chicken and eggs, the team says. They found that the land required to produce these was only marginally greater than that for insects and imitation meat.

As well as being a major contributor to human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, current livestock production has other environmental impacts. Globally, pasture covers twice the area of cropland, and livestock consume around a third of all harvested crops, researchers say.

The research, which can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/y84qsq7s> was published in the journal Global Food Security, and was supported by the UK's Global Food Security Programme and the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme. It was carried out in collaboration with Scotland's Rural College, the University of York, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and the Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research.

Lead author Dr. Peter Alexander, of the University of Edinburgh's School of GeoSciences and Scotland's Rural College, said: "A mix of small changes in consumer behaviour, such as replacing beef with chicken, reducing food waste and potentially introducing insects more commonly into diets, would help achieve land savings and a more sustainable food system."

EFSA TO CONTRIBUTE FUNDS FOR ALLERGENS AND AIRBORNE PLANT PATHOGENS PROJECTS

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has launched two thematic grant calls for proposals in the areas of allergens and airborne plant pathogens:

- Detection and quantification of allergens in foods and minimum eliciting doses in food allergic individuals.
- Smart monitoring of airborne plant pathogens: advances in aerobiology, and molecular diagnostics and remote sensing to support risk-based plant health surveillance in the EU.

The thematic grant scheme, one of several grants schemes at EFSA, aims to facilitate scientific cooperation in the EU, boost innovation and support the exchange of expertise and best practice in areas relating to EFSA's work. When awarding grants to scientific institutions or consortia, EFSA typically identifies the scientific area and expected outcomes. With thematic grants, EFSA indicates broad themes in key scientific areas identified by Member States. This approach allows applicants to define and develop the specific scope of a project in line with the research interests of their own institutions.

EFSA provides a co-funding rate of 50% for a project period of up to four years, and a maximum contribution of €375,000 per project. Proposals need to be submitted by 25 October 2017 and must be by a consortium of at least two organisations from at least two different EU countries, Norway or Iceland. Applicants however, must be on an approved list which includes the UK's Food Standards Agency, Public Health England and several UK universities and research institutes.

Over the past two years, has EFSA awarded a total of five grant agreements as a result of thematic grant calls. The 2015 pilot call attracted interest from six consortia, comprising 34 organisations from 15 countries. The second call, launched in April 2016, attracted similarly high interest and led to the award of grants worth roughly €1 million to three innovative research projects on methodology development in risk assessment.

More information, including the list of approved applicants can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/yaqzedm>

HOTTEST CHILLI PEPPER IN THE WORLD ACCIDENTALLY CREATED BY WELSH FARMER

A Welsh fruit grower trying to come up with a novel entry for the Chelsea Flower Show has accidentally created the hottest chilli ever recorded.

The Dragons Breath chilli measures 2.48 million on the Scoville heat scale, ahead of the 2.2 million achieved by the Carolina Reaper and is so powerful that one drop of its capsaicin oil would be detectable in 2.48 million drops of water. By contrast, US Army Pepper Spray, used to blind and disorientate assailants, measures only 2 million on the Scoville scale.

It was grown by Mike Smith from Denbighshire, in collaboration with scientists from Nottingham Trent University, who believe oil from the chilli's is so potent it could act as an alternative anaesthetic for those allergic to conventional drugs.

Experts believe that anyone who attempted to swallow one of the chilli peppers would be at risk of death from anaphylactic shock. The immune system can go into overdrive if the capsaicin is too concentrated because TRPV1 receptors (proteins on nerve endings that detect heat) are activated by capsaicin, and erroneously interpret capsaicin as a signal of extreme heat.

SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENT & CSR

FDF PUBLISH RESULTS FROM LATEST FOOD AND PACKAGING WASTE SURVEY

The FDF and WRAP have published findings from their latest food and packaging waste survey which presents the results of the 2015 FDF members' survey of food and packaging waste arisings.

The main objective of the survey was to determine whether the FDF membership had achieved its Five-Fold Environmental Ambition (FEA) target of sending zero food and packaging waste to landfill by (or before) the end of 2015. Results show that FDF members participating in the waste survey reduced the amount of food and packaging waste sent to landfill to effectively zero in 2015 (0.04% of total waste arisings). This indicates around 96.6% of the total food processed was sold as intended, with around a further 1% redistributed to people or diverted to animal feed and the remaining 2.4% underwent some form of waste treatment. Between the first survey year in 2006 and 2015, it is estimated that FDF members diverted approximately 800,000 tonnes of food and packaging waste from landfill. Further information, along with link to the survey itself can be found on the FDF website here: <http://tinyurl.com/yb7agobg>



EU PARLIAMENT DEBATE AND PUBLISH INFOGRAPHIC ON FOOD WASTE

With 8 million tonnes of food being wasted in the EU every year, the equivalent to 173 kilos per person, the European Parliament have recently published an infographic on food waste. The infographic shows how food is lost and wasted along the whole supply chain from farms to processing and manufacturing to shops, restaurants and at home. According to their estimates (albeit using 2012 data) most of the food in the EU is wasted by households with 53% and food processing with 19%. Food service/catering contributes 12%, primary production 11% and retail/wholesale 5%. The infographic can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/lbdlaf4>

On 15 May, MEPs also debated a report by Croatian S&D member Biljana Borzan which proposed a set of measures to reduce food waste in the EU by 50% by 2030. The report included several proposals to reduce food waste such as facilitating food donations and called on the European Commission to propose a change in the current VAT directive to explicitly authorise tax exemptions for food donations. In addition, the report listed solutions to end the confusion about “best before” and “use by” labelling on food products.

Following the debate, at which Borzan’s resolution was adopted by 623 votes to 33, with 20 abstentions, the European Parliament published the following press release: <http://tinyurl.com/ydgxv5dh>

BEVERAGE COMPANIES COMMIT TO 100% SUSTAINABLE JUICE BY 2030

European beverage and food companies have joined forces and formed a coalition aiming for 100% sustainable juice and puree by 2030.

Under the coordination of IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, the companies Döhler, FrieslandCampina Riedel, Refresco and Verbruggen Juice Trading Sustainable Products b.v., signed a global covenant targeting 100% verified sustainable sourcing for their juices within the next decade. With the support of AIJN, the European Fruit Juice Association, they will work on the certification/verification of their supply chains, and jointly set up projects to address specific sustainability issues such as smallholder inclusion, working conditions, soil erosion and degradation, and climate resilience.

As part of the commitment, the companies’ progress towards 100% sustainability will be monitored by an independent third party, based on a common definition on sustainability criteria (including SAI FSA and SMETA based principle). In 2018, the companies are committed to having 15% of their volume sourced sustainably, rising to 30% in 2020, 75% in 2025 and to then have 100% volume sourced sustainably in 2030.

Some of the next steps for the coalition is to get the annual process monitoring in place, setting pre-competitive projects in the field and to develop an activity plan for the first year. The partners also seek to inspire more like-minded companies to join the covenant and work together towards a more sustainable supply chain. The covenant is open to all players in the supply chain, several companies have already indicated their interest.

More information about the Sustainable Juice Covenant can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/matzudl>



EA PUBLISH UPDATED GUIDANCE ON PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PACKAGING WASTE

If your business or organisation produces or uses packaging, or sells packaged goods, you may be classed as an obligated packaging producer. Obligated packaging producers must follow rules which help to:

- reduce the amount of packaging produced in the first place
- reduce how much packaging waste goes to landfill
- increase the amount of packaging waste that’s recycled and recovered

These are in addition to waste duty of care rules all businesses must follow.

Every year an obligated packaging producer must:

- register as a packaging producer by 7 April
- meet their recovery and recycling obligation
- obtain evidence of compliance
- submit a certificate of compliance (CoC) by 31 January the following year

Details of how to check if you are an obligated packaging producer, how to register and the charges involved can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/yanp55xr> along with recently updated guidance from the Environment Agency (EA).

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTES IN FAVOUR OF STRICT NEW PALM OIL MEASURES

At the beginning of April, the European Parliament voted to implement tough new palm oil resolutions calling for the phasing out of palm oil in biofuels and enforcement of stricter regulations on production and certification throughout the continent. 640 MEPs voted in favour of the proposals aimed at substantially changing regulations for the world's biggest consumer of palm oil, the EU. They were met with only 18 votes against, and 28 abstentions.

European politicians have been looking at the issue for some months now. Over the last three decades the palm oil industry has grown substantially and palm oil is a common ingredient in food like margarine, chocolate spread and crisps as well as being used in cosmetics, detergent and biofuel. However, the unsustainable production of the cheap vegetable oil leads to deforestation as jungle is removed to be replaced by palm plantations. This in turn impacts tropical ecosystems, which cover 7% of the Earth's surface and are under increasing pressure from deforestation, resulting in for example forest fires, the drying up of rivers, soil erosion, loss of groundwater, pollution of waterways and destruction of rare natural habitats. In addition, the loss of natural habitats in the form of rainforests endangers the survival of a large number of species such as the Sumatran rhinoceros, the Sumatran tiger and the Bornean orangutan.

The report, was put forward by Czech GUE member Katerina Konecná and it calls on the EU to strengthen environmental measures to prevent palm oil-related deforestation, and phase out by 2020 use of palm oil as a component of biodiesel.

Currently independent schemes such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), (which certifies 21% of world palm oil as sustainable and includes members such as Nestlé, Wilmar (the world's chief supplier of the product) and Unilever) do not enforce blanket bans on forest and peatland clearance for suppliers and their respective producers.

The RSPO have welcomed the motion as giving an important political signal that the EC and EU have an expectation that governments and industry step up on deforestation. However, the motion is proposing a single mandatory scheme for sustainable palm oil certification throughout Europe, something the RSPO have said would be less efficient than having "schemes that work at scale across a commodity".

In response to the motion's call for the commission to put pressure on groups such as the RSPO to require zero land clearance from its members, the RSPO said:

"We are just now launching a consultative review of the RSPO standard, which is done each five years. The RSPO standard already protects primary & high conservation value forest & recommends best practice for peatland planting; and 'RSPO Next' are an existing set of additional criteria for companies that want to certify their commitments to zero deforestation & no planting on peat."

The RSPO Next standards are a voluntary option for companies who wish to add even further to their sustainability credentials, but this vote could see these standards become obligatory.

Now that the vote has passed, President Juncker will be charged with deciding the next step.

COCOA FARMER GROUP CALLS TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE CHOCOLATE PROGRAMS

The World Cocoa Farmers Organisation (WCFO) has called for sustainable chocolate programs to treat cocoa farmers as equal implementing partners saying farmers were tired of implementing programs for multiple chocolate producers when they have a limited voice.

The WCFO says current chocolate and cocoa company sustainability programs tend to target organised groups that produce just 10% of the crop but sustainability initiatives should involve the other 90%, i.e. those smallholders who are not touched by these programs because they are not part of a cooperative. In their view, it is the unorganised farmers who are using children on farms so in order to put a stop to this there has to be improvement amongst this group.

The WCFO also argue that the top five chocolate companies must source from the 90% of unorganised farmers as businesses could not reach the volumes of cocoa they source annually only with the thousands that are part of their own sustainability programs

Sako Warren, Executive Secretary of the WCFO suggested that as a body that represents farmers it could be an implementing partner for chocolate company programs. He said WCFO's members have a deep understanding of the communities in which they live whereas Mondelēz and Fairtrade do not represent the farmers.

"Farmers are independent business people. We need to represent their values and not for them to be represented by another stakeholder. It would not only be effective in improving livelihoods it will also be effective in cutting down child labour. At the end of the day, it is the farmers who are going to implement," he said, adding that projects should not be forced on farmers.

WCFO merged with the International CoCocoa Farmers Organization (ICCFO) last November, bringing together 750,000 cocoa farmer members across the globe. Those members are smallholders, organised groups of cocoa farmers and farm workers in cocoa producing countries, such as Ghana, Côte D'Ivoire Ecuador, Indonesia, Jamaica and Colombia.

MAJOR PALM OIL TRADER COMMITS TO PROTECT INDONESIA'S FORESTS

The IOI Group, one of the largest palm oil traders in the world has made a significant commitment to protect Indonesia's forests, address the problems on its own plantations and set a new standard for the entire industry.

The IOI Group was suspended from the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) for alleged violations of sourcing standards, in respect of complaints against its Indonesian subsidiaries' plantation estates last year. This obviously impacted stakeholders and the reputation of the group.

Some months later, in August 2016, IOI Group regained its certified status but some companies, including multinationals such as Unilever and Mondelez were still reluctant to use the supplier. Prompted by this the IOI Corporation launched its updated Sustainable Palm Oil Policy (SPOP) alongside a comprehensive Sustainability Implementation Plan (SIP).

IOI has commissioned external consultants to transparently verify its progress and to assess and recommend solutions to any labour issues in its Sabah plantations. It has committed to implement global best-practice peatland management in the Ketapang landscape, including the peatland standard currently being developed by the Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG). It has also developed and communicated to suppliers new mechanisms to proactively monitor its third-party suppliers to ensure compliance to its policy commitments, as well as analysed the exposure of its supply base to peatland and committed to minimise and mitigate the impact of third-party suppliers on peatlands.

IOI has promised to commission an independent verification of the implementation of its Sustainable Palm Oil Policy, and the commitments stated above, in the second quarter of 2018.

UN SLAMS THAILAND FOR 'GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION' BEHIND SLAVERY IN FISHERIES

Thailand's fisheries have been caught out yet again after the UN released an unusually critical report of the Kingdom's failure to stamp out slavery and human rights abuses in its seafood industry, the fourth largest in the world.

Despite government promises to clean up the industry, the UN's International Labour Office (ILO) – which deals with labour standards and social protection – has highlighted continued and endemic criminality throughout Thai fisheries.

Among the most serious crimes highlighted in the report were "widespread corruption of government officials" connected to gangs accused of "routinely torturing and executing migrant workers who attempted to flee, in order to serve as a warning to others."

The European Commission has already issued a 'yellow card' warning to the Thai government in 2016 that if substantial improvements are not made, all seafood imports could be banned from the EU27.

Evidence was collected from ex labourers who gave information to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITWF) - a global network of trade unions.

Gangs operating the vessels and committing crimes were reportedly allowed to flourish because local officials provided protection and assistance. The Government has done little to hold government officials who are complicit in trafficking accountable for their crimes. Civil servants exposing corruption have had to flee the country as they might be charged with defamation. Criminal defamation has been used to silence others who speak about trafficking in persons. Witnesses in trafficking-in-persons prosecutions against government officials have also been harassed and threatened without the perpetrators facing serious consequences.

Workers also confirmed brokers would routinely hire labourers for extortionate recruitment fees, often promising onshore work to lure unsuspecting foreigners in, and then confiscate their identity documents and force them to work up to twenty hours per day, often spending nine month periods at sea. Other allegations of non-payment of wages, debt bondage and violence used to punish attempted escapes, all add to a detailed picture of modern day slavery – practices the report describes as standard.

Greenpeace investigations have also unveiled evidence that Thai fisheries have managed to circumvent all efforts made by Thai authorities to control the situation by moving into foreign waters where their actions cannot be policed. In their report 'Turn the Tide', they state that Thai vessels have simply standardised transshipment at sea to avoid coastal policing, and moved operations 7,000km further afield to environmentally fragile areas of the Indian Ocean.

Given the strength of the allegations released by the UN, giving the same findings used to give Thailand its 'yellow card', the European Commission could likely begin taking further action on the issue.

The full report can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/lrsp4pd>

The Greenpeace report 'Turn the Tide' can be downloaded here: <https://tinyurl.com/hrglcax>



TECHNOLOGY AND NOVEL FOODS

FIRST PRODUCTS USING A SWEETER SUGAR TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2018

Israeli start-up DouxMatok - which has developed patented technology which effectively makes sugar taste sweeter – has struck a series of joint development agreements with leading food manufacturers and says the first products containing its enhanced sugar could hit the market next year.

The process uses an inert mineral particle (silica) as a carrier for sugar molecules such that they bond to the silica via non-covalent chemistry (the process does not involve the sharing of electrons). The sucrose molecules surround and coat the silica particle to form structures that our taste receptors perceive to be sweeter than a comparable amount of sugar in free un-associated form thus enabling sugar reductions of 20-40%, depending on the application. The 'enhanced' sugar performs, and tastes, just like regular sugar, can be listed as 'sugar' on the ingredients list, and does not require manufacturers to change their processes.

As less sugar is required to deliver the same sweetness, developers will typically have to add some bulking agents in applications where bulk is needed, although in some cases, such as dairy, other components in the recipe can simply be used in slightly higher amounts. The cost is higher than regular sugar, but it can be used at a lower rate.

When the DouxMatok sugar is consumed, the sugar component (sucrose) is metabolised as normal whereas the silica (which is tasteless) is not metabolised. It passes through the body and is excreted.

Silica is a GRAS (generally recognized as safe) food additive that is widely used in the food industry as everything from an anti-caking agent to an emulsifier. In this application, the silica serves as a carrier, therefore legally does not have to be declared although some manufacturers may wish to do so in the interests of transparency.

The company has had particular success in chocolate, dairy, bakery and cereal applications but still face challenges with beverages as some of the bonds between the silica and sucrose are broken in a solution.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN NATURAL SWEETENERS

A natural sweetener claimed to copy the flavour and 'mouthfeel' of sugar while still acting as a bulking agent will be available later this year. Made from stevia and dietary fibres, the Unavoo sweetener contains no chemicals or alcoholic sugars. It has a glycaemic index value of zero, meaning blood glucose levels do not increase after its consumption, making it safe for people with diabetes. Following successful industrial-scale production tests on a range of foods, Unavoo Food Technologies, is now working with agricultural commodities trader ED&F Man to manufacture and distribute the sweetener.

Meanwhile, Omega Ingredients have created a new natural sweetener which they say offers manufacturers the opportunity to make clean-label products. MegaSweet is a calorie-free natural flavour sucrose sweetener claimed to have no after-taste. It was created to combat the challenge faced by the beverage industry from the sugar tax.



INTELLIGENT PACKAGING DEVELOPED IN BRAZIL

Brazilian thermoplastic resin producer Braskem has partnered with Clemson University in the US and Rio Grande do Sul Federal University (UFRGS) in Brazil to create intelligent packaging that can change colour if a product is unfit for consumption.

Intelligent packaging uses specific indicators to demonstrate the state of conservation of its contents, emitting an external alert. The packaging will change colour to warn the consumer if the product is unfit for consumption. This technology can be used for perishable product packaging in various sectors. Chemical substances able to react to specific indicators of product damage are added to the thermoplastic resin used in the packaging. When product integrity suffers any type of alteration, it's indicated by a change in the packaging's hue. In research conducted with poultry, meat and fish, for example, pH alterations determine a packaging colour change. Patrick Teyssonneyre, Braskem's global director for Technology and Innovation, maintains that a product's entire value chain can benefit from this technology. "This gives consumers greater quality assurance on the products they take home, and, at the same time, allows companies to control product integrity after manufacture, either during transport or at the point of sale." However, as he also pointed out "Intelligent packaging needs to be customised for specific segments: this means it may be a few more years before it appears on supermarket shelves."



British Frozen Food Federation Technical & Legislative Expert Group

Meeting of the Technical and Legislative Expert Group
To be held at 10am on Wednesday 10th May
Belton Woods Hotel, Grantham

1. Apologies and Welcome
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Items for discussion - see list following
5. Items to discuss if time – see list following
6. Items for information – see list following
7. Items carried forward – see list following
8. Contact with other organisations
9. Projects
10. Any other business
11. Presentation – Approximately 12pm – Annette Sansom & Martin D’Agostino, Campden BRI
12. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 12th July at The Belton Woods Hotel, Grantham

Agenda Item 4 – Items for discussion

- 4.1 BRC standards/Audit burden (2017_03_X)
- 4.2 Information sharing (no paper)
- 4.3 Technical seminar proposal
- 4.4 Biocides and Chlorates Update (2017_03_L)
- 4.5 Foodborne Viruses (2017_03_E /2017_03_R also refer to 2017_01_C / 2017_01_F / 2017_01_U / 2017_02_AI /)

Agenda Item 5 – Items to discuss if time

- 5.1 Brazilian meat issue (2017_03_B /2017_03_C /2017_03_D / 2017_03_G / 2017_03_H / 2017_03_J / 2017_03_N)
- 5.2 Acrylamide Update (2017_03_Y)
- 5.3 Avian Influenza/ Free range impacts (2017_03_U)
- 5.4 Vehicle Security BRC S+D V 3
- 5.5 Date of First Freezing (2017_03_W)
- 5.6 BRC Agents and Brokers V2 update
- 5.7 Skinless Fish (2017_03_O)

Agenda Item 6 – Items for Information

- 6.1 Food fraud survey (2017_03_A)
- 6.2 Invitation to The Vegetable Summit (2017_03_I)
- 6.3 Regulatory future review & RD Conference Invite - future regulatory best practice (2017_03_F & 2017_03_K)
- 6.4 World trade organisation explained (2017_03_M)
- 6.5 PHE paper on achieving the 20% reduction in sugar & EFSA Review of Added Sugar (2017_03_P & 2017_03_T)
- 6.6 New version of the draft Commission Implementing Regulation on “voluntary origin labelling” (2017_03_Q)
- 6.7 EC Food Hygiene Audit in Bulgaria (2017_03_S)
- 6.8 Fish Update (2017/03/V)
- 6.9 PA3
- 6.10 MSM/Wishbone

Agenda Item 7 – Items Carried Forward

Standing agenda items awaiting further development:

- 7.1 Glaze Methodology
- 7.3 Whole Genome Sequencing
- 7.4 Review of effectiveness of traceability, withdrawal and recall process
- 7.5 Review of Date coding guidance
- 7.6 Salt in Scampi Challenge
- 7.8 Food Waste – Frozen as part of the solution (See Guest Speaker -July)

Agenda Item 8 – Contact with other Organisations

8.1 Contacts Made

Estelle Herszenhorn - Special Adviser (Food and Drink), WRAP
Judith Murdoch – Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)
Renata Bartekova - Food and Beverage Business Development Manager, ABB Robotics
Roythornes solicitors – number of specialised contacts made
FSA imports team

8.2 Future Meetings Arranged

Air Liquide -Nitrogen freezing – date TBC
Bulher/Sortex – date TBC
Visit to Frigoscandia – date TBC

Agenda Item 9 – Projects

- 9.1 Gold book (DR)
- 9.2 Shelf life project (MPF)

Agenda Item 10– Any Other Business

10.1 Future Guest Speakers

July 2017 - Estelle Herszenhorn - Special Adviser (Food and Drink) WRAP
September 2017 – Suggestions invited.

- 11. Presentation – Approximately 12pm – Annette Sansom & Martin D’Agostino, Campden BRI

MEET THE TECHNICAL & LEGISLATIVE EXPERT GROUP

The Technical & Legislative Expert Group maintains scrutiny of incoming information regarding legislative and technical developments from Brussels, the UK and other sources. The Expert Group informs and advises the Board to assist with determining Federation policy in technical and legislative areas.

Uniquely, members of this Expert Group represent the whole frozen food supply chain including imports, production, wholesaling and retailing. Their assessment of the impact of forthcoming legislation enables effective lobbying and influence in matters which could otherwise adversely affect member companies commercially and from a legal compliance perspective. The Group also provides expertise, guidance and oversight of BFFF technical and regulatory guidance including our Primary Authority assured advice.

Members of the Group

Iain Mortimer - Group Technical Manager, Apetito Ltd.

David Jones - Director of Technical Service, Bidvest Foodservice

David Graham - European Head of Policy & Regulatory Affairs, Birds Eye Ltd.

Ken Glauch - Head of Technical, Booker Ltd.

Gerry Thomas - Technical Director, Brakes

Philip Proud - European Technical Director, Cargill Meats Europe

Angela Doherty - Head of Responsible Sourcing, CP Foods UK Ltd.

Brendan McIntyre - Technical Director, Flagship Europe Ltd.

Chris Roddis - Subject Matter Expert (Protein), Greencore Grocery Leeds

Bill Wadsworth - Group Technical Director, Greggs Plc.

Emma Meredith - Food Legislation Manager, Iceland Foods Ltd.

Janet Williams - Technical Manager, Kent Frozen Foods

Vince Craig - Meadowbrae Technical Services (Chair)

Graham Christy - Group Technical Manager, R&R Ice Cream UK Ltd.

Scott Johnston - Technical Director, Youngs Ltd.



Cargill Meats Europe





Introducing the British Frozen Food Federation People Awards

2018 will see BFFF's inaugural People Awards ceremony, aimed at celebrating the unsung heroes within the frozen food industry.

"For 30 years our annual product awards have recognised the most exciting and innovative new products at our sell-out Gala Dinner Dance event.

"This year we have decided it is high-time we celebrated the people behind those products and the £8billion frozen food industry as a whole and give them the recognition they deserve." – John Hyman, Chief Executive Officer, BFFF.

Key dates

15th May 2017
Entries live now

6th October 2017
Entry Deadline

21st November 2017
Shortlist announced

22nd February 2018
The People Awards ceremony

Technical Champion

This person will be a front-runner in the fields of food safety and quality management. They will focus on excellence in food safety management systems and driving innovation in instilling a food safety and quality in their business.

Nominate now at:
www.bfffpeopleawards.co.uk

For further information or to download a copy of this newsletter, please visit www.bfff.co.uk.



All reasonable care is taken in the preparation of this newsletter, but no liability is accepted for any loss or damage caused to any person, company or organisation relying on any statement or omission in the contents.