

From the Chief Executive,

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To: Stakeholders
(see attached circulation list)

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Update on Artificial Food Colours

During autumn 2007, the Food Standards Agency held a series of meetings with stakeholders, which you or a representative from your organisation attended. This followed the publication of the study from Southampton University on certain food additives and their effect on children's behaviour. The FSA Board discussed the study in the light of the review of the work by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in April 2008, agreeing its advice to UK Ministers. I am writing to update you on recent activities within Europe and the outcome of correspondence on this issue with Ministers.

The FSA Board had agreed that the advice to Ministers and consumers should focus on the six artificial colours used in the Southampton study, as the primary function of sodium benzoate was as a preservative. It agreed to advise Ministers that there should be voluntary action by UK manufacturers to remove these artificial colours by 2009, with parallel action in the EU to phase them out over a specified period. It also agreed that the FSA advice to parents should be updated to reflect the Board's discussions.

EU Activity

Within Europe there is the on-going review of all food additives (which started with food colours) being undertaken by EFSA and separately, negotiations on the EC Food Improvements Agents Package which comprises proposals for new legislation on food additives to update the existing legislation which has been in place since the mid-1990's. Negotiations on this package started in 2006. During the second reading of the EC Food Improvement Agents Package the European Parliament proposed amendments in response to the results of the Southampton Study. As part of a



second reading deal, the Council of Ministers and Parliament have agreed that 18 months after the new food additives Regulation comes into force, food placed on the market containing any of the six colours used in the Southampton study should carry additional label information that “consumption may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children”. This requirement is likely to come into force around mid-2010.

UK Activity

Ministers have agreed with the approach proposed by the Board, regarding voluntary action in the UK. This is on the basis that the FSA takes a proportionate and targeted approach to the issue, including flexibility around the products covered and target dates. Ministers have also requested that the FSA works with those manufacturers and retailers who are unable to comply by the proposed deadline of end of 2009.

In taking account of this advice colleagues will shortly be contacting the food industry and retailers for information regarding product categories where a longer phase-out period may be required, before engaging in further discussions with the industry.

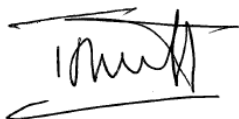
FSA Advice to Parents

The FSA has updated its advice on its website to parents on colours and hyperactivity. This can be found at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/chemsafe/additivesbranch/colours/hyper/>

In addition, the FSA is also considering how it can make further information available to consumers regarding products which contain the six artificial colours, taking into account the information which is already provided by industry and other organisations including Netmums and The Food Commission. In doing so Agency colleagues will wish to engage further with stakeholders on how this can be achieved.

A copy of this letter will also be placed on the FSA web site.



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British Soft Drinks Association

Somerfield Stores Ltd
Marks & Spencer
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British Retail Consortium
Morrison Supermarkets plc
Food Additives & Ingredients Association
British Hospitality Association
Organic Trade Group
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