

To: Heads of Environmental Health (England)
Directors of Trading Standards (England)

16th July 2004

Reference: ENF/E/04/014

Dear Colleague,

Food Standards Agency HACCP Implementation Strategy : Local Authority Update

David Statham wrote to you of 6 January 2004, giving some general information about the Agency's programme of work relating to the new EU food hygiene legislation that will apply on 1st January 2006. In particular, he described the new legal requirement for all food businesses (except primary producers) to put in place food safety management systems based on HACCP principles.

In England, much of this work is being taken forward by myself and a small team within the Agency. I thought that it would now be helpful if I now provided you with a more detailed update of the Agency's work in this area and this is attached for your information.

I hope that you will find this information helpful. If you have any comments about the work we are undertaking or would like to have further information, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Airey
HACCP Project Manager

Food Standards Agency HACCP Implementation Strategy: Local Authority Update

Introduction

The Agency is working to prepare UK food businesses for the new EU food hygiene legislation that will apply on 1st January 2006. This legislation will make it a legal requirement for all food businesses (except primary producers) to put in place, implement and maintain a permanent procedure or procedures based on HACCP principles. This update supplements the information included in monthly EHO updates to inform Local Authorities of the work being undertaken by the Agency to help businesses comply with this requirement.

To view the most recent report on the adoption of the legislation and to access copies of the regulations, please see the Agency's website at:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/europeleg/eufoodhygieneleg/euconsolidateight>.

The legislation contains significant flexibility, with the requirements proportionate to the size and nature of the food business.

An action plan for the implementation of food safety management based on HACCP principles has been agreed by the FSA Board. The action plan sets out a programme of work to support businesses and Local Authorities in implementing the new regulations. The action plan can be viewed at:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsa040303.pdf>

Guidance for caterers

It is the intention of the Agency to produce a toolkit of options for use by businesses to help them to comply with the legislation. This toolkit will contain guidance developed in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and by local authorities in Wales.

In England, the Agency has led a team, working with small caterers, Local Authority enforcers, national trade bodies and HACCP and management experts, to develop a simple pack for small catering businesses. This "Safer food, better business" (SFBB) pack aims to engage the caterer at their current level of understanding and is based on the 4Cs of the Agency's Food Hygiene Campaign (cooking, chilling, cleaning, cross-contamination). SFBB provides the business with information to allow them to develop safe working methods, which together with record keeping in the form of a daily diary, builds into a food safety management system specific to that business.

Further work is underway to develop a largely 'self-help' version of SFBB that reduces the level of resource currently required to deliver the pack. It is anticipated that this version of SFBB will be ready for testing during Summer 2004.

Additional toolkit options have been developed by FSA Scotland, FSA Northern Ireland and FSA Wales. 'Cook Safe – A Food Safety Assurance System Catering – Your Guide to HACCP' have been developed and tested in partnership

with Local Authorities and local businesses within Scotland and Northern Ireland. FSA Wales are providing support and funding to enable individual Welsh authorities to develop their own guidance packs. It is anticipated that all guidance materials will become available during 2005, with some material already available for use by businesses and Local Authorities.

The Agency is working closely with Local Authorities and their representatives on all aspects of the action plan, specifically with regards to several key projects, summarised below.

Local Authority Trials – Progress in England

The Agency is managing a number of Local Authority trials designed to explore alternative approaches to the delivery of 'Safer food, better business' within catering premises via Local Authority Environmental Health services.

A number of Local Authorities offered to help the Agency develop SFBB and proposed alternative methods to help businesses implement it - reflecting the individual interests and circumstances in the authority. The Agency then selected sixteen Local Authorities to participate in the trials.

Methods being trialled include the use of workshops and seminars and a postal advice and assistance service.

Eight authorities began their trials between January and March 2004. The remaining eight authorities are due to commence their trials during June and July 2004. Qualitative results are expected by October 2004. Please see Annex 1 for a list of the authorities participating in these trials.

It is anticipated that each participating authority will be able to provide feedback on their individual trial and some background on the Agency's approach to food safety management to other interested authorities through local and regional food liaison groups.

North West Regional Development Agency

The Agency has been working closely with the North West Regional Development Agency (NWRDA) on two pilot projects that test the feasibility of delivering the 'Safer food, better business' approach through the development agency network. If successful, this would hope to augment the support given through Local Authorities.

The two projects are:

- Working with the local Business Link network, the development of a Regional Resource Centre for businesses, Local Authorities and trainers to support the introduction of 'Safer food, better business'.
- Undertaking research into the economic benefits of 'Safer food, better business' using the RDA funded Business Link Advisor network in association with all Local Authorities in the pilot area.

These projects are designed to promote the dissemination of food safety management procedures and to facilitate the development of an infrastructure of advice, information, support and consultancy for businesses and Local Authorities.

The projects are proceeding in association with Local Authorities in the pilot area, particularly focussing on those within the North Manchester food group area, and should provide evidence-based case studies that will enable English regions to take forward the initiative.

Large-scale Feasibility Study

A pilot exercise, designed to test three different models of guidance for implementing HACCP-based food safety management that will be included in the Agency's toolkit, is currently underway in 40 randomly selected Local Authorities across England, involving some 2000 small catering businesses. The objective is to determine which model works best with which type of business and at what cost.

The three models that are being piloted are:

- 'Safer food, better business';
- 'Cook Safe – A Food Safety Assurance System' developed by the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee in partnership with FSAS and small business;
- 'Safe Catering – Your Guide to HACCP'; a model developed by Local Authorities and FSA Northern Ireland from previous successful guidance used in Northern Ireland.

Guidance is being delivered into businesses by trained coaches, with businesses being assessed before and after intervention. A control group with no intervention is being used as a comparison, with results of the study are expected to be available by Autumn 2004.

Adapting 'Safer food, better business' for different cuisines and sectors

The Agency's Action Plan to take forward food safety management procedures based on HACCP principles includes the adaptation of 'Safer food, better business' for different cuisines and sectors.

In the longer term it is envisaged that this will be an industry-led initiative and the Agency has agreed a number of research contracts to pilot this approach.

The work to adapt 'Safer food, better business' is being taken forward by the University of Birmingham, the University of Wales, University of Cardiff and the HCIMA. This work includes collaboration with individual Local Authorities and relevant trade associations identified by each contractor. For example, work is underway to produce a version of SFBB in association with the National Federation of Fish Fryers in Leeds. A further example is the work that is shortly to begin to adapt SFBB for Balti restaurants, an approach that will be piloted by the University of Birmingham in partnership with Birmingham City Council.

The aim of these projects is to demonstrate how appropriate guidance and support methods can be adapted for specific catering sectors and to develop case studies that will assist other trade associations develop their own sector specific guidance.

The results of these pilots should inform the development of alternative approaches and delivery methods. It is anticipated that by Autumn 2005 the Agency will host a series of events for enforcement officers to review these trials and to set out case studies of best practice.

The Agency is continuing to develop its work on implementing the forthcoming legislation and will provide information to EHOs through its regular updates. FSA Scotland will shortly be distributing information on detailed food safety management implementation proposals to Local Authorities in Scotland.

Annex 1.

Local Authority Trials – Participating Authorities

Phase 1.

Blackpool Borough Council
Coventry City Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Kirklees Metropolitan Council
Kerrier District Council
Newcastle City Council
North Cornwall District Council
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

Phase 2.

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Canterbury City Council
Derby City Council
Eastbourne Borough Council
London Borough of Brent Council
London Borough of Greenwich Council
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Council
South Shropshire District Council