

Increased consumer trust in Agency

The seventh national Consumer Attitudes to Food Survey has highlighted steadily rising consumer awareness of the Food Standards Agency and its role in providing clear consumer advice.

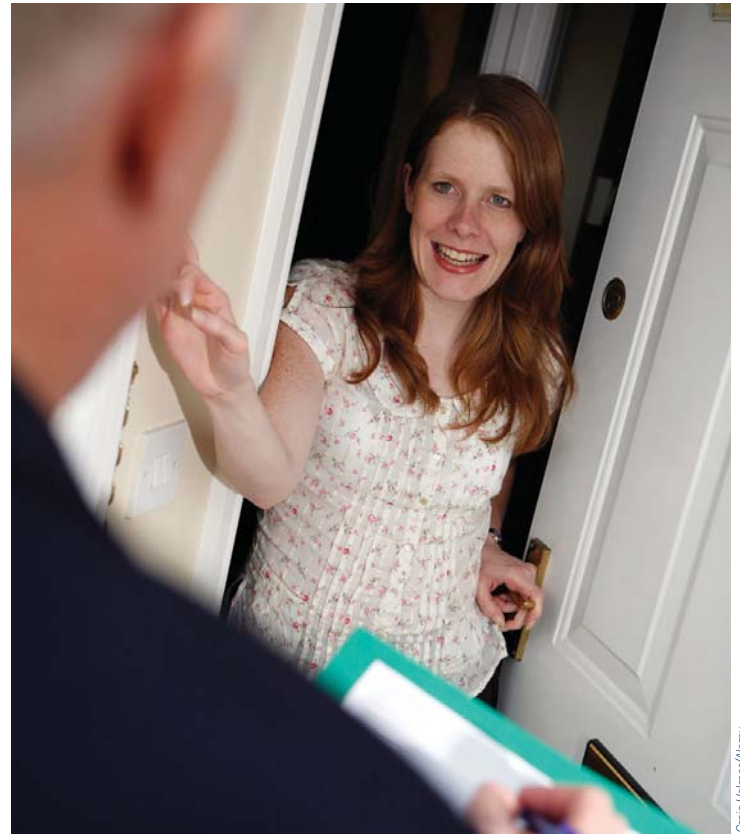
This includes a substantial increase, from 2001, in the number of people who believe the Agency is an organisation that they can trust, and a substantial increase, from 2000, in the number who describe themselves as confident about the Agency's role in protecting health with regard to food safety.

Healthy eating is also a key concern for consumers, according to the 2006 survey, which has just been published. There has, for example, been a significant increase in awareness of the '5-a-day' message and many people claim to check labels for nutritional information on a regular basis.

- A significant yearly increase in the number of consumers who are aware that they should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Almost an additional third of consumers are now aware that they should eat at least 5-a-day compared with 2000.
- A large number of consumers say they look at nutritional information on food labels to check the fat and salt content when buying products for the first time.
- Almost half of people claim to be trying to increase their consumption of fresh fruit. Almost two-fifths were trying to increase the amount of vegetables they eat, and almost a quarter of consumers were trying to up their consumption of salads.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Survey can be found at: food.gov.uk/science/surveys/foodsafety-nutrition-diet/cas07
See also centre pages of this issue.



There has been a substantial increase in people's confidence in the Agency

Key trends

The 2006 survey highlights a number of diet and health trends that have emerged since 2000, including:

Per serving	
FAT	7.7g
SATURATES	2.0g
SUGARS	42.2g
SALT	2.0g

Signposting that meets the FSA's criteria. For more, see eatwell.gov.uk/trafflights

Mums and doctors back signpost labelling

Support is growing for the Agency's approach to front-of-pack labelling, with a recent Netmums' survey giving an overwhelming thumbs-up for traffic light coloured signposting, and leading health organisations offering their backing for the approach.

The Netmums' survey, carried out by the 260,000-strong web-

based organisation in late January and early February, found that 79% of mums surveyed prefer the traffic light labelling system as 'the easiest way to choose healthier food at-a-glance'.

More than 17,000 members of Netmums took part in the survey.

Cathy Court, Director of Food and Nutrition for Netmums, said:

'Our survey shows that the red, amber, green colours adopted by the FSA... are easier to use than having to understand the percentages on packets that you find [with guideline daily amounts].

'To have the biggest impact on the nation's health, we need one scheme in operation in all shops.'

Continued over

Inside this issue

News

Safer food, better business packs for different cuisines. Judge finds in favour of FSA on GM rice. McKechnie Award shortlist. Board update. Local awards.

A question of attitude

See our special pull-out supplement, looking in detail at some of the key findings of the Agency's seventh annual Consumer Attitudes to Food Survey.



Latest research reports inside

Research

Four page supplement

Seventh EU 'framework' programme. Microbiological risk assessment. Message from the Chief Scientist. Cold meat survey. UK funders group looks at clostridium.



Continued from page 1



Announcing the British Medical Association's support for the Agency's approach, BMA Chair James Johnson (above), said:

'Obesity causes heart disease, osteoarthritis and some cancers, and costs the NHS millions. With childhood obesity rates soaring in the UK, it is essential for tough action to reverse this trend.'

'Helping people to make healthy food choices is a positive step in tackling obesity and the BMA is backing the FSA's traffic-light food labelling scheme. Improved, consistent labelling will help customers buy healthy food and will help doctors to advise their patients about making changes to their diet.'

Angela Mawle, Chief Executive of the UK Public Health Association (below), said: 'The UKPHA is in total support of the traffic light food labelling scheme developed and recommended by the FSA.'

'We consider that the clarity and immediacy of the information will be a real incentive to consumers to make informed healthy choices. We are particularly conscious that an across-the-board, easily-recognisable scheme, such as this, will ensure that those least able to pore over labels will have the help that they need to choose healthier food.'

'We greatly regret that certain leading supermarkets and food companies are pursuing an alternative scheme that is both less effective and transparent.'

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Netmums' survey can be found at: www.netmums.com

The BMA website is at:

www.bma.org.uk

More on the UKPHA is at:

www.ukpha.org.uk



Safer food, better business packs are launched for caterers of different cuisines

This month, the Agency is launching two new Safer food, better business (SFBB) packs, one for Chinese cuisine and another for Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan cuisines.

Both packs have been adapted from SFBB for caterers, following consultation with working groups including representatives from local authorities and relevant food businesses.

The working groups found that while the existing SFBB for caterers pack was relevant for all types of small catering business, the cooking section would benefit from being changed to more closely reflect the particular preparation and cooking methods characterising each cuisine.

So, for example, the pack for Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and

Sri Lankan cuisines features dishes such as tandoori chicken, biryani and keema naan. Both packs include a separate safe method on rice, since this is central to both cuisines. The Chinese pack also contains a new safe method on eggs, including advice on making egg fried rice. The Cooking sections in both packs feature new photographs, to reflect the relevant cuisine.

Both packs have been extensively researched and tested across the country and initial feedback has been extremely positive. The pack for Chinese cuisine will also be fully translated into traditional Chinese (Cantonese) because the Agency's research demonstrated that there was a need for this.

However, the pack for Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri



The Chinese pack: now in Cantonese

Lankan cuisines is not being translated, because feedback from the Agency's research indicates that this wasn't necessary for the managers of these businesses.

The FSA is currently looking at how key messages for staff can be communicated in a range of languages.

Watch out for information on how the packs are being implemented in businesses in future issues of FSA News.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Packs are available from the Agency's publication line, tel: 0845 606 0667, or by emailing: foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com



Safer food... better tandoori chicken, biryani and naan

Judges consider entries for McKechnie Award



Day of judgement: from left, Professor Tim Lang, Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton and broadcaster Jon Snow consider the merits of the shortlisted schemes

The judging panel for the annual Agency's Dame Sheila McKechnie Award for Community Food Initiatives met on 27 February to discuss which two of four shortlisted projects will win this year's award.

More than 50 projects had originally applied for the award, with the four finalists coming from locations as diverse as the Isle of Wight, Stockton, Bournemouth and Leamington Spa.

The Isle of Wight entry is a project working with mums aged 14-25, the Stockton entry is a youth club, the Leamington Spa project is a kids' café, and the Bournemouth entry is a cooking training programme.

The next issue of FSA News will have more details of the winners and runners-up.

Seventh EU 'framework' programme announced

In December, the European Union launched its seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which will provide funding of €55 billion (about £37 billion) over the next seven years, for European work to develop research capabilities. It will also promote innovation and competitiveness and provide evidence to inform policies in priority areas for Europe.

Most of the funds in FP7 go to collaborative research under ten priority themes, including one on Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology (FAB) with a budget of €1.9 billion (about £1.3 billion).

This theme is based on three activity areas:

- Sustainable production and management of biological resources
- Farm to fork: food, health and wellbeing

■ Life sciences and biotechnology for sustainable non-food products and processes

The Agency welcomes the new theme as a continuation and development of the work in FP6, and will help to co-ordinate research across Europe on shared concerns.

We will continue to work closely with the Commission and with stakeholders in the UK and Europe to ensure that the programme delivers reliable evidence to inform European policies on food safety, diet and health and consumer choice, and that it reflects the principles of openness, quality and effective communication in research.

The Agency can contribute funds for successful projects in FP7 (as we have under the previous programmes, FP5 and FP6), where they contribute to our objectives, and subject to our other research

needs and available resources.

We encourage anyone preparing proposals under FP7 in areas that may be of interest to us to contact us at an early stage to discuss how they might match our policy and research needs.

The Agency is part of a team of UK National Contact Points on the FAB theme in FP7, with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council and Beta Technology Ltd, providing information and advice on the theme and on participation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For details, contact Dr Paul Willetts, tel: 020 7276 8058, or go to our website : food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/europeanresearch/

Review of Agency microbiological risk assessment

The Food Standards Agency is currently reviewing and evaluating its research programmes in the area of microbiological safety.

Programme reviews are intended to provide interested parties with the opportunity to discuss the work that has been funded by the Agency and to help identify priorities for the future. As part of this process, the Agency is formally evaluating

the B12 Microbiological Risk Assessment research programme with other relevant projects through an invited panel of independent experts. The review will be held at the Copthorne Reading Hotel, Reading, on 21-22 March 2007.

Attendance at the event is free. However, attendees will be expected to pay their own travelling expenses and hotel accommodation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the project is at: food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/foodborneillness/microriskresearch/b12programme/

For more information or to confirm attendance, contact Daniel Lovelle-Diaz, email: daniel.lovelle-diaz@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk telephone: 0207 276 8956, as soon as possible.

Message from the Food Standards Agency's Chief Scientist



Andrew Wadge: A new committee is being set up that will challenge and advise the Agency on issues relating to general science

You will have seen from my earlier articles how much I value the work of the scientific advisory committees and the independent expertise of their members. Therefore, I am pleased to add my support to our Chair's positive tribute to the committees made at

the Food Standards Agency's February open Board meeting.

You can find out more about what the scientific advisory committees do in our series of individual committee profiles; we have previously featured the work of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (*FSA News 63*) and the Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (*FSA News 64*) and will be looking at the other committees over the coming months.

As Chief Scientist of the Agency, one of my roles is to consider whether the committees we have provided the range of advice we need. The work the Agency has done over the past two years on the governance of science has made me realise that we would benefit from independent advice on a broader range of issues than just research, as provided by the Advisory Committee on Research (ACR). In February, the Board agreed that the ACR should be disbanded and a new committee would be set up that will provide the functions the Agency now requires.

The new committee, the General Advisory Committee on Science, will be an independent body to challenge and advise the Agency on issues relating to general science that drive and underpin our work. In addition, the committee will both support and challenge my work as the Chief Scientist in the areas of science governance and strategy. The General Advisory Committee on Science will operate in an open and transparent way, according to the

principles adopted by the Agency's existing committees. The new committee will feature independent and lay members, ensuring that it has the broad spread of experience and expertise required to carry out its work. The Chairs of the Agency's eight existing scientific advisory committees and the Chair of the forthcoming Social Sciences Committee will also sit on the new committee.

I have commented further on the creation of the General Advisory Committee on Science on my blog, so please follow the link below to read more and to also post your own comments on this and other topics.

I would like to finish by saying thank you to the members of the ACR and those who have been involved with this committee for all their hard work over the years, and I look forward to the development of the new committee following the Board's endorsement.

We will be recruiting independent members for the new General Advisory Committee on Science through open competition, so if you think that it sounds interesting please look out for further details in *FSA News* or on the website.

You can also register your interest with Patrick Miller (see details below) and we will send you more information once it becomes available.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The FSA Chief Scientist's blog can be found at: food.gov.uk/scienceblog

For more details on the new advisory committee, contact Patrick Miller, email: patrick.miller@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Cold sliced meat and pâté survey

The Agency will shortly be starting a survey looking at the bacteria present in ready-to-eat cooked cold sliced meats and pâtés on retail sale in the UK. Samples will be tested for a range of bacteria, although the survey will focus on listeria contamination. The survey is being carried out on all types of sliced meats – beef, ham, chicken and turkey – but fermented meats, such as chorizo sausage, salami and parma ham, will be excluded from this survey.

The Agency is carrying out the survey in an effort to understand the reason behind the increased number of cases of listeriosis in the UK – these have doubled over the last few years. Listeriosis is a serious and potentially fatal disease so it is important

that any food sources of the organism are pinpointed, and cold sliced meats and pâtés have been implicated as a source of listeria.

This survey will take six months and ALcontrol Laboratories is carrying out the sampling and testing of the food. Samples will be purchased from a range of shops throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The information being gathered will include type of meat/pâté, retailer type and country of production. The data collected will contribute to the development of evidence-based advice to vulnerable groups and is a key component in the Agency's strategic target to further reduce foodborne disease over the next five years.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details, go to: food.gov.uk or contact Dr Chun-Han Chan, tel: 020 7276 8957; email: chun-han.chan@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk



UK funders group issues report on clostridium

A new report in a series providing an overview of publicly-funded research relating to microbiological safety of food has been produced by the Microbiological Safety of Food Funders Group (MSFFG).

The new report was published in January 2007 and reviews publicly funded research related to clostridium. This report comprises research funded by the members of the MSFFG, and covers a total of 29 projects over the period 1990 to mid-2006.

Clostridia are a group of bacteria that can cause human disease. *Clostridium botulinum* and *Clostridium perfringens* are two organisms particularly associated with foodborne illness. In each case, illness is caused by a toxin produced by the bacteria, rather than by the presence of the bacteria themselves. One of the illnesses, botulism, is rare in the UK, and when it does occur, it is very seldom food-borne. However, without treatment botulism is often fatal. *Clostridium perfringens* causes a type of food poisoning characterised by diarrhoea. There are several other species of clostridium that have been

associated with human foodborne illness, but none to a significant level.

Food-borne illness due to these bacteria can be prevented by good management of food preservation, preparation and handling. In the past 15 years, research has focused on identifying how best to do this, providing a basis for recommendations by the Food Standards Agency to the food industry and consumers.

The MSFFG is a cross-representational body involving bodies who fund microbiological research in the area of food safety. Membership includes representatives from the Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland, the Environment Agency, the Food Safety Promotion Board, the Health Protection Agency, the Meat and Livestock Commission, the Medical Research Council, the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs

Department Science and Research Group and the Scottish Executive Department of Health.

A report is also currently being prepared on antibiotic resistance and the Group is updating its report on campylobacter research.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The clostridium report is available at: food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/foodborneillness/microfunders/



Final reports of research published and available in the FSA Information Centre

The following research reports have been published by the Food Standards Agency and placed in the Agency's Information Centre at Aviation House. These may be viewed at the Information Centre, or a copy (CD-ROM or email attachment if available, otherwise hard copy) can be requested from the Information Centre, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH.

Further information

Contact Dr John Dixon, Assistant Librarian, Food Standards Agency, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH, tel: 020 7276 8060; email: john.dixon@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
For technical information on any of the research summarised inside, please get in touch with the contact shown below the relevant report.

Project F01011

Analysis of feed samples for dioxins and PCBs – EC Member collaborative study

Division

Primary Production

Dioxins and PCBs belong to a class of persistent organic pollutants that are formed by various industrial processes. These substances may find their way into animal feedstuffs as well as food for human consumption. Under EC and national legislation there are maximum permitted levels (MPLs) for dioxins and PCBs in animal feeds, which are reviewed every few years in the light of new data on levels found. The European Commission plans to review the MPLs shortly. In order to have a better overview of the background levels that will contribute to the establishment of

MPLs, Community-wide collaborative studies have been undertaken to gain a better understanding of these levels in the individual Member States. It will be interesting to establish whether background levels have declined in response to actions aimed at controlling dioxin emissions into the environment. A wide range of animal feedstuffs (including cereals, oil legumes, forages, minerals, trace element, anti-caking agents, premixtures, animal fat, fish oil, fish meal and compound feeds) for different animal categories were sampled from four geographical regions of the UK between November 2005 to August 2006. Out of 163 samples, only one sample was found to be 'borderline'. All other samples complied with the relevant dioxin limit. In general, higher levels were found in fish and fish oil-based products, but overall levels were found to be generally lower than those observed in a 2004 study.

Further Information

Contact Dr Katarina Dulic, tel: 020 7276 8316, email: katarina.dulic@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Food Standards Agency funded research published in peer reviewed journals

A05 Food irradiation

Sanderson, D.C.W., Carmichael, L.A., Fisk, S. (2003). Photostimulated luminescence detection of irradiated herbs, spices, and seasonings: international interlaboratory trial. *Journal of AOAC International* 86 (5): 990-997

B14 Food-Borne Disease

Amar, C.F., East, C., Maclure, E., McLauchlin, J., Jenkins, C., Duncanson, P., Wareing, D. (2004). Blinded application of microscopy, bacteriological culture, immunoassays and PCR to detect gastrointestinal pathogens from faecal samples of patients with community-acquired diarrhoea. *Eur J Clin Microbiol Infect Dis* 23: 529-43

Amar, C.F., East, C.L., Grant, K.A., Gray, J., Iturriza-Gomara, M., Maclure, E.A., McLauchlin, J. (2005). Detection of viral, bacterial and parasitological RNA or DNA of nine intestinal pathogens in faecal samples archived as part of the English infectious intestinal disease study: assessment of the stability of target nucleic acid. *Diagn Mol Pathol* 14: 90-96

C03 Mycotoxins and process contaminants (including nitrate)

Muttucumar, N., Halford, N. G., Elmore, J. S., Dodson, A. T., Parry, M., Shewry, P. R., Mottram, D. S. (2006). Formation of High Levels of Acrylamide during the Processing of Flour Derived from Sulfate-Deprived Wheat *J Agric. Food Chem* 54: (23) 8951 - 8955

Project A01041

Review of methods of analysis for biologically active principles

Division

Novel Foods, Additives and Supplements

The aim of this project was to conduct a literature search to see whether there are analytical methods to measure the 12 biologically active principles (BAPs) in foods and to critically evaluate such methods. BAPs are substances for which the available evidence suggests possible toxicity, and they occur naturally in a number of natural flavouring source materials (e.g. herbs and spices). These substances may be present at low levels in food due to the use of natural flavouring preparations and/or the use of herbs and spices as such. UK flavouring legislation limits the amounts of these substances in foodstuffs containing flavouring preparations. The results showed that sensitive analytical methods currently exist for all of the BAPs. However, there is a lack of published methods available to extract many of these substances from food matrices. This is likely to be the main area where future research is required.

Further Information

Contact Wendy Dixon,
tel: 020 7276 8587, email:
wendy.dixon@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Project Q01076

Verifying the authenticity of “organically grown” crops using stable nitrogen isotope analysis.

Division

Enforcement

Organic produce must be grown and certified according to EC Regulation EEC No 2092/91. As it is not possible to devise a method to check the complete organic system, this research project focused on one main aspect of organic vegetable production, namely the prohibition on the use of synthetic nitrogenous fertilisers.

Synthetic fertilisers are produced from the nitrogen in the air and have a lower proportion of the heavier nitrogen isotope (^{15}N) than is present in organic soil fertilising systems. These differences in the nitrogen isotope measurement could be detected in the total nitrogen of test crops, tomatoes, lettuce, carrots and mushrooms, which were grown under controlled organic and conventional production methods. Although these differences were repeated in a collection of organic crops sourced from UK and Europe for tomatoes and mushrooms, there was more overlap in the results from lettuce and carrots. This method could serve as a screen for organic produce so that further investigation of adverse results could be initiated

Further Information

Contact Dr Mark Woolfe,
tel: 020 7276 8176 email;
mark.woolfe@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Project Q01047

Detection of permitted and non-permitted uses of veterinary medicines (antibiotics)

Division

Enforcement

Use of antibiotics as growth promoters (prophylactic use) is now banned, and only therapeutic use (to cure an infection) is permitted. In addition, the dosage of permitted veterinary drugs is controlled for organic meat production by placing restrictions on the frequency of application. The project investigated whether dosage regimes could be determined from the deposition patterns of antibiotics in bone cross sections. Tetracyclines can be visualised because they are fluorescent. Fluorescence microscopy was able to distinguish between animals given single, multiple or prophylactic continuous doses of tetracyclines. In addition, by using imaging software, deposition patterns were put on a semi-quantitative basis. Sulphonamides on the other hand required a treatment to visualise the bound sulphonamide residues in bone. However, the same detailed deposition patterns could not be seen, and hence it

was only possible to determine that animals had received doses of sulphonamides, but not the frequency. The method has been validated and can be used to determine antibiotic treatment on commercial meat cuts that have bone present.

Further Information

Contact Dr Mark Woolfe,
tel: 020 7276 8176 email;
mark.woolfe@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Project N0919

Change in snacking habits and obesity over 20 years in children aged 11 to 12 years

Division

Nutrition

Existing dietary data sets were used to determine the potential role of snacking as a risk factor for overweight and obesity. Two definitions of snacking were used, and all analyses in the study were repeated using both definitions. The types of foods consumed between meals (i.e. eaten as snacks) were no different from those consumed as part of meals. The total amount, and the proportion, of energy derived from foods eaten as snacks did not increase between 1980 and 2000 and there was no change in the frequency of consumption of foods between meals. There was some suggestion that the energy density of foods eaten as snacks may have increased between 1980 and 2000. There was an increase in the average portion size for some foods over the study years and a decrease in portion size for others. For all the foods for which an increase or decrease in portion size was detected, this change occurred whether the food was consumed as a meal or between meals.

The results of this project have influenced our work to set nutritional guidelines for food provided in major institutions and will be taken into account when considering messages to consumers.

Further Information

Contact Tamara Beckett,
tel: 020 7276 8936, email:
tamara.beckett@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

A question of attitude



The Food Standards Agency is committed to carrying out research that promotes greater understanding of consumer attitudes in relation to healthy eating and food safety. The Agency's annual Consumer Attitudes Survey, first published in 2000, offers an insight into consumer thinking, trends, knowledge and behaviour with regard to food, and consumer awareness of the Agency and its work. The information gathered in the surveys helps the Agency develop effective policies and communication tools. Some of the most recent survey findings can be found below.

The Consumer Attitudes Survey 2006 was undertaken as part of a wider consumer engagement programme that aims to gather the views of individual consumers through a range of activities. Some of these are conducted on a frequent basis (such as the survey) and others are tied to specific policy needs.

Survey objectives

The FSA Consumer Attitudes Survey aims to:

- Track changes in consumer attitudes, knowledge, claimed behaviour and awareness over time, with regards to food standards
- Improve knowledge and understanding of consumer attitudes in those areas for which the Agency has responsibility
- Help the Agency develop effective communications by understanding how and where consumers look for, and access, information about food safety, scares and healthy eating.

Commenting on the 2006 Survey, Food Standards Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton said: 'The results show progress is being made in the right direction with awareness of healthy eating messages, including 5-a-day and salt, increasing year on year. It's also reassuring that consumers who are aware of the FSA, feel it is an organisation they can trust, with concern about food safety issues staying at a manageable level and trust and confidence in the Agency remaining high.

'It's encouraging that over the years, our research has shown a growing awareness and knowledge among consumers towards healthier eating. The consistent rise in the number of people who say they know they should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day as well as those making the effort to check their food labels for nutritional content, shows a real positive shift in attitudes and behaviour towards food and diet in general.'

2006 Survey key findings

Healthy eating is a key concern

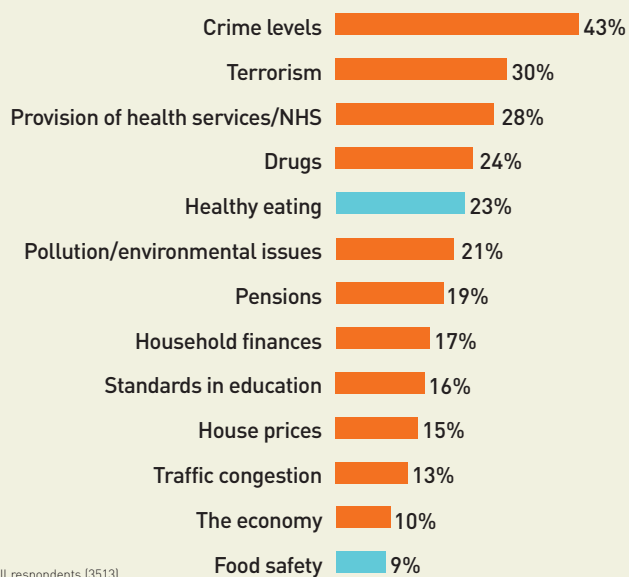
- Even when deliberately set in the broader context of concerns that face people today, healthy eating is a key issue for consumers – as important as drugs and environmental issues. Only a minority (12%) felt that healthy eating was not important to them, and these were most likely to be ‘pre-nesters’ or ‘young nesters’.
- The amount of salt, fat and sugar in food remain the dominant food concerns for consumers when prompted, together with food poisoning and foods aimed at children.

Food safety is less ‘top of mind’ than healthy eating, but prompted concern remains high

- In comparison with healthy eating, food safety is seen as less of a concern (mentioned by 9% of the UK sample when prompted with a list of possible concerns, compared to 23% who mentioned healthy eating). However, when asked directly, three fifths (60%) did claim to have some concerns over food safety issues, with women more likely to say they are concerned than men and those from higher socio-economic groups more likely than those in lower groups.
- When asked about specific types of food they were concerned about, raw meat, and especially raw chicken, dominated concern, consistent with previous years’ findings.

Major concerns facing you today

Question: Which of the following are the major concerns facing you today? Please select your top three concerns.



Base: All respondents (3513)

Concerns about hygiene

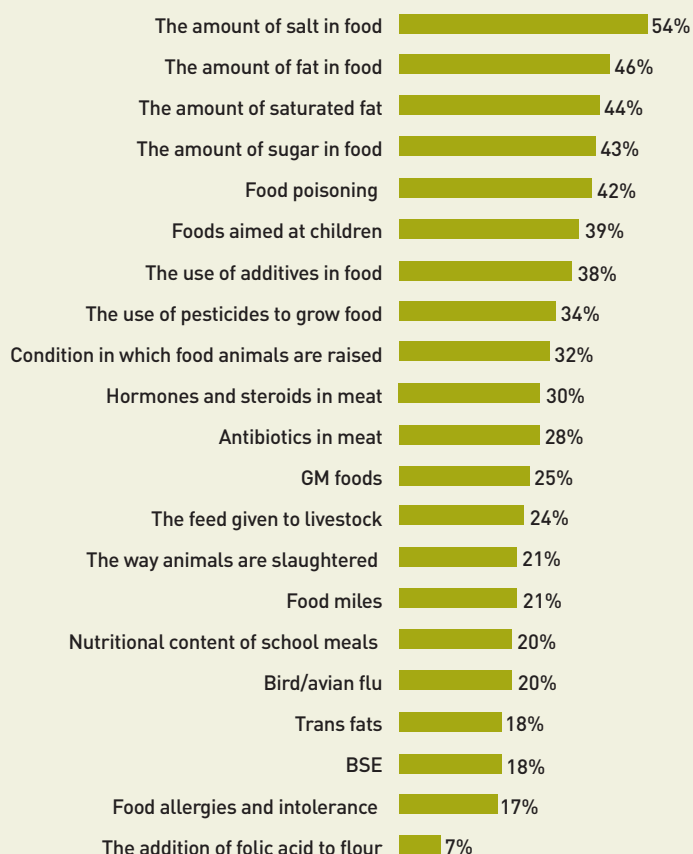
Concerns about hygiene were greatest in relation to takeaways, fast food outlets and restaurants / cafes etc., with relatively less concern about any type of food retailer. Only a quarter of those who had had a concern, said they had reported it to anyone – and only 5% reported their concerns to anyone outside the outlet itself.

Shopping habits

- The vast majority of respondents use supermarkets for most of their food shopping, with around two-thirds using large supermarket stores, and a further 30% using the smaller, local store format of the supermarket chains.
- However, small grocery stores and corner shops play an important part in “top-up shopping”. Local specialist shops, such as butchers and greengrocers, also play a role in this type of shopping.
- The majority of those questioned do a main food shop once a week or more often, and a “top-up shop” between one and three times a week. Unsurprisingly, those with children in their household conducted “top-up shops” most regularly.

Concerns about specific food issues (prompted)

Question: Are you concerned about any of the following issues?



Base: All respondents (3513)

Concerns about hygiene

Question: Have you been concerned about hygiene in any of the following places in the last 12 months?



Base: All respondents (3513)

- The vast majority of those responsible for all or most of the shopping, are also solely or mainly responsible for the food preparation and cooking in the household. This is more likely to be women – but the respondents age and working status is also related to their amount of food shopping/preparation responsibility.
- 39% of those interviewed avoided certain foods, either due to an allergy, medical or religious reasons, because they are vegetarian/vegan, or on a diet to lose weight.

Food labelling is a key issue

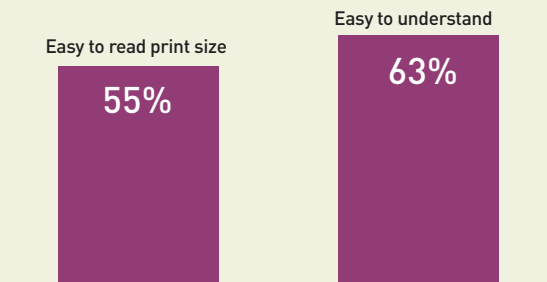
The Food Standards Agency is concerned not only with the food we eat but with what it is sold in and how that is labelled. Food labels are a useful source of information, primarily to inform and protect consumers. Much of the Agency’s current work on labelling is to help make sure that people get the information they need in an understandable form.

- Food labelling appears to be an area of real concern for consumers. Two-fifths of UK respondents find the print on labels hard to read, with nearly one third finding them difficult to understand. Those over 50, and those from the lower social grades, were the most likely to say they find labels hard to read and understand.
- Given the concern over healthy eating, it is also important to note that almost half (45%) find it difficult to know whether a product is healthy from the label, again those from the lower social grades are more likely to say so.
- Labels are most likely to be referred to for information about;
 - The amount of fat
 - The amount of salt
 - The amount of sugar
 - The amount of saturated fat
 - Additives
 - Calories
 - Best before / use by dates

Print on food labels

Question: How easy do you find it to read the labelling on food products in terms of the size of the print/and how easy do you personally find food labels to understand?

Percentage saying ‘very or fairly easy’



Base: All respondents (3513)

Eating Habits

- Respondents were asked what foods, if any, they were trying to increase or reduce their consumption of. A quarter of respondents said they were making a special effort to cut down on foods containing fat, and foods containing sugar.
- Women were more likely than men to say they were trying to avoid foods containing fat or sugar, and those over 25 were more likely to say so than those under 25.
- On the other hand, 45% said they were making a special effort to increase the amount of fresh fruit they ate, with 38% saying the same about fresh vegetables and 22% about salad.
- Again women were more likely than men to say they were trying to increase their consumption of fresh fruit & vegetables, and those from the higher socio-economic groups were more likely to say so than those from lower.
- There is a strong feeling among consumers, that budget is not a barrier to healthy eating and that parents should accept responsibility for making their children eat healthily.
- Indeed, three-fifths of parents claimed they were trying to reduce their children’s consumption of ‘less healthy’ options, with over one half of parents concerned about foods aimed at children and one-quarter concerned about the nutritional content of school meals.

Snacking

- While two-fifths claimed to have eaten between meals on the previous day, the most popular claimed snack was fresh fruit (40%). Younger respondents (under 35) were more likely to say they snacked yesterday than older respondents. Snacking was more prevalent on weekdays than weekends.

Awareness of the “five-a-day” message

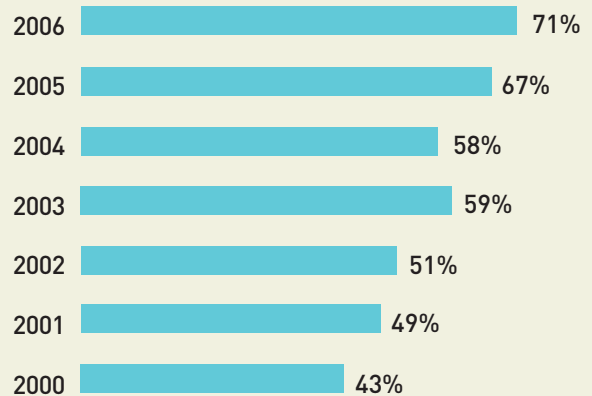
- Over the past few years the Agency has supported the Department of Health’s campaign to promote consumption of at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- The survey has measured awareness of the “Five-a-day” message since it began in 2000. The chart below shows that awareness continues to increase, with 71% aware they should eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day, compared to 43% in 2000. Women and those from higher social grades are most likely to be aware.

The FSA is viewed as a reliable source of information

- TV is the primary channel of information for consumers both in terms of food safety & scares, and healthy eating. Although for food safety and scares, TV news is the pre-dominant channel, whereas more general programming is used more for information about healthy eating.
- Newspapers also feature strongly as channels of information about food safety & scares, whereas for healthy eating there’s a wider range of channel including magazines, friends & family, and leaflets.
- The FSA was seen as a key provider of information about food safety and scares, with one-third (34%) claiming to have received information from the Agency. The Agency was also seen as one of the most reliable providers of information about food safety & scares, with 79% of those using information from the Agency being positive about its reliability.
- The Agency is also seen as among the most reliable sources of information on healthy eating – more so than supermarkets and food manufacturers – with 83% of those using information about healthy eating from the FSA being positive about its reliability.
- However at present the Agency is not the source most consumers think of in the context of healthy eating – this role belongs currently to supermarkets.

Correct knowledge of “at least 5 portions a day” (spontaneous)

Question: How many portions of fruit and vegetables do you think you should eat every day?



Base: All respondents (3513)

Improving perception of the FSA

■ Prompted awareness of the FSA continues to grow, rising to 82% in 2006. However, when asked to describe the role of the Agency, the most common answer given was ‘to monitor and check food standards’ – which to some extent may be driven by the name of the Agency, as opposed to a real understanding.

■ Confidence and trust in the FSA remain high with 61% giving a positive rating for trust (increased from 44% in 2001), and 66% giving a positive rating for confidence in the Agency’s role (increased from 50% in 2000).

Awareness of the Food Standards Agency

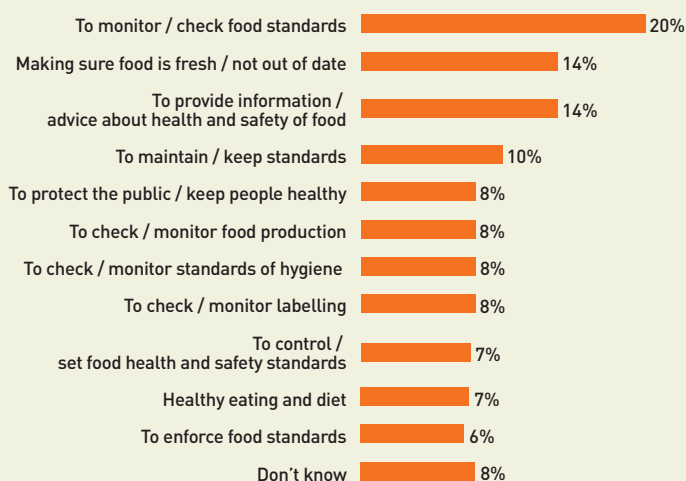
Question: Have you ever heard of the Food Standards Agency?



Base: All respondents (3513)

Perceived main role of the FSA (spontaneous)

Question: What do you think is the main role of the Food Standards Agency?



Note: Answers under 5% not shown

Base: All respondents aware of FSA (2876)

Rating of Food Standards Agency: Level of trust

Question: How would you rate the Food Standards Agency on a scale of 1 to 7 where 7 is ‘an organisation I trust’ and 1 is an organisation I don’t trust’?

Percentage saying “an organisation I trust”

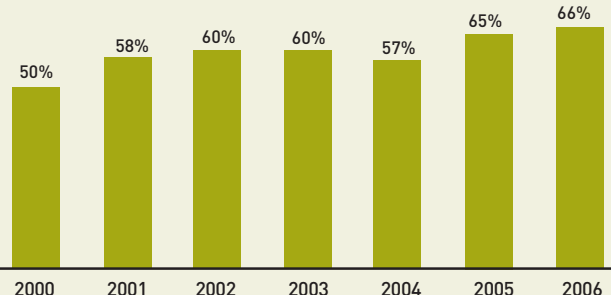


Base: All respondents aware of FSA (2876)

Confidence in role played by FSA in protecting health with regard to food safety

Question: How confident are you about the role played by the Food Standards Agency in protecting your health in this way?

Percentage saying ‘very or fairly confident’



Base: All respondents aware of FSA (2876)

Survey methodology

Interviewing is conducted face to face with respondents, with each interview approximately 30 minutes in length. A representative sample (in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic group, marital and working status) of 3513 adults in the UK took part in interviews for the 2006 study between August and October that year.

More details of the research methodology and background to the study can be found in each of the reports, which are published on www.food.gov.uk

Five reports are published annually; a UK report and one for each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each report contains analysis by demographics, and the England report contains comparisons between the nine Government Office Regions.

This year, in addition to the standard demographics, the reports contain for the first time analysis by lifestyle. Lifestyle is a combination of age, marital status and the presence of children in the household. For more on the lifestyle categories used, see the footnote below.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you’d like to find out more about the Consumer Attitudes Survey, please look on our website www.food.gov.uk or contact Helen Ralph, the FSA’s Senior Social and Market Research Officer, tel: 020 7276 8636. If you’d like to find out more about our wider consumer engagement strategy, please contact Jaz Bangar, Head of the Consumer Branch, on 020 7276 8179.

Footnote: Lifestyle & Definition

Pre Nester – Aged 16-35, no children in household. Younger Nester – Aged 16-35, with children in household.

Older Nester – Aged 36+, with children in household. Empty Nester – Aged 36+, no children in household, married / living as married.

Older Single – Aged 36+, no children in household, not married / not living as married.

Board update Feb 2007

The Food Standards Agency held an open Board meeting in London on 15 February 2007. The meeting, chaired by Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton, was attended by 93 people and a live webcast of the meeting was viewed by 494.

The Board discussed proposals for a new overarching Scientific Advisory Committee, a review of models for delivering official controls in approved meat premises, the EU's Food Labelling Review, the FSA's openness remit and better regulation.

Chief Executive John Harwood and Dr Andrew Wadge, the Agency's Chief Scientist, updated the Board on the recent avian flu outbreak.

New Deputy Chair

In her update, Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton began by introducing Dr Ian Reynolds, the Agency's new Deputy Chair (see FSA News February issue for more details on Dr Reynolds).

The Chair said she was delighted that he had agreed to take on this new role – Dr Reynolds' business and scientific background would be of enormous assistance to the Agency.

The City of London Port Health and Environmental Services Committee annual dinner

The Chair reported on her attendance at this event in January. She had taken the opportunity to stress the importance of improving the relationship with local authorities. This message was well received by the representatives of local authorities present, she said.

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF)

The FDF's new President had announced a restructuring of the organisation. The organisation was now focused around three

priorities: health and well being, food safety, and sustainability and competitiveness, she said.

The Chair stated that this would provide the Agency with a good opportunity for co-operation with each of these divisions. Meetings had been arranged with each of the Chairs of these three strategy groups.

Deirdre Hutton said that she had already met with Salman Amin, Chair of the Health and Well Being Group.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More on bird flu is at: food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/feb/flu16feb

You can view the whole Board meeting by webcast at: www.flyonthewall.com/FlyBroadcast/FSA/LondonBoard0207

Sign up to receive Board meetings as part of a podcast pilot at: www.flyonthewall.com/podcast/food.gov.uk/OpenBoardMeetingsPodcast

Who's meeting whom?

The Agency, as part of its commitment to being an open and transparent organisation, is now publishing details of meetings held and attended by the Chief Executive and Directors.

Each month, the Agency's website will be updated with information about meetings held, who attended, and the purpose behind the meetings. The initiative will cover meetings attended by UK Directors, including the Head of the Meat Hygiene Service. The MHS is an Executive Agency of the FSA.

The Agency also provides details of Board Members' engagements. These are available as a Standing Order paper to Open Board Meetings.

Meeting details will be published about our Chief Executive and Directors from our externally facing directorates. Other directors not shown in the meeting tables focus mainly on internal management of the Agency and as these directors attend meetings with external organisations infrequently, they will only appear on an ad-hoc basis.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Chief Executive's and directors' meeting details for January 2007 can be found at: food.gov.uk/aboutus/how_we_work/profiles/cedmeetings/cedmeetsjan07



In January, Agency Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health Gill Fine appeared before a House of Lords Select Committee inquiry into allergy and allergic diseases. For other directors' meetings see the website

New Chair appointed to ACMSF

Professor Sarah O'Brien has been appointed as the new Chair of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF).

Professor O'Brien is a Consultant in Public Health Medicine and currently Professor of Health Sciences and

Epidemiology at the University of Manchester.

Her appointment is for three years, until 31 March 2010.

The ACMSF provides the Agency with independent expert scientific advice. Appointments to the committee are made strictly on merit, following public advertisement.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the ACMSF can be found at: food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiogsafety

For more on Professor O'Brien, see: food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiogsafety/pressreleases/newchairacmsf

Judge finds in favour of FSA on GM rice

Friends of the Earth brought a judicial review challenge against the Food Standards Agency, regarding the application of EU law in handling the issue of contamination of US long grain rice with an unauthorised genetically modified rice. The hearing took place on Tuesday 20 and Wednesday 21 February. The FSA vigorously defended the challenge on the basis that the UK complied fully with its obligations under EU law. The review found in favour of the FSA. The Agency is pleased with the judgement and will reflect on the judge's comments and issue a more detailed statement in due course.

Agency grants for local initiatives

The Agency is offering grants of up to £10,000 to help local authorities promote awareness of food hygiene and healthy eating.

This year's scheme, which was launched on 9 March 2007, is open to applications from local authorities, district councils, food liaison groups or trading standards regional groups in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Local authorities will be able to use the grants to target specific community needs and the Agency is keen to see proposals for initiatives that involve working locally with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Several projects previously supported by the scheme have won or been commended by the FoodLink Communicating Food Safety awards.

Heads of food service or lead food officers in all UK local authorities have been invited to provide a brief project plan using the application form supplied. Projects can focus on food hygiene or healthy eating, or a combination of the two.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Details about the scheme, downloadable copies of documents and links to summaries of previous projects, are at: food.gov.uk/enforcement/laresource/lahngnrgants For more details, contact Jackie Spencer, tel: 020 7276 8900, email: jackie.spencer@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Import controls for 'high-risk' food products

The Agency is seeking views on a European Commission Working Document setting out implementing rules under Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls for 'high-risk' feed and food products of non-animal origin (non-POAO) imported from outside the Community.

Responses are requested by 24 May 2007. The key proposals are:

- establishing a list of 'high-risk' non-POAO to be subject to an increased level of official controls
- standard documentation to facilitate prior notification of imports of these products
- designated points at which controls of these products must be undertaken
- fees for controls of these products

Views are also sought on an associated draft partial Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). The Working Document is due to be discussed at a Commission Working Group meeting in late March/early April (the Commission hopes to adopt the implementing rules in June or July). In view of this, it would be helpful to have initial responses by 21 March and any other comments by 24 May 2007 at the latest.

Regulation (EC) No 882/2004

Regulation 882/2004 sets out requirements for those authorities in EU Member States that have responsibility for monitoring and verifying compliance with,

and enforcement of, feed and food law (and animal health and animal welfare rules), i.e. the 'competent authorities' responsible for organising and undertaking 'official controls'.

These include requirements for official controls of non-POAO feed and food from third countries that is imported into the Community. These are set out at Articles 15 to 25. For products that represent a known or emerging risk ('high-risk'), a framework is established under which importers will be required to pre-notify the relevant authorities of the arrival of such consignments, and will have to present these products at specific points that have been designated specially to carry out the necessary controls.

Article 15(5) of the Regulation empowers the Commission to establish the list of these 'high-risk' products and to detail the frequency and nature of the controls that must take place. It also allows for the possibility of establishing a system of fees for these controls. Implementation of this framework will bring arrangements for 'high-risk' non-POAO more into line with those for products of animal origin (POAO).

In January 2007, the Agency announced that initial

discussions at EU level on the necessary implementing rules were underway, and sought views on the main issues that had emerged. The Agency is grateful for the many useful comments that it received and these will help inform the UK position on the Working Document, which was issued recently.

Commission Working Document on 'high-risk' non-POAO feed and food.

The proposal is for a Commission Regulation, but the current draft is in the form of a Working Document.

Views on any aspect of the Working Document are welcome, but the Agency would particularly value comments in the following areas: List of products representing a known or emerging risk;

Standard documentation for prior notification; Designated points of entry; Fees.

Suggested issues for consideration in these areas can be found at: food.gov.uk/consultations/ukwideconsults/2007/nonpaoimports

FURTHER INFORMATION

The consultation on 'Import controls for high-risk feed and foods of non-animal origin' is at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/highrisknonpao.pdf



The Quick-frozen Foodstuffs Regulations 2007

These new Regulations, which replace the Quick Frozen Foodstuffs Regulations 1990 (as amended), carry forward, and consolidate, existing requirements that must be fulfilled by quick-frozen foodstuffs (QFF). Existing requirements on enforcers for sampling procedures and official methods of analysis of temperatures of QFF are also carried forward. They also include new requirements in relation to temperature monitoring equipment, as set out in Commission Regulation (EC) No 37/2005, specifically the 2007 Regulations provide for administration and enforcement provisions. Regulation 37/2005 requires all new temperature monitoring instruments used in

the transport, warehousing and storage of QFF to comply with relevant European standards from 1 January 2006. Existing instruments (installed before 1 January 2006) complying with previous legislation can continue to be used until 31 December 2009. All instruments must comply with the CEN standards from 1 January 2010.

The finalised Regulations take account of responses to the public consultation that closed in November 2006. The Regulations apply to all businesses that manufacture, transport (including transport by rail), store and retail QFF. 'Quick frozen' is an optional description, so legal requirements only apply to foods meeting the definition

of QFF and if they are labelled as 'quick-frozen'.

The new regulations came into force on 1 March 2007 in England. Equivalent legislation came into force on the same date in Wales and Northern Ireland. Separate regulations in Scotland will come into force in mid-March.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details contact: Pendi Najran, tel: 020 7276 8157; email: pendi.najran@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk The regulations will be available in due course from the Office of Public Sector Information (formerly HMSO) at: www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/index.htm

Contaminants in foods

Three new EC Regulations were published in the Official Journal on 20 December 2006 and apply from 1 March 2007. Regulation (EC) 1881/2006 sets maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs, (EC) 1882/2006 lays down methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of the levels of nitrates in lettuce and spinach and (EC) 1883/2006 lays down the methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of levels of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in certain foodstuffs. These have been implemented in the UK by The Contaminants in Food Regulations 2007. The Contaminants in Food (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007 No. 210) revoke and replaced The Contaminants in Food (England) Regulations 2006.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For details contact Barry Walters, tel: 020 7276 8747; email: barry.walters@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Views on pesticides

Last year the FSA funded research to find out what people want to know about pesticides. It looked at:

- what information people need about pesticide residues in food
- what the Agency needs to do to meet those needs
- what other organisations, including government departments, retailers and assurance schemes, could do to meet those needs

FURTHER INFORMATION

A report is available on the Agency's website at: food.gov.uk/safereating/chemsafe/pesticides/pestresconsumerresearch/

FSA News is published by the Food Standards Agency, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH. Editor: Frank Chalmers, tel: 020 7276 8805; email: frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk To join or update the mailing list call: 020 7276 8829

Printed in the UK, on paper comprising 75% recycled content. FSA/1137/0307