

## Agency calls industry to account on food colours

Representatives of the food industry were called to a meeting with the Food Standards Agency on Thursday 13 September to explain what plans they have to remove certain artificial colours from their foods and what action they are taking to provide information to consumers.

The meeting was organised by the Agency following the publication of research undertaken for the FSA by Southampton University, to investigate the effects of certain artificial colours and a preservative on children.

The industry representatives were asked by the Agency:

- have they taken any action regarding the specific colours used in the FSA-commissioned study?

- what are they planning to do in response to the Agency's advice?

- how do they intend to help customers who wish to avoid products that contain these colours?

The colours that were used in the study were Sunset yellow (E110), Quinoline yellow

(E104), Carmoisine (E122), Allura red (E129), Tartrazine (E102) Ponceau 4R (E124), and the preservative sodium benzoate (E211).

The research suggests that eating or drinking certain mixes of these artificial food colours together with the preservative sodium benzoate is associated with an increase in hyperactivity in some children.

The Agency has advised parents of children showing signs of hyperactivity that avoiding foods and drinks with these artificial colours might have some beneficial effects on behaviour.

This revised Food Standards Agency advice follows evaluation of the research by the independent Committee on Toxicity (COT), which concluded that the observed effect could be of more relevance to children who were more hyperactive.

The Agency also organised a meeting with consumer and public interest organisations to explain its revised advice. The organisations attending felt that



it was unreasonable to place the burden of avoiding these artificial colours on consumers. They felt that the colours should be banned and that Agency's advice should have been extended to all children.

They cautiously welcomed the Agency's initiative in setting up a page on its website that will provide information about what industry is doing.

They also responded positively to the Agency's suggestion that they and industry meet under the aegis of the FSA to discuss what further practical steps could be taken by the food industry.

FSA Board members were set to consider these and other points raised at the meeting at the Open Board meeting on 20 September.

The Agency has also written to the European Commission urging it to take swift action. The Commission has responsibility for approving and regulating the use of additives throughout Europe, and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is currently reviewing colours that are permitted to be used in Europe.

FSA Chief Scientist Dr Andrew

Wadge said: 'This study is a helpful additional contribution to our knowledge of the possible effects of certain artificial food colours on children's behaviour.'

'After considering the COT's opinion on the research findings we have revised our advice to consumers: If a child shows signs of hyperactivity or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) then eliminating the colours used in the Southampton study from their diet might have some beneficial effects.'

FSA Chair Deirdre Hutton said: 'We are urging EFSA and the Commission to deliver an opinion urgently on these colours, because this period of uncertainty is deeply unhelpful to consumers and to industry.'

She said that the Agency recognised that parents were concerned, and acknowledged that consumers needed more information about the presence of these colours in food products, which was why the Agency was pressing the food industry to provide the information.

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## Speedy access to healthier eating

East coast national train operator GNER (pictures above) has introduced traffic light labelling on its range of café bar sandwiches, to provide its passengers with speedy access to healthier options.

The company feels that using the Agency's approach to front-of-pack labelling will enable passengers to easily identify nutritional content and highlight healthier options.

Sue Blanche, GNER train catering and retail manager, said the approach had been adopted to 'give passengers greater choice and reflect their expectations in terms of healthier eating'.

Other new adopters of the Agency's labelling recommendations include Korker Sausages Ltd. Company managing director Ed Hoad said: 'We are in favour of the FSA front-of-pack traffic light signpost scheme because it is so simple to use and customers can see at a glance what the product

they are buying contains – unlike other systems, which we think are confusing.'

Oatcake and biscuit manufacturer Paterson Arran is another recent adopter of the Agency's approach.

Paterson Arran Managing Director Alan Hardie said: 'There has been a real growth in demand for healthier food products in recent years, with consumers seeking out balanced diets, healthier food choices and transparency in labelling.'

'We have adopted the FSA's labelling approach to help consumers make quick, informed decisions about their food purchases and understand the nutritional value of their food.'

Meanwhile, support among health organisations for the FSA's approach continues to grow, with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) the latest to add its endorsement.

RCPCH President Dr Patricia Hamilton said: 'Inappropriate

diets in early life can establish preferences for unhealthy diets, and lay the foundations for ill health such as obesity, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes mellitus, in later life.'

'The traffic light system... is valuable in that it enables health professionals to have a single uncomplicated message when they advise on healthy eating at all ages. Furthermore, once children have learnt the traffic light system they will be able to use it into adult life.'

### International

At the same time, traffic light labelling has been gaining recognition internationally, and the Agency was invited to make a presentation to a US Food and Drug Administration public hearing earlier this month on the use of symbols to communicate nutrition information on food labels.

Addressing the two-day hearing, at the University of

Maryland, FSA Head of Labelling, Promotions and Dietetic Foods Claire Boville said that preliminary sales data from companies that had applied front-of-pack signpost labelling suggested that consumers are using the traffic lights to make healthier choices when doing their shopping.

'Consumers are switching to healthier versions of foods within categories, but are not avoiding categories where products include some red traffic lights,' she said.

Retailers and manufacturers have also reported that they are using the Agency's traffic light nutrition criteria to profile their product range and drive their product innovation and reformulation activities, for example by reducing saturated fat and salt levels to get more amber and green lights.

'This is an example of how market and consumer forces can be harnessed effectively for the common good,' she concluded.



Support from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

## Dame Sheila McKechnie Award 2007 launched

The Agency's fourth annual Dame Sheila McKechnie Award scheme for community initiatives was launched on 5 September 2007.

The awards assist community food initiatives to develop innovative approaches to tackling issues around food inequality.

Each year, two initiatives, chosen by a judging panel, are each presented with an award of £15,000, to be used over the following three years.

The late Dame Sheila McKechnie was instrumental in lobbying Government to establish an agency that would genuinely 'put consumers first' and allay consumer concern about a range of food related

issues. These awards aim to commemorate the work that Sheila McKechnie undertook as a consumer champion.

To apply for the award, community schemes are asked to submit details about their projects on an easy-to-complete form. They are also asked to develop a three-year action plan setting out what they plan to achieve during that period.

The action plan should address, for example:

- the main objectives over the three year period
- how the objectives will be achieved
- what targets/milestones will be set
- what the main outcomes are
- how the funding will be used

Applications for the 2007 award must be received no later than 6 December 2007.

A shortlist of outstanding initiatives will then be made, and FSA officials will visit these initiatives to gain a further insight into the work being done within the local community.

Winners will be announced in March 2008 and funding for the winners will commence in April 2008.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Full details of information required in the action plan, and of how to apply, are contained within an application form, which can be downloaded from our website at:

[food.gov.uk/multimedia/worddocs/dsmapp2007.doc](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/worddocs/dsmapp2007.doc)  
Alternatively, email us at: [mckechnieaward@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mckechnieaward@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone: 020 7276 8170 / 8641 and an application form will be sent to you.



Sheila McKechnie: championed the cause of an independent food safety Agency

## The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



# Food guidance on a plate

The Food Standards Agency has launched the eatwell plate (above), a visual tool that illustrates the types and proportions of foods that make up a balanced diet. It updates the previous illustrative model, the 'Balance of Good Health'.

Some food groups shown on the eatwell plate have been renamed so they are easier to understand, the design is contemporary, and it includes photography of real foods that reflect current eating patterns.

The launch comes as new Agency research shows that people are confused about what foods they can eat and are unsure what a healthy balanced diet looks like.

Whether people are eating out or cooking food at home, the eatwell plate is a useful reminder of what types of foods people should try to eat more of, or less of, for a balanced and healthy diet.

The eatwell plate shows that starchy foods should be enjoyed in the same proportion as fruit and vegetables and that people should try to eat a lot of these foods. Of the 2,094 people surveyed:

- 73% recognised we should aim

to eat a lot of fruit and vegetables, but only 11% said we should eat a lot of starchy foods – showing that people don't always realise the benefit of eating bread, rice, potatoes and pasta.

- 97% recognised that fresh fruit and vegetables count towards the 5-a-day target – this figure dropped to about half for tinned and frozen fruit and vegetables and dried fruit, all of which do contribute towards our daily intake.

On the subject of eating foods high in fat and sugar, which make up the smallest proportion of the eatwell plate:

- 58% of people recognised that we should only eat them occasionally, when given a list of options to choose from. However, about one fifth (19%) incorrectly said that to enjoy these types of food we should eat 'plenty of fruit and vegetables to outweigh' the consumption of high fat and sugar foods, which is not a sensible approach.

Rosemary Hignett, Head of Nutrition at the Food Standards Agency, said: 'The eatwell plate is a reminder of the essentials – the secret is simply knowing the

proportions of a balanced diet and making easy, practical food swaps where we can.

'It's not a ten-minute fad; it's a diet for life that we know will help reduce the number of diet-related illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers, which are on the rise in the UK.

'This is about a simple, straightforward approach that allows us to enjoy a varied diet that includes foods from all groups. Once armed with the knowledge of what we should try to eat more or less of, there are other tools available, such as nutritional front of pack labelling to help with choices about salt, sugar and fat in our food.'

In addition to the eatwell plate and nutritional front of pack labelling, an Agency booklet is available for consumers with *8 tips for eating well*.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the eatwell plate is at: [food.gov.uk/eatwellplate](http://food.gov.uk/eatwellplate)  
More on front-of-pack labelling is at: [food.gov.uk/trafficlights](http://food.gov.uk/trafficlights)  
*8 tips for eating well* is at: [eatwell.gov.uk/8tips](http://eatwell.gov.uk/8tips)

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### Background to the announcement

The research was commissioned in September 2004 by the Agency to examine the possible effect of the combination of certain artificial food colours and the preservative sodium benzoate then most likely to be found in foods popular with children, such as soft drinks, confectionery, and ice cream. The study was carried out in groups of three-year-old and eight-year-old children.

The report's author, Professor Jim Stevenson from Southampton University, said: 'The results suggest that consumption of certain mixtures of artificial food colours and sodium benzoate preservative are associated with increases in hyperactive behaviour in children.

'However, parents should not think that simply taking these additives out of food will prevent hyperactive disorders. We know that many other influences are at work, but this at least is one a child can avoid.'

Gill Fine, FSA Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health, said: 'It's quite clear that parents need more help to follow the FSA's advice on certain artificial food colours. That's why we have asked the food industry to provide more information about products containing these colours as soon as possible. They have agreed to do this and the FSA will be providing links to their information from a dedicated page on our website. This is a good first step but more needs to be done to enable consumers to make informed choices.'

### FURTHER INFORMATION

The research is in full at: [food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/foodcomponentsresearch/allergyresearch/t07programme/t07projectlist/t07040](http://food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/foodcomponentsresearch/allergyresearch/t07programme/t07projectlist/t07040)

The study is summarised on page 8 of the research supplement inside this issue.

Agency Chief Scientist Dr Andrew Wadge's blog is at: [food.gov.uk/scienceblog](http://food.gov.uk/scienceblog)

The full COT statement is at: [food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/toxicity/statements/cotstatements2007/colpreservechildren](http://food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/toxicity/statements/cotstatements2007/colpreservechildren)

The Agency's advice in full is at: [food.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/2007/sep/colours](http://food.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/2007/sep/colours)

## News in brief

### Open Board meeting

The Agency is due to hold an open Board meeting in London on 20 September, as this issue of *FSA News* goes to press.

The Board meeting will take place at 9am on Thursday 20 September 2007, at the Congress Centre, 28 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LS.

Updates since the last meeting will be given by Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton and Chief Executive John Harwood.

### Reports for discussion

Board members will discuss papers on: Recent Developments on Food Additives; Prior Approval: Options; Being a World Class Regulator; Review of Sudan I; Report from the Food Fraud Task Force.

They will also hear information items including: Progress on the FSA Plan to help Consumers with Food Allergies and Intolerances; and reports from the chairs of the Welsh, Northern Irish and Scottish Food Advisory Committees.

The formal meeting will be followed by an open question and answer session.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

To register to attend future Board meetings complete the registration form at: [www.glasgows.co.uk/fsa](http://www.glasgows.co.uk/fsa)  
For other queries, email: [fsaboardmeetings@glasgows.co.uk](mailto:fsaboardmeetings@glasgows.co.uk)  
tel: 01772 767730; fax: 01772 767555.  
You can submit a question in advance of any question-and-answer session, though we can't guarantee we can answer all of them. Email: [boardquestions@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:boardquestions@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)  
For podcasts of the Board meetings, go to: <http://www.flyonthewall.com/podcast/food.gov.uk/OpenBoardMeetingsPodcast/>

### Who said what?

Speeches by Food Standards Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton can now be accessed more easily from a new online section.

Also included is a new archive of speeches given by the former Chair and Deputy Chair.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

The speeches can be found at: [food.gov.uk/news/speeches](http://food.gov.uk/news/speeches)

# FSA Board backs meat hygiene regulation changes

Plans to transform the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) into a more efficient organisation that retains service delivery in approved meat premises throughout Britain have received the backing of the Food Standards Agency Board.

At its meeting in Cardiff in July, the Board supported seven key recommendations made in a Review of the Delivery of Official Controls in Approved Meat Premises.

Board members endorsed the principle that meat hygiene regulation should be aligned more closely with the regulation of the rest of the food chain, adopting a more risk and evidence based approach to regulation, inspection and enforcement.

They noted that this would require working collaboratively with the European Commission and Member States, to gather evidence as a basis for future changes in the European Union's approach to meat hygiene regulation. This would also be a priority.

The Board agreed that Official Controls in England, Scotland and Wales should be delivered by a Transformed Meat Hygiene Service (TMHS), provided it meets a series of challenging financial and performance targets. This approach would be supported by an audit and inspection regime, which would maintain a high level of consumer protection and

promote compliance with Official Controls, through a system based on earned recognition. Preparatory work would be conducted on a delivery partner model as part of a move towards greater contestability. A decision on this would be made by the Board in spring 2008.

The Board also agreed:

- that a new charging system should be developed, in consultation with stakeholders
  - that the FSA set up an Advisory Body for the Delivery of Official Controls to advise on plans to implement the agreed changes
  - that there should be an opportunity for local authorities to deliver Official Controls in low-throughput approved premises, where appropriate
  - that the FSA and MHS should work with the poultry sector to remove barriers to the greater use of poultry inspection assistants (PIAs)
  - that the FSA and MHS should identify ways to improve joint working with animal health and Government rural affairs department to promote meat safety, and animal health and welfare across the food chain
- Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton said: 'Today marks a watershed in the regulation of meat hygiene. The delivery of a more proportionate risk-based approach to regulation poses a challenge to both the MHS and



Steve McGrath: decision is a significant vote of confidence in the MHS

the FSA and will require commitment, innovation and strong leadership. Throughout this process we must always remember our foremost priority, the protection of consumer health. The future success of the MHS now lies in its own hands.'

MHS Chief Executive Steve McGrath said: 'The FSA Board's decision in July is a significant vote of confidence in the MHS and proves that we are moving in the right direction.'

'For example, we saw improvements in communication and involvement with our stakeholders during the foot and mouth outbreak and there will be many more positive improvements in the near future. We realise there are still many challenges ahead, but I have every confidence in our ability and dedication to deliver.'

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more on the recommendations, go to: [food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsa070706.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsa070706.pdf)

## Agency responds to Wales E. coli report

The report of the Outbreak Control Team into the autumn 2005 *E. coli* O157 outbreak in South Wales has been published.

It was completed in June last year but publication was delayed pending legal proceedings involving the local meat supplier at the centre of the outbreak.

William John Tudor, of John Tudor & Son, Bridgend, was jailed for a year at Cardiff Crown Court recently. He pleaded guilty to seven offences relating to the

supply of meat contaminated with *E. coli* O157 to schools within the local authorities' areas.

Acknowledging the report's publication, FSA Wales Director Joy Whinney said: 'Following the conclusion of legal proceedings, the publication of this report shows the effort and commitment of all members of the Outbreak Control Team in managing this outbreak and protecting public health.'

The Agency will be giving

evidence to the public inquiry due to be chaired by Professor Hugh Pennington next February.'

The report details the comprehensive investigations undertaken as the outbreak developed and the measures that have since been put in place.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details go to: [food.gov.uk/wales/aboutus\\_wales/pressreleases/2007/sep/ecolireport](http://food.gov.uk/wales/aboutus_wales/pressreleases/2007/sep/ecolireport)



Interacting with consumers in Reading in a fun and friendly way to provide them with information on how to reduce their salt intake

## Setting up stall on salt

Shoppers in selected Tesco stores across the UK were served up with a surprise earlier this summer when the Agency turned up outside to show them practical ways to reduce how much salt they are eating.

The July 2007 phase of the campaign included 24 activity days during which shoppers were able to:

- win free re-usable shopping bags in a fun and interactive quiz

- receive leaflets offering tips and advice on salt
- get money-off coupons for low salt products
- sample a selection of lower salt products
- collect low salt recipe cards

Entertainment outside the stores included an FSA salt 'trailer' featuring a game show style salt quiz and giveaway shopping bags. Shoppers were shown how to check labels to

read the salt content in products.

In addition, a quiz leaflet with multiple-choice questions and answers about salt was handed out. Those who got their answers right received an educational 'check' book containing coupons for lower salt items from participating brands, such as Flora, Kraft and McCain.

Activities inside the stores included lower-salt product tasting sessions and price promotions on selected brands.

FSA Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary health Gill Fine said: 'This activity represented another step in our ongoing campaign to increase consumer awareness of the health risks associated with eating too much salt.'

'We aim to make it easier for shoppers to reduce salt in their diet and improve their health.'

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more on the Salt Campaign go to: [www.salt.gov.uk](http://www.salt.gov.uk) or [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)



## New head of social science research

The Agency has appointed Dr Jane Barrett (above) as its new Head of Social Research. The appointment – she took up post on 16 July 2007 – reflects the Agency's commitment to strengthen its social science capacity as set out in its 2005-10 Strategic Plan.

Dr Barrett's role will be to develop an in-house social science research team. Initially, she will be reviewing how social science research can best add value to the Agency's evidence base, scoping the remit of her team and establishing an independent Social Science Research Committee – the tenth of the Agency's scientific advisory committees.

Policy directorates within the Agency usually determine their own research priorities and tend to use consultants to assist them in setting agendas and priorities. With the help of the new Social Science Research Committee Dr Barrett plans to input to these processes, and to focus on developing cross-cutting projects.

A civil servant since 1996, she has worked at the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly the Department of Social Security) on subjects including employment, low-income families, and health and work.

A secondment to the Women's Unit resulted in her working on the first women-only citizens' juries to be carried out in central Government, and she oversaw the successful completion of the Job Retention and Rehabilitation Pilot – one of the first Government randomised control trials in labour market policy.

## Food for thought

Fresh evidence on diet and health is always exciting, but it can have its frustrations as well. Take the research on artificial food colours we have funded, the results of which were published in *The Lancet* this month. Many people have long suspected that artificial food additives have an effect on children's behaviour. Now for the first time we have a robust scientific study that shows a statistically significant association between children eating foods containing certain artificial food additives and subsequent behavioural problems.

That is a real breakthrough, but it is also frustrating as the evidence is far from definitive – science rarely is. Behavioural research of this kind is particularly complex, time-consuming, and the results difficult to interpret. Having studied the findings, our independent scientific advisory committee concluded that there was a clear but modest association – not cause and effect – between the two mixtures of artificial additives studied and an increase in hyperactive behaviour in some, but not all children.

The FSA Board will be discussing the implications of the research when it meets in public on 20 September. In the meantime, the Agency has issued advice to parents to avoid foods containing a specific set of additives if their children show signs of hyperactivity. You can read further details on page 1.

I see a parallel with the links between omega-3 oils from fish and improvements in behaviour and intelligence in children. I like the idea that eating fish can make children happier and cleverer and I find the hypotheses linking diet, brain biochemistry and behaviour not just fascinating but highly persuasive. But what hasn't yet been produced is evidence sufficiently robust to support new advice to parents on eating fish.

Our current advice on how much fish to eat (see the link below) is a balance between strong evidence of the health benefits, such as lowering the risk of heart disease, and caution about the consumption of environmental contaminants associated with some fish oils. If clear evidence were to emerge of additional benefits, such as an effect on intelligence and

behaviour, we would immediately start looking afresh at the balance of our advice.

Until then I will continue eating a diet that is rich in fish and shellfish – not just because it's delicious, but also safe in the knowledge that it is doing my heart good, and possibly my head as well.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More information on eating fish can be found at: [eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/nutritionessentials/fishandshellfish](http://eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/nutritionessentials/fishandshellfish)



Gill Fine

## Hygiene, healthy eating and fitness at Murrayfield

The Food Standards Agency Scotland teamed up with Scottish Rugby at the end of last month, to kick-start a new initiative aimed at encouraging youngsters across Scotland to boost their knowledge of food hygiene and healthy eating, and improve their fitness.

Almost 5,000 school children from 160 primary schools across Scotland will take part in this initiative, which comprises a six-week training course for boys and girls in primaries five and six.

Some youngsters and teachers participating in the launch were able to join the Scotland rugby squad at Murrayfield stadium in a healthy lunch before stepping pitch-side.

FSA Scotland Assistant Director Lydia Wilkie said the Agency was delighted to launch the initiative with Scottish Rugby and its other partners, Active Schools Co-ordinators and teachers.

'We have evidence from our

earlier pilot that using sports coaches as role models, helps to motivate youngsters to take on and understand messages about safe and healthy eating along with fun activities,' she said.

Scotland full-back Hugo Southwell is one of 20 Scotland male players and two Scotland women internationals who feature in a new educational 'mission book', packed full of healthy eating and hygiene tips and activities. The book was developed by the Agency and Scottish Rugby.

He said: 'We all need to eat a varied, balanced diet that is packed full of healthy foods. It's important children make sure they get their five portions of fruit and veg a day and avoid sugary and salty snacks as much as they can.'

Ken MacEwen, Scottish Rugby's National Fitness Co-ordinator, said: 'Healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle are at the



Scotland rugby internationals with some of the lucky pupils

very core of our national fitness programmes.

'Following these simple guidelines, as laid down in a very user-friendly manner in the mission-book, will lay foundations that will benefit all the participating children, hopefully for the long-term.'

Pupils taking part in the course will complete a variety of healthy eating and food hygiene activities each week, ranging from learning how to be healthy and getting the right balance of foods, to how to handle and store food hygienically and safely.

After completing the theory, children will then go outside to join Scottish Rugby's club development staff for a practical fun-based rugby session.

During the session, the coaches will ask the pupils questions on activities in the pupil mission book, to test their knowledge, and introduce new topics.

All pupils who successfully complete the course will receive a certificate along with some goodies, including a kit bag and fridge thermometer.

Participating schools will receive some rugby kit.

## Food hygiene hits the road in Scotland



Roadshows have started rolling across Scotland to help people find out about the Agency's Food Hygiene Information Scheme.

The scheme asks food premises to display a certificate in a door or window so people can see how the business has fared in its most recent hygiene inspection.

One event has already been organised, in the Braehead Shopping Centre, Renfrewshire, on 17 August (above), with another, in Castle Street in Edinburgh, due to take place as *FSA News* went to press.

More are taking place in:

- Aberdeen: St Nicholas Street, 4 October, 9am to 7pm
- Perth: High Street, 5 October, 9am to 5pm

■ Leven: Durie Street, 24 October, 9am to 5pm

■ St Andrews: Logies Lane, 25 October, 9am to 5pm

About 3,000 establishments have been involved in the Scottish initiative so far. Each has been asked to display certificates prominently on the door or window of its premises saying 'Pass', 'Improvement required' or 'Awaiting Inspection', showing clearly how well each outlet has fared in its most recent hygiene inspection.

Marion McArthur, Head of FSA Scotland's Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Branch, said: 'These roadshows aim to raise awareness among the general public about the scheme

and how it can benefit them.

'An interim evaluation of the pilot scheme, carried out earlier this year, showed that the overwhelming majority of both consumers and trade felt the scheme would make food businesses more likely to comply with food hygiene regulations. Indeed, 98% of consumers felt it was fair that the public should be able to check a retailer or caterer's food hygiene status.'

Councillor Marie McGurk, Convener of Renfrewshire Council's Environment and Infrastructure Board, said: 'This scheme gives consumers greater confidence and encourages establishments to meet high standards, as they know the results will be on display for all to see. It's also important to note that businesses that haven't yet met the highest standards of hygiene will be getting practical advice on meeting the required standards.'

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the scheme and on inspections is at: [food.gov.uk/scotland/safetyhygienescot/foodhygieneinfoscot](http://food.gov.uk/scotland/safetyhygienescot/foodhygieneinfoscot)

## Food fun at Royal Highland Show

FSA Scotland served up a mix of advice, education and fun at the Royal Highland Show earlier this summer, when visitors to the Agency's interactive kitchen set had an opportunity to win prizes, take a hand-washing challenge and test their knowledge of food safety, hygiene and nutrition in a variety of games and quizzes.

Kaye Adams, presenter of TV show 'Loose Women', hosted a live cookery demonstrations during which Scottish Chef Wendy Barrie demonstrated how easy it is to cook up quick and nutritious meals.

Visitors were able to find out more about the Agency's work, and children were able to learn from the lunchbox game (pictured below).



# Solving the recruitment problems in clinical trials

As part of the Food Standards Agency's risk assessment (T01) and phytoestrogens (T05) research programmes workshop held in June (see *FSA News* 69, p7) a presentation was given by Professor Steve Atkin, from the University of Hull, on 'Patient recruitment to clinical trials: Problems and solutions'.

This presentation covered aspects of recruiting patients to clinical trials and looked at various problems and possible solutions.

Professor Atkin started the presentation by describing the importance of appropriate planning and knowledge of the target audience in ensuring a clinical trial starts well.

He explained that good links with the local media and GPs, and consideration for the time of year, especially avoiding the holiday seasons, will aid recruitment to the trial.

Once the trial is up and running, the first visit is a crucial time for both the subject and the researcher and this should not be too fatiguing.

A team evaluation after the first batch of these can be useful to highlight potential problems that might result in participants dropping out.

Making visits as easy and convenient to the subjects as possible is invaluable in ensuring compliance and will help to reduce the drop-out rate. This can include guaranteed car parking, visits outside working hours and subjects not having to wait after their allocated appointment time.

Other factors influencing drop-out rate include giving enough time to each subject and ensuring treatments are available at the visits; also asking subjects if they have had any problems.

Payment of expenses, professional treatment, a friendly and welcoming attitude and provision of hot or cold drinks will also help to keep subjects in the study. Early evaluation, especially if there appear to be problems, is useful for the researcher, and also the sponsor, to keep abreast of progress.

Following the presentation, discussion focused on three topics:

- incorporating extra capacity in the team to ensure clinical trials are not affected by staff changes or illness
- problems of gaining ethics approval while waiting for funding. The suggestion put forward was that the ethics

submission can be put together while waiting for funding and, where appropriate, submitted for approval on the basis that funding for the trial will be obtained

- requirements of Good Clinical Practice (GCP) which have now been embedded into the process of carrying out a clinical trial. Any new units setting up would be well advised to make contact with others to share best practice
- This presentation provided food for thought on running patient trials and provided the Agency with useful ideas to consider when commissioning future research projects involving patient trials.



Recruiting sergeant: Professor Atkin



## On line, in contact: blogging for the FSA

Food Standards Agency Chief Scientist Dr Andrew Wadge (above) writes: Since my last column in *FSA News*, back in July, I was very pleased to find out that my blog was one of four finalist in this year's New Statesman New Media Awards, in the 'information and openness' category.

These awards aim to recognise those who realise the potential of new media technology and have the commitment and stamina to execute their ideas effectively.

Sadly, we were beaten in the New Statesman awards by the Intelligent Giving website, but reaching the final means that we must be doing something right.

These awards have provided us with another platform to raise interest in the Agency's science. The blog is still a novel method for the Agency to communicate with our stakeholders, in particular with an audience that does not engage through more traditional routes.

At the time that I am writing this article I have submitted 75 blog entries to our website (an average of two a week) and there have been 89,363 visits to the blog so far.

A wide range of topics has been covered, including describing the Agency scientists' contribution to the Board discussion on folate, providing context and background to food scares including avian flu and giving my thoughts on the results of new research

(whether that is our own or from other experts).

The blog is a unique resource for me to be able to highlight the good work of Agency scientists, relate tales of events I have attended and react to food-related stories in the news. The blog supplements the Agency's other channels of communication, such as our websites ([food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk), [eatwell.gov.uk](http://eatwell.gov.uk) and [salt.gov.uk](http://salt.gov.uk)), *FSA News* and the open Board meetings.

In August I blogged about an e-mail I had received asking whether the FSA could provide general advice on the latest food stories in the media – addressing the wider picture and combating the drip-feed of conflicting advice on diet and health (see my blog entry 'Food science and the media' for more details).

It is difficult for us to comment on each and every new piece of research, especially when we haven't had the opportunity to see the study in question.

It would, therefore, be very valuable to have a resource that brought together all the evidence, conflicting or otherwise, allowing consumers to make an informed decision about whether they would benefit from a daily glass of red wine or if they should be eating more purple foods, alongside established advice on what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet.

Maybe this is something the food industry could consider; the Agency would certainly

support such a venture, employing our channels of communication to add value. What do you think? Why not get involved in the debate and leave me your comments on my blog.

### Increasing social science in the Agency

The Agency's need for an increased social sciences capacity was first identified during the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2005-2010. There is an increased importance being attached to social science evidence to help bridge the gap between consumers understanding the message and having the motivation to act on it.

To this effect the Agency has been working to establish an in-house social science research team and I am pleased to let you know that we now have a Head of Social Science Research, Dr Jane Barrett, in place (see *FSA News* main issue page 5).

I will keep you informed of further developments with this new team, including the steps towards setting up a Social Science Research Committee within the Agency. As the Agency's Chief Scientist I am always encouraged when the Agency's scientific expertise is strengthened.

### Further Information

For more on the science behind this story, check out Andrew Wadge's blog at: [www.food.gov.uk/scienceblog](http://www.food.gov.uk/scienceblog)

# Agency study into acrylamide and domestic cooking

Research investigating the levels of acrylamide produced when cooking at home has been published by the Agency. Acrylamide is a chemical that can be produced naturally in food, as a result of cooking starchy foods at high temperatures through baking and frying, as well as grilling and roasting. The aim of this study was to measure the levels of acrylamide formed when potatoes are cooked in the home.

Since the initial 2002 discovery of unexpectedly large amounts of acrylamide in some foods, research has continued internationally to improve understanding of the toxicology, analytical methodology, formation and potential methods of reducing acrylamide levels in food. Numerous research projects have been conducted worldwide and this study has been conducted as part of that international effort.

Acrylamide is genotoxic – it has the potential to damage DNA – and known to cause cancer in animals. It is considered probable that it could also cause cancer in humans, although this is not certain. Based on independent expert scientific advice, the Agency believes that exposure to DNA damaging, cancer-causing chemicals such as acrylamide should be as low as reasonably achievable.

In February 2005, the Joint FAO/WHO

Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) carried out a safety evaluation of acrylamide in food. JECFA concluded that, at the current dietary intake levels, acrylamide may be a public health concern and therefore appropriate efforts to reduce acrylamide concentrations in foodstuffs should continue.

The findings from this study show that acrylamide is formed in potatoes cooked at the high temperatures typically used in domestic cooking. Acrylamide was formed in roast, sautéed, chipped and baked potatoes. It was not formed in boiled or microwaved potatoes.

The Agency is not changing its advice to people on the basis of this study and continues to recommend that people should eat a balanced diet, including plenty of fruit and vegetables, bread, other cereals and potatoes and should limit the amount of sugary and fatty foods they eat, including fried food such as chips and crisps.

The research confirms that chips made from fresh potatoes cooked to a lighter colour have lower acrylamide levels than chips cooked to a darker colour. The same results were found with fried and roast onions. It was also found that levels of acrylamide are minimised if frozen chips are cooked according to the instructions on the packaging.

The results also confirmed that the level of acrylamide formed in potatoes was linked to the amount of sugar in the potatoes. The study showed that storing potatoes in a fridge causes an increase in their sugar content which may lead to higher acrylamide levels when cooked. However, chips made from fresh potatoes that have been soaked in water for 30 minutes prior to frying were found to have almost 70% lower levels of acrylamide than those not soaked.

## Further Information

For the science behind this story, check out FSA Chief Scientist Andrew Wadge's blog at: [www.food.gov.uk/scienceblog](http://www.food.gov.uk/scienceblog)

The report on acrylamide is at: [food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/acrylamidereport0707.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/acrylamidereport0707.pdf)

The Provision of crops contract study report by Sutton Bridge Experimental Unit is at: [food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/acrylamidereport0707.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/acrylamidereport0707.pdf)



## ACMSF publishes burger report

The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) has published its report on 'safe cooking of burgers' following consultation on the document.

In September 2004, the Food Standards Agency sought the ACMSF's view on whether the current UK advice, issued by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in 1998, was still appropriate.

This advice recommends that burgers are cooked at 70°C for two minutes or equivalent.

The ACMSF established an Ad Hoc Group to review the CMO's 1998 advice on the safe cooking of burgers.

It considered whether this advice was still appropriate in the light of differences between the recommended cooking conditions for burgers in the US and the UK (more stringent). The ACMSF Ad Hoc Group drafted a report summarising its review of the advice.

The ACMSF report examined the epidemiology of *E. coli* O157, contamination of carcasses, meat and meat products by this organism, guidance on safe cooking of burgers in the US and other countries and industry controls to ensure safety of cooked burgers.

The ACMSF report concluded that the

CMO's advice for safe cooking of burgers should not change and, in line with current advice, should remain at 70°C for 2 minutes or equivalent.

It also concluded that the use of lower time/temperature combinations should not be ruled out where producers are in a position to demonstrate that they would be able to consistently ensure that the final product is safe and that the process is under effective control.

The report recommended that the Agency produce guidance on appropriate use of such time/temperature controls for industry and enforcement officers and considers using a modelling approach to set recommended time/temperatures based on required inactivation levels and limits of competence.

Advice to consumers and caterers on cooking of burgers should also be reiterated.

## Further information

The report is available in hard copy from the ACMSF Secretariat (email: [acmsf@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:acmsf@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)) quoting document reference FSA/1183/0607. It is also available on the Agency's website at: [food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/acmsfburgers0807.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/acmsfburgers0807.pdf)

## Research programme advisers needed

The FSA is looking for research programme advisers for three of its nutrition research programmes. The Agency appoints programme advisers and co-ordinators to maintain an overview and provide an external perspective on the various programme areas.

As well as this independent expert advice on Agency-supported research, programme advisers and co-ordinators have a key role in monitoring and managing the programme and make an important contribution to the communication, quality and standing of the research that is carried out.

The programmes needing advisers are:

- diet and cardiovascular health
- nutritional status and function research
- diet and colonic health

The deadline for applications is 29 October 2007.

## Further information

For details go to: [food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/researchfunding/rrd/adhoccalls/currentadhoc/](http://food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/researchfunding/rrd/adhoccalls/currentadhoc/)  
More about the research programmes is at: [food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/nutritionresearch/](http://food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/nutritionresearch/)



## Mycotoxins in cereals publication

The Food Standards Agency has developed a UK Code of Good Agricultural Practice for cereal farmers, following the setting of limits for fusarium toxins in cereals and cereal products by the European Commission.

The code is designed to help reduce the levels of mycotoxins in cereals through changes to cultivation and storage practices. The Agency has distributed the guide to over 43,000 cereal farmers in England, with separate distributions across Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

This code of practice, developed through project C03049, was also informed by research projects C04022 and C04033 on the investigation of fusarium toxins in UK wheat, barley and oat production. These projects investigated the effects of agronomic factors on the concentration of fusarium mycotoxins in UK barley, oats and wheat over a five-year period.

### Further information

Final reports of these projects can be accessed via the Agency's Information Centre, while the UK Code of Good Agricultural Practice can be downloaded at: [food.gov.uk/foodindustry/farmingfood/fusariumadvice](http://food.gov.uk/foodindustry/farmingfood/fusariumadvice)

## Mycotoxins sampling advice published

The Agency has published sampling advice for enforcement authorities and food business operators on the legislation regarding mycotoxins in foodstuffs and the official methods of sampling certain foods for mycotoxins.

The guidance document should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation. It is not a statutory code of practice or a substitute for the regulations, decisions or statutory instruments to which it refers.

### What are mycotoxins?

Mycotoxins are toxic substances produced by some fungi, and can be hazardous to human and animal health, even at low concentrations. Mycotoxins can be present

in our diet as a result of the growth of specific fungi on food crops, either in the field or in storage.

The toxins are found in a wide range of foods from around the world, but particularly in foods from countries that have climates with high temperatures and humidity.

There are a number of contaminants under the heading mycotoxins, and these include aflatoxins, ochratoxin A, the fusarium toxins and patulin.

### Further information

For more details, contact Dr Mat Barber, tel: 020 7276 8780; email: [matthew.barber@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.barber@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)



# 'Difficult to interpret' results from sheep scrapie research

The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) has published a summary of its meeting on 20 July 2007. It includes reference to 'difficult to interpret' results from experiments conducted using material from sheep diagnosed with classical scrapie.

SEAC concluded that the significance of these latest results cannot be determined yet and that further work is required to clarify the findings.

## Background

Cattle, sheep and goats are susceptible to a group of brain diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs).

The best known of these diseases is BSE in cattle. Another is 'classical' scrapie, which has been recognised for hundreds of years and is not known to harm people.

SEAC is appointed by Ministers and sponsored jointly by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Its role is to

provide independent expert scientific advice to the Government on spongiform encephalopathies such as BSE, CJD and scrapie. SEAC's remit is wide-ranging, and covers public health, food safety and animal health issues.

The latest study is one part of the significant ongoing research programme into TSEs, which is regularly reviewed by SEAC. As the science progresses there is the potential for other TSE diseases and strains of those diseases to be identified.

In 2003, for example, a disease, referred to as 'atypical scrapie', was newly identified. The Agency published detailed information for consumers, which included advice to consumers that there was no need for them to change their eating habits with regard to lamb or mutton (sheep products) and goat meat or products derived from these animals.

## Advice

The FSA is committed to updating consumers in line with the latest information and developments in research into TSEs. The Agency is therefore taking a close interest in



these latest preliminary findings but notes the view of SEAC that their significance cannot be determined yet, and that further work is taking place. In the light of SEAC's view, there is no change in the FSA's advice to consumers.

The FSA will continue to work with DEFRA, SEAC and other stakeholders on this issue.

## Further information

For more on atypical scrapie, go to: [food.gov.uk/bse/what/atypicalscrapie](http://food.gov.uk/bse/what/atypicalscrapie)  
More on the SEAC meeting is at: [www.seac.gov.uk/summaries/seac98\\_summary.pdf](http://www.seac.gov.uk/summaries/seac98_summary.pdf)

## Other reports published and available in the Information Centre

### Programme S14 – Research, Surveillance and Monitoring: Scotland

Collection and analysis of shellfish flesh from Scottish inshore and offshore harvesting areas for chemical contaminants (S14026)

### Programme M01 – Meat hygiene: microbiological safety (non-TSE research)

Global HACCP implementation in meat producing countries (M01030)

### Programme N09 – Food acceptability and choice

Promoting recommended infant feeding practices in a low-income sample randomised controlled trial of a peer support intervention (N09016)

### Programme N12 – Diet and colonic health

Novel DNA biomarkers for folate deficiency in surrogate tissues and colonic mucosa (N12003)

### Programme Q01 – Food authenticity: Research

The determination of non-cocoa fats in chocolate (Q01094)

## 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. These may be viewed at the Agency's headquarters, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6HN or a copy (CD-ROM) or email attachment if available, otherwise hard copy, can be requested from the Information Centre.

### Further information

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

Programme B12- Microbial risk assessment

### Risk assessment of *listeria monocytogenes* in UK-retailed cheese (project B12006)

This project aimed to assess the risk of *L. monocytogenes* contamination, growth and survival in the main categories of cheeses sold in the UK, to inform the Agency's advice on cheese consumption for pregnant women and other vulnerable groups. Industrial intelligence on the formulation and manufacture of cheese was collected and predictive modelling was used to assess how controlling factors such as pH,

water activity and salt content of cheese would affect the growth and survival of *L. monocytogenes*.

With the exception of hard cheeses, the use of raw milk was found to introduce an additional risk factor for *L. monocytogenes*. In the categories of cheese that account for the majority of UK consumption by volume, the vulnerability from *L. monocytogenes* appears to be very low. The risk ranking of cheese categories provided in the final project report tends to support existing Agency advice on cheese consumption for pregnant women and other vulnerable groups.

### Further Information

Joanne Aish, tel: 0207 276 8965, email: [joanne.aish@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.aish@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Programme B15 – Eggs and poultry

## Measures and best practice to minimise infection of remaining birds with campylobacter when broiler flocks are thinned (B15004)

This project aimed to undertake a detailed review of industry practices during broiler thinning (the removal of a portion of a chicken flock before final depopulation), coupled with a programme of microbiological tests to establish the campylobacter status of flocks pre- and post-thin and identify possible sources of flock colonisation.

It demonstrated that campylobacter-negative flocks quickly became positive after thinning. The findings support the need for an industry code of practice for thinning.

Results showed that all flocks that were campylobacter-negative before thin (60%) became positive after thinning, most within 2 to 6 days. Campylobacter was isolated from vehicles, equipment and personnel entering and leaving the farm before and after thinning, identifying these as potential risk areas in the spread of campylobacter. In many cases these isolates were indistinguishable from the strain subsequently colonising the flock.

A hygiene and biosecurity protocol for thinning procedures was developed and a number of recommendations regarding practices and possible intervention measures were made. The findings will enable the FSA to identify key practices that help reduce the introduction and spread of campylobacter at thin, and to produce recommendations regarding guidance material. The results also informed the poultry-catchers' biosecurity training programme undertaken in 2006.

### Further Information

Kathryn Callaghan, tel: 0207 276 8943, email: [kathryn.callaghan@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.callaghan@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Programme C01 - Chemical contaminants from food production: research

## Horizon scanning for emerging environmental contaminants (C01040)

This desk-based study aimed to identify methods for identifying emerging contaminants that could be of concern to food safety. The approaches identified included monitoring of the literature, media and conferences and more pro-active prioritisation and chemical monitoring studies. Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, retrospective monitoring is likely to demonstrate an actual risk but will only identify substances that researchers have actively investigated and may identify a risk after an impact has occurred. Prioritisation

approaches can help to identify those substances of most concern that have not yet been studied, but the application of these approaches is likely to be costly and highly data intensive. It will also not be possible to identify (and therefore prioritise) every substance that is released or formed in the environment; and analytical screening can identify previously unstudied (and sometimes unknown) compounds, but many of the new techniques for screening are currently in their infancy, are unable to detect everything and have high limits of detection. These methods will be used to improve the FSA's capability to prepare for emerging contaminants and the opportunity to support strategic planning and policy development.

### Further Information

Jillian Spindura, tel: 0207 276 8708, email: [jillian.spindura@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jillian.spindura@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Programme C02 - Chemical contaminants from food production: surveys

## Analysis of dioxins and PCBs in representative food samples from the UK, as specified in the EU recommended monitoring programme (project C02060)

Samples of UK-produced foods covering carcass meat, meat products, game, shellfish, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice cream, oils, fruit and vegetables were analysed for dioxins and PCBs. This work was carried out in line with Recommendation 2004/705/EC on the monitoring of background levels of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in foodstuffs. For all the samples, the levels of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs were within the existing maximum limits and action levels. One sample of wild boar meat contained dioxins above the maximum limit applicable to pig meat, but there would be no risk to health. Dioxin and PCB levels are relatively high in gull eggs and wild duck, but these are not widely consumed and have only a short season, so no consumer advice is necessary.

### Further Information

Martin Gem, tel: 020 7276 8724, email: [martin.gem@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:martin.gem@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Programme C03 - Mycotoxins and process contaminants (including nitrate) - research

## Examination of the effect of domestic cooking on acrylamide levels in food (C03037)

This study was carried out to investigate the effects of domestic cooking methods on the

level of acrylamide in food, particularly in potatoes. The research was done as part of the international effort to determine the mechanism by which acrylamide is formed in food, with a view to developing reduction measures.

Acrylamide was found in potatoes that had been sautéed, chipped, roasted or oven-baked in their skins. No acrylamide was found in the raw, boiled or microwaved potatoes.

The study showed that cooking freshly prepared chips to a golden yellow colour resulted in lower levels of acrylamide compared to levels in chips cooked to a darker colour. Investigation of acrylamide levels in commercially-produced chips sold frozen for cooking at home showed that in all cases the chips 'as sold' contained acrylamide resulting from the partial cooking process they had undergone already. Further increases in acrylamide were minimised when the chips were cooked according to cooking instructions on the packaging.

Investigation into the effect of simple pre-treatments on levels of acrylamide showed that almost a 70% reduction in levels of acrylamide were obtained when chips made from fresh potatoes were soaked in water for 30 minutes prior to frying.

A range of commercial potato varieties with contrasting characteristics were selected and stored conventionally according to typical current practices for the pre-pack industry, in order to investigate the effect of storage. In all cases stored potatoes were higher in acrylamide and this correlated with an increase in acrylamide on cooking.

Potatoes were refrigerated prior to chipping showed an increase in acrylamide level that, due to an increase in the sugar content of the potatoes, confirming the link between the formation of acrylamide and sugar content in potatoes.

### Further Information

Nina Webber, tel: 020 7276 8714, email: [nina.webber@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nina.webber@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## Exploiting process factors to reduce acrylamide in cereal based foods (C03032 / C03036 / C03052)

This research investigated the relationship between acrylamide levels in cereal-based food and processing/cooking conditions, with a view to optimising these conditions to minimise acrylamide levels in commercially and domestically prepared products.

Levels of acrylamide in commercial bread were found to be quite low. However, levels were found to be significantly higher in the crusts. The highest mean levels of acrylamide in cereal products were found in gingerbreads, ginger biscuits,

crispbreads and wholegrain crackers.

Asparagine levels in cereal flours varied in parallel with fructose and glucose in wheat and rye flours used in biscuits and crispbreads. Cereal selection based on low fructose and glucose content, and hence low asparagine, could be beneficial in reducing acrylamide in baked cereal products with no added sugars.

Options for reducing levels of acrylamide in cereal based foods include optimising the temperature, moisture and pH, and addition of calcium.

There was no risk of increased contamination by other process contaminants, for example 3 monochloropropane-1,2-diol (3 MCPD) resulting from recipe/process changes to minimise acrylamide.

#### Further Information

Wendy Matthews, tel: 020 7276 8717, email: [wendy.matthews@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.matthews@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Programme C04 - Mycotoxins and process contaminants (including nitrate) - Surveys

## Investigation of fusarium toxins in UK wheat, barley and oat production (C04022 & C04033) and Development of a Code of Practice for fusarium and ochratoxin A reduction in cereals (C03049)

These projects aimed to investigate the effects of agronomic factors on the concentration of fusarium mycotoxins in UK barley, oats and wheat. Mycotoxins are toxic substances produced by some fungi, and can be hazardous to human and animal health, even at low concentrations.

Samples of barley, oats and wheat were collected and analysed for ten trichothecenes (types of mycotoxin) including, deoxynivalenol (DON) and zearalenone, each year. The mycotoxin content was modelled against the agronomic practices applied to each field to identify the impact of each agronomic factor, such as grain variety and fungicide application.

Overall, results showed that the incidence of most fusarium mycotoxins (including DON and zearalenone) were below the legislative limits for UK wheat, barley and oats. However, high levels of T-2 toxin (T2), HT-2 toxin (HT2) were detected in UK oat samples and modelling against agronomic factors identified a significant interaction between year and region.

Other findings based on agronomic practices highlighted the importance of timely harvest and the advantages of using an ear spray to control ear blight. Further contributing factors and the full results of the project are detailed more fully in the final report.

The project also anticipated the introduction

of legislative limits for fusarium toxins by the European Commission and results from the completed project were used to develop the UK Code of Good Agricultural Practice to reduce fusarium mycotoxins in cereals, which was issued by the Food Standards Agency and can be downloaded via the web link at: [food.gov.uk/foodindustry/farmingfood/fusariumadvice](http://food.gov.uk/foodindustry/farmingfood/fusariumadvice)

#### Further Information

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Programme T01 - Risk assessment

## Influence of cooking and processing of brassica vegetables on release of beneficial and harmful metabolites of glucosinolates in the digestive tract (T01027) and Glucosinolate stability in culinary processing and storage (T01028)

Consumption of brassica vegetables (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts) is reported to be associated with a reduced incidence of cancer. This effect is thought to be mediated by glucosinolates. These are broken down by myrosinase, a heat labile enzyme found in intact cells from brassica vegetables and/or by myrosinase-like activity found in certain human intestinal flora. Myrosinase is released from brassica vegetables when the cells are broken up mechanically, for example by chewing or chopping.

Glucosinolate metabolites include isothiocyanates, which are associated with a chemoprotective role, and other metabolites including minor components that have been shown to be toxic in animal studies. However, there are few data on the *in vivo* fate of ingested cruciferous vegetables in humans.

These two overlapping projects set out to:

- investigate the effects of storage, preparation and cooking on concentrations of glucosinolates and their breakdown products (T01028)
- generate better data on glucosinolate absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion and investigate the effect of cooking methods and meal matrix on glucosinolate breakdown and uptake (T01027)
- compare analytical results for glucosinolate levels in identical samples from the two projects, which used different methods of analysis.

Both projects involved the development of new methodology. T01028 established analytical methods using LC-MS/MS to quantify dietary glucosinolates,

isothiocyanates and related amine derivatives. T01027 involved the *de novo* synthesis of a range of stable isotope-labelled glucosinolates and their breakdown products. These were then used to identify potential urinary markers of glucosinolate metabolism. The synthesis of stable-isotope labelled glucosinolates and metabolites represents an important achievement as it provides the know-how for preparing standards that can be used in subsequent work on glucosinolates.

The two projects provide extensive data on glucosinolate levels in brassica vegetables and how these are affected by different methods of cooking, storage and processing. Results from both projects suggest that the best way to maximise levels of glucosinolates and isothiocyanates in the diet is to avoid boiling and opt for light cooking of brassica vegetables. Data from the human study highlighted the large intra-individual variation in the extent to which glucosinolates are broken down and taken up from the gut.

#### Further Information

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Programme C01 - Chemical contaminants from food production - Research

## Levels of arsenic in rice – literature Review

Arsenic is readily assimilated by rice more than other grain crops. Several agricultural and mining processes, as well as the use of contaminated groundwaters, have resulted in elevated levels of arsenic in some rice producing regions. The rationale for this study was to scope the risk posed by arsenic in rice for the UK population. The study was based on a literature review, compilation of unpublished University of Aberdeen results and use of rice import data and rice consumption/expenditure data.

The study reports that rice is a major source of inorganic arsenic in the UK diet. The total and inorganic arsenic content of rice was found to vary between regions of origin. The report also highlighted that there was limited information regarding how cooking rice affects arsenic content.

Rice purchase data indicates that the 'average' adult population is not at risk from arsenic consumption from rice. However some groups of people who consume more rice than the UK average might be at risk and their rice consumption, rice variety/country of origin preferences and cooking methodologies may have an impact. The Agency is considering the recommendations from this work to determine if any future studies are required.

#### Further Information

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The FSA recently published the results of research it commissioned into the possible effects of artificial food colours on children's behaviour. See below for a summary. See *FSA News 70*, page 1, for the latest news

Programme T07 – Food Intolerance

## Chronic and acute effects of artificial colourings and preservatives on children's behaviour (T07040)

There has been a longstanding suggestion that some artificial food colourings and preservatives (AFCPs) may affect children's behaviour, particularly in relation to Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). This project built on a previous study conducted on the Isle of Wight that was commissioned by the Government, to examine the effects of AFCPs on the behaviour of a cohort of three-year old children.

The new study recruited over 130 children in each of two age groups (3-year-olds and 8- to 9-year-olds) from schools, nurseries and pre-schools in the Southampton area. From the families who initially volunteered to take part in the study, children were recruited to represent the full range of behaviours from normal through to high level hyperactivity. Two AFCP mixtures were used. Mix A was identical to that used in the previous study (i.e. a mix of the colours sunset yellow, tartrazine, carmoisine and ponceau 4R, plus sodium benzoate). A second mixture that is more typical of the AFCPs currently found in children's foods (mix B) was also developed. Mix B contained sodium benzoate plus the colours quinoline yellow, sunset yellow, carmoisine, and allura red in amounts that could reasonably have been consumed by young children in the UK from a range of foods. The levels of colours in mix B were calculated using information on the average amounts of foods permitted to contain these colours, that were consumed by children in these age groups and the maximum level of colour permitted in such foods, and thus represented an estimation of what an average child could consume.

The challenge took place over a six-week period and the children received a drink consisting of mixed natural fruit juices every day of the study. In some weeks this drink also contained either mix A or mix B. The active and placebo drinks were provided as daily doses presented in identical, sealed bottles and with the same appearance. Neither of the challenge drinks was designed to equate to any drinks that might be commercially available, but they were used as means of administering the total daily dose of additives.

During the challenge periods, in weeks 2, 4, and 6, each child received either mix A, mix B or the control drinks each day for one week, with a washout period in weeks 1, 3 and 5 when children were given the control drink. All children consumed all three drinks over the duration of the study with the order of the drinks that a child received assigned at random. Throughout the study, other sources

of these AFCPs were removed from the children's diet and the parents were asked to keep a diary to record any accidental consumption of these AFCPs during the course of the study.

Assessment of behaviour was carried out in the children's pre-school or school and included a daily observation by a trained research assistant using standard validated methods. A computer-based measure of attention was also used to assess the older group. In addition, ratings of the children's behaviour were made by parents and by teachers throughout the six-week study period. The parents and all members of the study team apart from the study administrator did not know which drink the child was receiving at any particular time.

Several factors that may moderate any responses to AFCPs were investigated. Firstly, the effect of the children's pre-trial level of hyperactive behaviour was investigated by stratifying the group on the basis of initial hyperactivity behaviour scores (measured at the start of the study). The inclusion of the older children also allowed any age-specific effects of AFCPs to be explored. Furthermore, cheek cells provided by the children were genotyped in order to determine whether variations in the form of genes implicated in ADHD influenced any effects of AFCPs.

The results showed that in the sample of 3-year-old children Mix A showed a significant adverse effect on the average level of hyperactivity within this group, compared with the placebo, but Mix B did not. For the 8-year-old children, Mix B but not Mix A showed a significant adverse effect on the average level of hyperactivity, compared with the placebo.

There were marked individual differences between children in their response to the artificial food colour and preservative mixtures, with some responding substantially and others not at all. The researchers reported that one factor influencing this variable response to additives could be the child's genetic make-up.

The results of this study were presented to the Agency's independent advisory committee, the Committee on Toxicity, for their consideration. A statement of their views has been published on the COT website. The final report of this study is also available on the Agency website.

### Further Information

The latest news on additives is at: [food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk)  
More on the research is at:

[food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/foodcomponentsresearch/allergyresearch/t07programme/t07projectlist/t07040](http://food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/foodcomponentsresearch/allergyresearch/t07programme/t07projectlist/t07040)

The COT statement is at:

[food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/colpreschil.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/colpreschil.pdf)

The Southampton University website is at: [www.soton.ac.uk/](http://www.soton.ac.uk/)

The EFSA website is at: [www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa\\_locale-1178620753812\\_home.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_home.htm)

## Food Standards Agency funded research published in peer reviewed journals

### C01 and C02- Chemical Contaminants from Food Production

Dowding, A., Foxall, C., Fernandes, A., Lake, I., Lovett, A., White, S., Rose, M. (2006). The effects of river flooding on the congener patterns of dioxins in soil, herbage and cows' milk from flood-prone farms. *Organohalogen Compounds* 68: 440-3

D'Silva, K., Fernandes, A., White, S., Rose, M., Mortimer, D.N., Gem, M. (2006). Brominated organic micro-pollutants in the United Kingdom diet – results of the 2003 total diet study. *Organohalogen Compounds* 68: 770-3

Mortimer, D.N., Clarke, D.B., Gem, M., Rose, M. (2006). Perfluorinated compounds in the UK 2004 total diet. *Organohalogen Compounds* 68: 371-4

Mortimer, D.N., Gem, M., Rose, M., Fernandes, A., White, S., Knowles, T.G. (2006). Dioxins and PCBs in farmed and wild fish: How important is the difference? *Organohalogen Compounds* 68: 616-9

### C03- Mycotoxins and Process Contaminants

Muttucumaru, 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): 8951-5

### T01 Risk Assessment

Rungapamestry, V., Duncan, A.J., Fuller, Z., Ratcliffe, B. (2007). Effect of meal composition and cooking duration on the fate of sulforaphane following consumption of broccoli by healthy human subjects. *Br J Nutr* 97(4):644-52.

This supplement was published by the FSA in September 2007. For more about *FSA News*, contact the editor at: [frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk) To subscribe, contact Celia Dunphy, tel: 020 7276 8829, email: [celia.dunphy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:celia.dunphy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk) For more on the Agency go to: [food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk) or: [eatwell.gov.uk](http://eatwell.gov.uk) To contact the Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit, tel: 020 7276 8762; or email the unit at: [MB-RCU@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:MB-RCU@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

# Five stars for Marie Curie Hospice

Marie Curie Cancer Care Hospice kitchen in Belfast is one of only 5% of food businesses in the Belfast City Council area to have been awarded a prestigious five star status, as part of the Scores on the Doors scheme for food safety standards.

Scores on the Doors is a pilot scheme facilitated by Belfast City Council and supported by the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland to show how well food businesses meet current food laws. Under the scheme, cafes, restaurants, pubs, shops and any business selling food are given a star rating to show how well they comply with food safety standards. Five stars represent an excellent standard of food hygiene.

FSA Northern Ireland Head of General Food Hygiene and Incidents Trevor Williamson said: 'We congratulate all the catering staff at Marie Curie Hospice who have clearly worked hard to achieve this excellent rating. Members of the public can look out for star

ratings displayed in premises in Belfast and Banbridge or go to: [www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk](http://www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk)

'One of the Agency's priorities is to encourage high standards of hygiene by food businesses. We are delighted to support Scores on the Doors, which will be evaluated along with other similar initiatives with a view to eventually recommending a UK wide scheme'

Janice Bell, Non-Clinical Services Manager at Marie Curie Cancer Care, said: 'The Scores on the Doors five star rating is a wonderful testament to the relentless hard work and dedication of the kitchen staff at the hospice in East Belfast.

Head Chef Tina and her team provide a wonderful service to patients, often catering to specific dietary requirements, while sustaining the ultimate standard in food safety.'

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more on the Scores on the Doors pilot scheme go to: [food.gov.uk/scores](http://food.gov.uk/scores)



Annie Chambers of the General Food Hygiene and Incidents Branch at FSA Northern Ireland (right) is pictured with Marie Curie Head Chef, Tina Hill and her team, Vicky Tudball, Marty McCauley, Alan Paine and Bryan Hill

## Cookstown eats healthy to stay healthy

Cookstown District Council in Northern Ireland has been awarded a grant of £10,000 by the Food Standards Agency for its 'Eat Healthy, Stay Healthy Roadshow' initiative, which was launched in August by FSA Northern Ireland's Trevor Williamson and Cookstown Council Chair Ian McCrea.

Trevor Williamson, Head of Food Hygiene at FSA Northern Ireland, said: 'Cookstown Council really impressed us in designing a series of fun community events that get across key "staying healthy" messages to people of all ages. The events are all designed with food safety and five-a-day messages in mind.

'This was the first year that we have run this grants scheme in Northern Ireland and Cookstown and Belfast Councils – the other Northern Ireland winners – were among only 123 councils selected for grants across the whole of UK.'

Marissa McCormick, District Environmental Health Officer



Healthy Living in Cookstown: Cookstown Council's Marissa McCormick and the FSA's Trevor Williamson with children from Cookstown at the launch of the Eat Healthy, Stay Healthy Roadshow

with Cookstown Council, said: 'The key for us was designing an event that focused on families and fun.

'We couldn't have put this scheme in place without the

support of the FSA and we like to think that the roadshow will continue to be a success. We have information on everything from cooking demonstrations to free health checks.'



Sophie Webb, above, was one of a number of children aged 14 and under who won family passes to W5, Belfast's science museum last month, in an FSA food-safety competition held at the Balmoral Agricultural Show in Northern Ireland. She and other competition winners had their photos featured in some of Northern Ireland's daily press. Visitors to the Balmoral Show, Northern Ireland's largest agricultural show, were able to learn about food safety and hygiene from a Strictly Yum Dancing stand and a 'grill the audience' interactive quiz, jointly organised by FSA Northern Ireland and Saferood, the all Ireland food-safety body

# Agency tenders its marketing and advertising contracts

The Food Standards Agency is tendering for marketing services and has begun the process of accepting pitches for its advertising account.

## Marketing services

Contractors are being sought to provide marketing services in support of its Nutrition and Food Hygiene/Safety campaigns. The Agency intends to compile a roster of about three agencies.

- Contractors must be able to take marketing brief, create a strategy and carry out all aspects of a campaign that could include:
- promotional marketing
  - direct marketing
  - outdoor/experiential marketing
  - project management (provision of timelines and budgets)
  - creative development and implementation
  - manage joint promotional campaigns with third party (retail partner)
  - advertising material (point of sale, posters)
  - events (for example, creative support for campaign launches)
  - evaluation
  - demonstrate their organisation is commercially sound
  - demonstrate relevant proven experience and adequate resources

It is expected that a contract or contracts would commence from January 2008 for four years.

Applicants must complete and

return a questionnaire by midday on Wednesday 26 September 2007.

## Advertising brief

The advertising brief focuses upon the Food Hygiene campaign – primarily the creation of an overarching brand that can be used in future consumer food hygiene campaigns (including below-the-line activity, literature, website, PR etc).

However, the Agency may require advertising support across other areas of future activity, so it is possible that the winning agency will be appointed to manage this additional work.

Alternatively, and depending on the quality of proposals, the Agency might appoint more than one agency.

## Several phases

Since 2000, the Agency has run several phases the Food Hygiene campaign.

In 2002 and 2004 the Food Hygiene campaign primarily targeted those working in catering settings. In 2004 and 2005 it focused on consumers and the importance of avoiding cross-contamination.

In April 2006, the Agency published the 4Cs strategy that focused primarily on promoting good hygiene in the home and in the local community. Its target audience includes those in

might be strengthened.

It is expected that the Chair and committee members will come from a variety of backgrounds – such as business, media, academia or the voluntary sector – providing them with experience of best practice in consumer engagement.

Applicants for the post of ACCE Chair will be senior figures in their current field, with extensive experience of chairing multidisciplinary committees.

Members of the ACCE are expected to bring with them specialised knowledge of one or



Contractors must have imagination and flair

education, parents, vulnerable groups and carers.

## Food hygiene key messages

All the communications activity around the Agency's food hygiene work is founded on the '4Cs' key messages:

- wash your hands, work surfaces and utensils properly and keep them Clean
- Cook food properly
- Chill food properly
- avoid Cross-contamination

Research suggests that cross-contamination is the message that is least well understood by

the public. And prevention of cross-contamination is a key measure for control of campylobacter infection.

## Adding weight to campaigns

The Food Standards Agency's campaign work has placed a strong emphasis on TV and press advertising. Now the Agency aims to introduce more marketing activity to add weight to these campaigns.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the marketing tender is at: [food.gov.uk/procurement](http://food.gov.uk/procurement)

# 'Ace' committee members sought for ACCE committee

The Food Standards Agency is seeking a Chair and members to form a new Advisory Committee on Consumer Engagement (ACCE).

Putting the consumer first is one of the Agency's core values, and the new committee will provide the FSA's Board with quality assurance of consumer engagement.

The ACCE will meet twice a year and report annually to the FSA Board. In addition to reporting on the effectiveness of the Agency's consumer engagement, it will make recommendations on how the engagement process

more of the following:

- consumer perspectives
- analysis of consumer data
- performance measurement or improvement
- marketing innovation

At least two of the members will be expected to have practical experience of engagement with disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers.

Food Standards Agency Chief Executive John Harwood said: 'By acting as an external challenge to me and my colleagues, the new committee will help the FSA strengthen even further its engagement with individual consumers. We look

forward to receiving applications from a range of disciplines and sectors and to putting the resulting shared expertise into practice.'

Appointments will be on a two-year term. Anyone interested in applying should go to the link below for more details and an application form. Completed applications must reach the Agency by 24 September 2007.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Application details are available on the Agency's website at: [food.gov.uk/aboutus/jobs/acce](http://food.gov.uk/aboutus/jobs/acce)

# Cooking Bus drives forward healthy eating work in South West

The Food Standards Agency's Cooking Bus was parked-up in Tiverton in South West England recently to drive forward the gains of FSA funded cooking skills courses carried out in the area.

Wilcombe Primary School in Tiverton, where the mobile kitchen was set up, had earlier benefited from courses co-ordinated by Mid Devon District Council to promote hygienic and healthy cooking skills with schoolchildren – and their parents. Five other projects and community groups also took part in the cooking skills courses.

Joining the Wilcombe Primary children on the bus for the first morning were Tina Henry, Health Services Manager from the District Council, and Lorna Thompson from the FSA Regional Presence Unit.

Pupils from years 1 and 2 had fun preparing a number of tasty

dishes including bruschetta, cheesy tuna jacket potatoes and 'berried treasure'. The sessions were rounded off with children tasting a fruit smoothie before heading back to their classrooms with the food they had made.

The school was pleased that the sessions contributed to its 'whole school' approach to healthy eating and would support the work being carried out on building its Healthy Schools Status.

The school also received an FSA 'Cookit', which includes all the utensils needed to run practical cookery sessions with groups of pupils.

Lorna Thompson, FSA Deputy Regional Coordinator in the South West, said: 'It is so good to see the work started through the FSA funded cooking skills course being widened to more pupils through the Cooking Bus visit.

'I hope that, through the



Tina Henry gives out certificates at the award ceremony at the end of one of the Tiverton cooking courses for young mums

training the teachers received on the bus, and the Cookit the school received, pupils from Wilcombe Primary will be able to practice and develop these skills for a long time to come.'

Two cooking skills courses had previously been delivered at the school, each running for ten weeks, and with about 13 children aged 6-10 taking part.

The sessions were scheduled for the end of the school day to encourage parents being to join in. Feedback from the courses has been extremely positive, with children and their parents learning about cooking, weighing, understanding what food is made of, and having fun while cooking!

Food prepared during the sessions was taken home by each family, and participants received a pack containing recipes, a

fridge thermometer, food hygiene and healthy eating information, including information on packed lunches.

In addition to the sessions delivered to pupils at Wilcombe Primary School, tutors ran courses involving vulnerable young adults living independently in the community, including young teenage mothers, some of whom also received a recognised food hygiene qualification.

Tina Henry, who led on the project said: 'Altogether, there were 70 attendees on the courses we arranged, including 38 teenagers and children.

'The inclusion of hard-to-reach groups was one of the big successes of this project. We have had several requests from the communities involved for additional courses.'



Pupils from Wilcombe Primary School making 'berried treasure'

## South East projects draw lucky lottery number

Thirty two food-hygiene and healthy-eating projects in the South East of England are to be among the beneficiaries of a Big Lottery Fund grant aimed at addressing hidden health inequalities in the region.

They will receive financial support as part of the Big Lottery Fund's Chances 4 Change lottery boost, which is providing £5.6 million to support the work of more than 60 health-related projects.

The successful bid for the

food-hygiene and healthy-eating projects was developed with the involvement of the FSA Regional Presence Unit, working in the South East.

The projects include:

- a programme of cookery, nutrition and food hygiene skills in deprived wards throughout Buckinghamshire
- workshops and accredited training sessions in Brighton and Hastings to promote healthy eating amongst the unemployed, those of low

income, the socially disadvantaged and the geographically isolated

- provision of family-based healthy eating workshops for ethnic minorities and the disadvantaged in the heart of Portsmouth

- enabling Age Concern in the South East to pilot projects in Brighton, Hastings and the Isle of Wight to support older people eating more healthily.

Pam Naylor, Policy Lead for Food in the South East Region's

Public Health Group, said: 'This all goes to show what can be done through active partnership working to help secure deliverable health benefits.

'The South East Regional Public Health Group worked closely with a number of key players including Sport England, the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority, and the Food Standards Agency to develop a broad ranging high quality bid.

## Advice about 1% fat milk

The Agency has issued advice for food manufacturers and retailers about the use of 1% fat milk as an ingredient in food.

Many manufacturers are not aware that they can legally use 1% fat milk in their products. It has a slightly higher fat content than skimmed milk (max 0.5%) but lower than semi-skimmed (1.5–1.8%). Using it in place of higher fat milk could enable some manufacturers to reduce saturated fat and calories in their products.

Rosemary Hignett, Head of Nutrition at the Agency, said: 'During our discussions with industry about saturated fat levels, it emerged that there was some confusion about using 1% fat milk as a food ingredient.'

'We hope that this advice will clarify the situation for manufacturers and retailers and, where appropriate, result in 1% fat milk being used in place of other higher fat milk ingredients. It could potentially be used in a wide range of products such as sauces and dairy desserts.'

'Using 1% milk could help to reduce saturated fat levels in some foods and would be a positive move for the consumer.'

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the status of 1% fat milk can be found at: [food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/foodguid/onepercent](http://food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/foodguid/onepercent)

# Update on advertising whole milk to children

The Food Standards Agency has confirmed that its nutrient profiling model does not classify whole milk as a high fat, salt, sugar food and is therefore allowed to be advertised during children's television programmes.

When the Agency developed the nutrient profiling model, the official UK figures for the composition of whole milk (McCance and Widdowson's The Composition of Foods, sixth summary edition (2002)) were used and whole milk could be advertised.

## Concerns were raised in June that some samples of whole milk were classified as a high fat, salt, sugar food

However, concerns were raised in June that some samples of whole milk were classified as a high fat, salt, sugar food.

As the composition of whole milk can change very slightly due to factors such as cattle

feeding patterns, the Agency asked Dairy UK and the Dairy Council to provide figures on the composition of whole milk. The average values from this data fell within the official figures in the UK food tables, confirming that whole milk can continue to be advertised to children.

The Agency has advised Ofcom, the broadcast regulator, and the Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre that the official

UK reference figures should be used when submitting requests to advertise whole milk to children.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More about the nutrient profiling model and its development is at: [food.gov.uk/healthiercreating/advertisingtochildren/nutlab/nutprofmoddevelopment](http://food.gov.uk/healthiercreating/advertisingtochildren/nutlab/nutprofmoddevelopment)



# International meeting on milk products

The 8th session of the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products – an international meeting that establishes standards – will be taking place in New Zealand from 4–8 February 2008.

The meeting will discuss standards relating to products

such as processed cheese, creams and yoghurt.

The Agency has sent out letters to stakeholders, which include requests for comments on the proposed standard for processed cheese, the proposed draft amendment for fermented milks

(yoghurt) and methods of analysis and sampling for milk and milk products.

These can be found at the link below.

The provisional agenda can be found on the CODEX website (see below also).

A newsletter has been sent to stakeholders.

Anyone wanting to make comments should have submitted them to Shifra Sheikh within the specified deadlines detailed in the letters (28 September for proposed standard for processed cheese and 21 September for draft amendment for fermented milks and methods of analysis).

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details on the meeting, contact Shifra Sheikh, email: [Shifra.Sheikh@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Shifra.Sheikh@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

For '8th session of the Codex Committee on Milk and Milk Products: Interested parties letters sent in June and August 2008' go to: [food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/codexmilkintpart08.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/codexmilkintpart08.pdf)

For more on the Codex Alimentarius go to: [food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/Codexbranch/](http://food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/Codexbranch/)



## Veterinary residues report published

The Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC) 2006 Annual Report on the surveillance of veterinary residues in food in the UK is now available online. The report details the checks that have been done for a range of residues of veterinary medicines in food for human consumption.

The Food Standards Agency acts as a watchdog to ensure that food safety is given high priority during the authorisation and monitoring for veterinary medicines. This ensures any residues in food are kept as low as practically possible and within safe limits.

The Agency contributes to the UK surveillance programme overseen by the VRC. Two key examples in the report highlight this contribution:

■ In 2005 concerns over the use of fumigants – used by honey producers to sterilise empty bee hives – came to the Agency's attention. The UK's surveillance programme then

took account of these. The surveillance results in the 2006 report highlighted a quality issue in New Zealand, over the use of a chemical called 1,4-dichlorobenzene. As a result of these findings, the New Zealand authorities promptly introduced measures to ensure honey exports to the European Union complied with UK quality requirements.

■ The use of crystal violet, a chemical dye used to illegally treat fish, was recommended for inclusion in the UK surveillance programme by the Agency, following findings from Germany. Survey findings are set out in the report. The Agency has cooperated with the VRC in considering other possible dyes that might be used illegally as veterinary medicines. This 'horizon scanning' helps develop future surveillance programmes.

The VRC is an independent advisory committee overseeing

UK surveillance of residues of veterinary medicines in home and imported foods. It advises the Chief Executives of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Food Standards Agency on programmes and the importance of its results. Agency staff attend VRC meetings as advisors and the Agency nominates a member of the committee.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

The VRC website is at: [www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk/Reports/annual.htm](http://www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk/Reports/annual.htm)



## VMD and VPC to hold combined open meeting

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) will hold their Open Meetings on 14 November 2007 at The Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London, EC2Y. The VMD open meeting will begin at 10:30am to be followed by the VPC open meeting at 1:30pm. Admission is free but will be by entry ticket only.

### Draft Agenda: Veterinary Medicines Directorate

The draft agenda will be circulated nearer the date of the meeting. The presentations will be followed by an open question and answer session.

A light lunch and refreshments will be provided.

### Draft Agenda: Veterinary Products Committee

Following an introduction by the Chair, David Skilton MRCVS, there will be presentations on:

- Anthelmintic Resistance
- Risk in Using Human Medicines Under the 'Cascade'
- Environmental Issues.

Followed by an open question and answer session.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Requests for tickets/suggestions for presentations should be made to: Clare Main, e-mail: [c.main@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:c.main@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk), tel: 01932 338491.

Include the names of all attendees. The closing date for ticket requests is Friday 26 October 2007. Tickets will be issued shortly afterwards.

## Veterinary Residues Committee open meeting

On Wednesday 31 October the Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC) will be holding an open meeting at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Belfast.

The VRC is an independent advisory committee that oversees the UK's surveillance of residues of veterinary medicines. It advises the chief executives of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and the Food Standards Agency, on the programmes and the significance of their results.

The FSA has a keen interest in this committee's work because of

the food safety implications that potentially arise from the presence of residues of certain veterinary medicines in both domestic and imported foods. FSA staff attend VRC meetings as advisors and the FSA nominates a member to the committee.

The FSA contributes to the UK programme of surveillance overseen by the VRC. The results of their surveillance are passed to us, and we assess any risks and liaise with local authorities to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

The committee is inviting stakeholders and interested parties to attend this meeting.

### How to attend

Registration will be at 10am. Admission is free, but attendees will need a ticket. Tickets can be applied for on the VRC website at: [www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk/News/news311007.htm](http://www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk/News/news311007.htm) The closing date for ticket applications is Friday 19 October. Alternatively tickets are available from: Isabel Sharma, tel: 01932 338330 or email: [i.sharma@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:i.sharma@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## New website for animal feed committee launched

The Advisory Committee of Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF) now has its own dedicated website, reflecting the independent status of the committee.

The site contains links to news, and information on committee meetings agendas and papers.

It can be accessed at the link below.

Food Standards Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton has announced, on behalf of the Agency, the

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the three devolved administrations, the re-appointments of Dr Dozie Azubike, Prof. Nigel Halford, Mr Richard Scales and Dr Nigel Shepperson as members of ACAF.

Dr Azubike, Prof. Halford and Mr Scales have had their terms extended until 30 June 2010 and Dr Shepperson's term is extended until 30 June 2008.

Deirdre Hutton said: 'ACAF is one of the independent

committees that plays a very important role in providing the Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and devolved administrations with expert advice.

The committee is extremely fortunate to have members with the enthusiasm and experience of Dr Azubike, Prof. Halford, Mr Scales and Dr Shepperson, I wish them well in their work.'

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on ACAF is at: [www.acaf.food.gov.uk](http://www.acaf.food.gov.uk)



# Consultation on meat labelling

The Food Standards Agency has launched a consultation on amendments to the current rules on the labelling of certain meat products.

England's Meat Products Regulations are being amended after the European Commission (EC) revoked a requirement for food producers to declare whether protein or starch have been added to certain meat products.

The proposals published today aim to bring national regulations in line with EC changes. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are expected to consult on similar, parallel legislation.

The proposals would not leave UK consumers unaware of the presence of added starch and protein in meat products. The labelling of added starch and protein will still fall to general labelling legislation, which says that these ingredients must be

labelled in the name of the food – not doing so would mislead the consumer.

The labelling requirements to name any added ingredients of a different animal species to the rest of the meat will remain unchanged. This is an important consumer information measure, particularly for those consumers who may wish to avoid such ingredients for religious, ethical or other reasons.

The Agency is committed to ensuring consumers are given clear and informative labelling to help them make informed choices about the food they buy. The Agency is therefore also consulting on draft guidance for businesses and enforcement officers. It covers legal requirements and best practice advice for labelling of all added ingredients in the relevant meat products. It also aims to ensure clear information for consumers by encouraging adoption of

consistent and transparent labelling practices.

The consultation will run until 30 November 2007.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The Meat Products (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and Guidance is at:

[food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mpreng08.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mpreng08.pdf)

The Meat Products (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 are at: [food.gov.uk/consultations/consultscot/2007/meatscotland](http://food.gov.uk/consultations/consultscot/2007/meatscotland)

Meat Products (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 documents are at: [food.gov.uk/consultations/consultwales/2007/mprwales2007](http://food.gov.uk/consultations/consultwales/2007/mprwales2007)

The Meat Products (Northern Ireland) 2008 and associated guidance is at: [food.gov.uk/consultations/consultni/2007/mprni08](http://food.gov.uk/consultations/consultni/2007/mprni08)

# Shellfish information published

The Food Standards Agency has now agreed the classification of live bivalve mollusc production areas in England and Wales for the period 1 September 2007 – 31 August 2008.

The classification, effective from 1 September 2007, includes those areas in the Long Term Classification (LTC) system. All Class B production areas not included in the LTC system have been classified on an annual basis.

The Agency makes use of the expertise of the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) in Weymouth when determining the classification of shellfish production areas. Classification is undertaken in accordance with the standards set out in European Commission regulations.

The production areas are classified according to the results of the FSA-funded monthly microbiological sampling and testing programme, based on counts of *E. coli* bacteria per 100g of shellfish flesh.

Production areas are placed in one of three categories; class A, B or C. Areas with levels of *E. coli* higher than class C



areas are prohibited.

'Designated Prohibited' areas are those considered unsuitable for public health reasons and from where molluscs must not be subject to production or collection.

- Class A is awarded to an area in which there is less than 230 *E. coli* per 100g of flesh

- Class B is given to an area where levels greater than 230 and less than 4,600 *E. coli* per 100g of flesh, not exceeded in 90% of samples, have been found

- Class C is given to an area where levels greater than 4,600 and less than 46,000 *E. coli* per

100g of flesh have been found

While the classification of a production area determines the treatment required before the molluscs may be marketed, all shellfish must meet the same standard (below 230 *E. coli* per 100g of flesh) before going on sale. It is the harvester's responsibility to carry out appropriate testing.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

More details are available from Michael Talbot, tel: 0207 276 8991; email: [michael.talbot@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:michael.talbot@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

# Appointment to microbiological committee

The Agency has announced a new committee member for the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF).

Dr John Coia, Consultant Clinical Microbiologist with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and Director of the Scottish Salmonella Reference Laboratory, will serve on the committee for three years.

The ACMSF provides the Agency with independent expert scientific advice on the microbiological safety of food. Appointments to the Committee are made strictly on merit following public advertisement.

Dr Judith Hilton, Head of Microbiological Safety Division at the FSA, said: 'We're delighted that Dr Coia will be bringing his experience and expertise to the table at ACMSF. The committee provides an invaluable source of independent evidence-based microbiological advice to the FSA and we look forward to working together to help safeguard consumer health.'

The ACMSF, in line with the Agency's commitment to greater openness, is keen to improve public access to its work. The Committee holds its quarterly meetings in public. Its agendas, minutes and papers (subject to certain exceptions on grounds of commercial or other sensitivity) are all publicly available and are posted on the Agency's website.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the ACMSF is at: [food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiopsafety/](http://food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiopsafety/)

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