



FOOD  
STANDARDS  
AGENCY

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Food Standards Agency  
**news**

## Inside

### News

FSA Board news *p2* Scottish school students have designs on Christmas *p3* FSA Board member nominated for national food campaigning award *p4* One in the eye for potato cheats *p4* Update on semicarbazide in glass jars *p4* FSA Wales says 'keep well this winter' *p5* News in brief *p5*

### Countdown to curry chef final



With only a few weeks to go before the national final, the UK's top curry chefs are getting ready to do battle for the title of CIEH-FSA Curry Chef of the Year 2003 *p3*

### Agency pilots HACCP tools

An innovative approach to improving food safety management, developed by the Agency working with the University of Salford, is being piloted among small catering businesses *p5*

### FSA Matters

Recent publications *p6* Guidance *p7* Consultations *p7* Reports *p7* Advisory committee news *p8* Regulations *p8* Appointments *p8*

### Next month

If there's a topic you would like to see covered in FSA News, email the Editor at: [frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## More partnership-working needed to disarm 'obesity timebomb'

Partnership-working across government and the co-operation of industry will be absolutely crucial if the UK is to disarm the 'obesity timebomb ticking away in today's classrooms', FSA Deputy Chair Julia Unwin told a national gathering of diet and nutrition experts on 30 October.

Addressing the Westminster Diet and Nutrition Forum's seminar on Nutrition and Education Policy, the Agency's Deputy Chair spelled out the scale of the problem faced in the UK.

Statistics issued in the past month suggest that nearly one in every ten six-year-olds and one in every seven 15-year-olds was clinically obese, she said.

Hardest hit are those worst-placed to react: children living in socially deprived circumstances. 'We are talking here about a disease of poverty,' she said.

Some of the more pessimistic social commentators have been warning of a 'lost generation', she added. This generation, they say, will be 'condemned to an unproductive life – suffering with type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis, heart disease and cancer – and to an early death. Projections even suggest we will see a time when children will die before their parents.'

But while the problems are all too clear, the solutions are going to be complex, she said. Work being done in schools is important, 'not least because, for a large number of children, their school dinner, however bad it is, will be the most nutritious meal they will eat all day'.

It is also essential to look more broadly at initiatives and activities that go beyond the school gates and illustrate the 'co-operation and joined-up, long-term planning that is going to be essential in breaking down the barriers to improving our children's health'.

### Lack of skills and motivation

The first barrier is that teenagers generally know what is meant by a healthy diet, but lack the cooking skills and motivation to follow one.

'Indestructible teenagers see healthy eating as something to worry about in later life. But we now know with some



Julia Unwin: *hardest hit are those worst-placed to react*

certainty that eating habits established in infancy can stick through adolescence and beyond,' Julia Unwin said. 'This means it is vital to change attitudes and establish good eating habits before bad ones become ingrained.'

Schools offer an opportunity to work on children's eating habits, once a day – if not two or three times a day – at least until children move up to secondary school, when they may be free to leave the premises at lunchtimes.

'But how do we actually persuade children that healthier food is just as appetising as junk food, that sensible eating isn't for saddos?'

The FSA is currently sponsoring research that will explore the links between factors such as peer pressure, self-image, and sensory preferences, she said. All of these 'come into play when even we as adults are standing in the dinner queue, faced with a choice between a plate of chips and a portion of new potatoes'.

The findings will feed into a raft of FSA projects already going on, inside and outside schools, that aim to steer children towards a healthier diet.

These projects include:

- *Dish it up!* – an interactive learning CD-ROM aimed at 11-12 year olds, which has been sent to every UK secondary school
- *Five-a-day the Bash Street Way* – interactive educational materials for primary school teachers on fruit and veg,

*Continued, p2*

## Agency Open Board meeting

The next Open Board meeting of the Food Standards Agency will be held on 13 November at the Holiday Inn, New Bridge Street, Newcastle.

The Agenda will include reports from Agency Chair Sir John Krebs and Agency Chief Executive Jon Bell.

Papers due for discussion will cover 'Animal Feed (including the ACAF report on on-farm mixing)'; a 'Review of the FSA's research portfolio and management systems'; and a 'Review of MHS target setting'. There will also be a public question and answer session.

### Further information

Contact PK Khaira, tel: 020 7276 8214; email: [pk.khaira@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:pk.khaira@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## FSA Board Member wanted

The FSA is seeking a new Board Member. Ideally, the successful candidate should be enthusiastic, have very good judgement and a high level of integrity and public responsibility, coupled with the mental resilience to participate in making difficult decisions. He or she should also be an open-minded strategic thinker and be able to express themselves clearly and succinctly.

To maintain a balance of skills and experience on the Board, on this occasion the FSA is seeking a member with a current or recent background in the catering industry, which could include catering education or institutional catering, as well as the restaurant industry or retail catering.

The closing date for applications is 14 November 2003.

### Further information

Details on how to apply can be obtained from the Agency's recruitment consultants for these appointments, KMC International at: [www.kmcinternational.com](http://www.kmcinternational.com) by email to [fsa@kmcinternational.com](mailto:fsa@kmcinternational.com) or tel: 020-7317 4600. In all cases, please quote reference 593/3.

## Board webcasts now permanent

All Agency Open Board meetings will be webcast live over the Internet from now on, following a successful pilot project.

The first webcast took place when the Board met in Brussels in November 2002. By the time the pilot ended in July 2003, when the Board met in London, the meeting was watched from 1400 computers, and more than 50 questions were emailed.

*Continued, from front page*

which are available on the FSA website.

The Agency is also sponsoring a Cooking Bus project, which will offer support to schools that might otherwise be hard-pressed to find time or resources. In addition to the interactive experience that the children get on board the bus, the Agency envisages that the project will train about 800 teachers every year.

'And it is that aspect that is crucial,' she said, 'that although the physical resource is only a temporary facility for the school, it should leave behind a legacy of enthusiastic and motivated teachers.'

## Barrier of availability

A second barrier is availability, and it had been said that in some schools it is easier to get a can of coke than a drink of water. A poll published in late October claims that seven out of ten parents favour a ban on fizzy-drink vending machines in schools. But 'that might not convince cash-strapped head teachers to rip out a potential money-spinner', she said.

A new piece of Agency research – currently undergoing final evaluation – may be 'more persuasive', Julia Unwin added. Early soundings from a number of pilot tests suggest that vending machines filled with milk, fruit juices and water can be run alongside, or instead of, fizzy-pop machines and could still make a healthy contribution to the school budget.

For some schoolchildren, however, choice is less of an option than 'just eating something – whatever happens to be affordable or available'.

## Poverty of choice

The third barrier – one outside school – is 'poverty of choice', she said. 'When some parents are dealing with problems such as paying the gas bill, paying the rent, 'or sharing a damp bedsit with a brood of hyperactive kids, it's hardly surprising if "grab something" – usually something quick, cheap, and filling – is a louder message than "grab five".'

The London Borough of Newham – a borough that has some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country – has shown that schools can play a part in addressing a wider community problem, she said.

New Deal for Communities money is being used there to help fund breakfast and after-school clubs. And schools are

being used as bases for food co-ops, where parents and local residents can come to buy good-quality fruit and vegetables cheaply at the end of the school day.

## Promotion of foods to children

And there was a fourth barrier, the Agency's Deputy Chair said. 'Having stocked up on fresh fruit at home time, what do kids do then? Sit down, turn on the television, and get bombarded by ads for pop, crisps, sweets and sugary cereals.'

It is difficult to 'divorce the messages schools should be giving children about healthy eating from the deluge of advertising kids are subjected to at home. Or even from the potentially conflicting messages that seep into schools from food promotions – such as those for collecting crisps packets to exchange for text books.'

A systematic research review undertaken for the Agency by Professor Gerard Hastings has concluded that food promotion does have an effect, she said.

The research found that 'it influences what children like, what they eat, and what they buy with their own money – not just whether they buy a Mars or a Snickers, but whether they buy a Mars bar or a banana'.

The Agency Board will be discussing policy options early next year. A series of academic and public events is also planned



*Ensuring schoolchildren receive adequate nutrition is not always as simple as ABC*

to assess public opinion and inform the debate. 'Most importantly we need to get options for action openly discussed,' she said.

Reducing salt in children's diets is one area where the impact on changing behaviour is rather more clear-cut, she said. 'By one estimate, we could prevent some 35,000 premature deaths from stroke every year by cutting salt intake by a third.'

Partnerships are going to be 'the key to how we tackle the whole issue of childhood nutrition and the obesity timebomb,' she said in conclusion, 'because it is a problem with so many factors that extend far beyond the remit and resources of any one organisation.'

### Further information

The speech, including details of FSA initiatives, can be read in full on the Agency's website at: [www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/unwinspeech](http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/unwinspeech)

## Countdown is on to curry chef final

With only weeks to go before the national final, top curry chefs are getting ready to do battle for the title of CIEH-FSA Curry Chef of the Year 2003.

The final, which is sponsored by the Food Standards Agency and organised by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, will be held at the FSA's stand at the BBC's Good Food Show.

Eight top chefs, seven winners from regional finals and Chad Rahman, the 2002 defending champion, will have just one hour to cook their dishes to impress the judges.

The final will be on 26 November when chefs will be paired up for four cook-offs that require them to prepare a curry dish, a side dish, and rice or bread.

Marks will be awarded for taste, texture, aroma and appearance, with bonus points for culinary skills, originality and presentation.

Equally important will be marks for food hygiene and safety awareness in the kitchen. Each chef had to pass an inspection of their restaurant's premises before being allowed to take part.

FSA Board member and competition judge Chrissie Dunn, said: 'This is an ideal opportunity for chefs to display not only their culinary skills, but also a high level of food hygiene awareness. The quality and taste of the food is crucial but what really makes an excellent chef is someone who cooks high-quality, tasty dishes while always following good food hygiene practice.'

'The winning chef is someone who best takes both of these important factors into account when cooking.'

The winner of the National Final will pick up £3,000 in prize money, a certificate and the National Curry Chef trophy. They will also return to the 2004 National Final to defend their title. Prizes for second and third place are £1,000 and £500 respectively.

The Agency's sponsorship of this year's competition links to its five-year Food Hygiene Campaign. This was launched in 2002 to raise awareness of the need for high standards of food knowledge and practice by managers and staff across all catering businesses.



*A mouth-watering prospect: Stephen Airey, from the FSA's Food Chain Strategy Division, had the happy task of being a judge at one of the regional finals*

## Scottish youngsters aim for Christmas number one



*Post it? Just toast it! Kirstie, age 9, and Stuart, age 3, help FSA Scotland Director George Paterson post a toast-shaped response form into FSA Scotland's 'feedback toaster' at the Ideal Home Show in Glasgow*

With less than two months to go until Christmas, Food Standards Agency Scotland has been enlisting the help of thousands of youngsters across the country to help wrap up food bugs during the festive season.

As part of the Agency's Food Hygiene Campaign, all Scottish primary schools have been invited to take part in a competition to design the Food Standards Agency Scotland Christmas card, which

will be distributed to hundreds of organisations and individuals throughout the country in December.

The competition, to design a card based on a food safety theme, is open to all primary school pupils, and one winner and 11 runners-up will be chosen. These 12 designs will then be used to create FSA Scotland's 2004 calendar.

The winning school will get the chance to take part in a cookery demonstration with a well-known chef, as well as winning £1,000 to be spent on an FSA-approved project. Each runner-up school will receive £250 to be spent on fitness or health equipment. In addition, all 12 schools will receive the 2004 calendar.

Marie Kelly, Head of FSA Scotland's General Food Hygiene Branch, said: 'The earlier we can educate people to think about important food safety and hygiene messages the better – a few simple steps, such as washing your hands thoroughly and making sure food is properly cooked or stored in the fridge can help stop foodborne illnesses.'

'Not only does this competition allow children the chance to be creative while learning about essential food hygiene principles, it also offers great prizes

and opportunities for the winners and their schools.'

Earlier, during 10-19 October, FSA Scotland's 'interactive cartoon kitchen' proved popular at the Ideal Home Show in Glasgow's Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre.

The stand includes a handwashing unit for visitors to check how well they wash their hands, and interactive exhibits such as a custom-built oven and fridge that indicate how food ought to be stored and cooked.

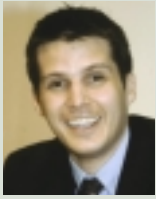
Microscopes were also available on the stand so people could get close-up images of the kind of foodborne bugs proper food hygiene will wipe out.

FSA Scotland Director George Paterson said: 'The stand was inundated with members of the public who weren't just interested in the numerous leaflets we had on show, but who wanted to get involved with the exhibits and test their own knowledge of food safety issues.'

### Further information

For more details of the Christmas card competition contact David Roy, tel: 01224 285100; email: [david.roy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:david.roy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## FSA Board Member nominated for campaign award



FSA Board Member Robert Rees, left, has been shortlisted for the BBC Radio 4 *Food Programme* Best Food Educator/Campaigner Award. Rees, a chef and

food campaigner known, nationally and internationally, for promoting healthy eating and food-hygiene, has been working with school caterers to develop a 'whole-school approach' to food.

Nationally, he has made an impact as a Board Member of the Food Standards Agency, member of the Agency's Meat Hygiene Advisory Committee, General Governor of the British Nutrition Foundation and through his involvement with the Aspirant Sector Skills Council for Hospitality.

The winner of the award will be announced in late November at the BBC Good Food Show, at the NEC in Birmingham.

## Positive comments from FSA News reader survey

Readers from all parts of the country responded to the September *FSA News* Reader Reply Survey with positive comments and valuable suggestions for future themed supplements.

The winner of two Eurostar tickets to Paris in the Readers' competition was Dr Georgia Whyte from London.

The four runners up, who won £25 gift tokens were: Fiona Lee from Coventry, Elizabeth Condick from Sheffield, Mr R Haddock from Dartmouth, and Mr A Dalgleish from Staffordshire.

One valuable fact that came out of the survey was that, after reading *FSA News*, the vast majority of subscribers pass their copy on to colleagues. If this is the case with you, why not suggest to your colleagues that they can get a free copy of their own (details below).

### Further information

Anyone interested in subscribing to *FSA News* should contact Steve Cunio, tel: 020 7276 8829; email: [steve.cunio@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:steve.cunio@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## One in the eye for potato cheats

An Agency survey of potatoes gathered from a range of shops and wholesale markets suggests that consumers do not always get the type or quality of potato they pay for.

More than a third of the potatoes, which had their genetic material compared with the DNA profiles of 98 different potato varieties held on a database, were found to have been wrongly labelled.

Many were not the variety claimed by the retailer or wholesaler. Difference in variety often comes with a difference in price – in some cases as much as 40%.

The potatoes most likely to be mislabelled were King Edwards. Of the 37 samples that were labelled as King Edwards, 16 (43%) were mostly of a little-known variety called Ambro.

Recent industry figures indicate that King Edwards potatoes sell for between £30 and £40 per tonne more than, for example, the Ambro variety.

The Agency's tests indicated that out of 294 potato samples analysed:

- 96 (33%) of the potatoes were wrongly labelled
- 49 (17%) of these were not the variety

they were claiming to be

■ 47 (16%) were not labelled with sufficient information – in other words, no variety name was given.

Potatoes on retail sale are required by law to be labelled with the name of the variety. Nearly all of the incorrectly labelled samples came from smaller, independent retailers, fruit and veg shops and stalls, and wholesalers.

A similar number of mislabelled or unlabelled samples were collected from the majority of the outlets, although most of the 19 samples collected from wholesale markets were mislabelled.

Rosemary Hignett, Head of Food Labelling and Standards at the FSA, said: 'It is clear that consumers are not always getting what they are paying for, and this is unacceptable.'

'There is clearly a particular problem at wholesale markets, and we are working with local authorities on follow-up action to make sure that this is resolved.'

### Further information

The Agency's survey can be read in full at: [www.food.gov.uk/science/surveillance/fsis-2003/fsis443](http://www.food.gov.uk/science/surveillance/fsis-2003/fsis443)

## Update on semicarbazide in glass jars

Following an initial alert in July 2003, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has now updated its scientific view on the finding of a chemical – semicarbazide – in some jars of food. The Food Standards Agency attended a meeting of European Member States on 14 October to discuss the most up-to-date information and action required.

It now seems likely that semicarbazide does migrate into food from the plastic gaskets used to seal glass jars with metal twist-off lids. However, the information about how much of this substance can get into food is still extremely limited, as is the evidence on the possible health risks.

The expert European panel has said that there is evidence from animal studies that semicarbazide is a weak carcinogen but, because of the limited evidence, it is not possible to conclude whether or not semicarbazide may pose a cancer risk to humans. The risk, if any, according to the panel, is judged to be very small, both for infants and adults.

Food Standards Agency Chair Sir John Krebs said: 'There is considerable uncertainty about the possible risks from semicarbazide. Because of this we have made clear to the European Commission

and the food industry that alternative methods for sealing jars of food should be developed as a precautionary measure.

'However, this needs to be done without compromising the very high safety standards that apply to the production of food in jars. In addition, further work needs to take place to understand the risks from semicarbazide.'

'On the basis of the current limited and inconclusive evidence, the Food Standards Agency is not advising against eating food in jars. However, these jars are commonly used for baby food and so parents may understandably be concerned by the continuing uncertainty, which may lead some parents to choose alternative food for their babies. Advice on feeding your baby is available on the FSA website.'

'As more information becomes available, we will publish further advice if it is needed.'

### Further information

EFSA statements on semicarbazide are available on the EFSA website at: [http://efsa.eu.int/pdf/pressrel20031015\\_en.pdf](http://efsa.eu.int/pdf/pressrel20031015_en.pdf) Advice about feeding babies is at: [www.food.gov.uk/healthierating/advice\\_for\\_you/yourbaby/](http://www.food.gov.uk/healthierating/advice_for_you/yourbaby/)

## Agency unveils practical approach to HACCP for small catering businesses

An innovative approach to improving food safety management, developed by the Food Standards Agency working with the University of Salford, is being piloted among small catering businesses.

The 'Safer Food, Better Business' pack, which is based on the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point), was unveiled at a 'New Approaches to HACCP in Catering conference', held in Salford on 14 October.

New legislation expected by 2006 will require all food businesses, except primary producers, to implement a food safety management system based on HACCP principles.

The FSA believes that a new approach is vital because no country has effectively implemented a HACCP-based system in small catering businesses. HACCP-based models developed by FSA Scotland and FSA Northern Ireland will also be piloted.

Feedback from the pilot scheme, which involves 2000 small catering businesses, will be available in April 2004.

Speakers at the Salford conference included FSA Board Members Robert Rees and Sandra Walbran, who have taken a keen interest in HACCP from catering and enforcement perspectives respectively.

Richard Harding and Stephen Airey, who are responsible for developing the FSA's HACCP strategy, highlighted the



*Safer Food, Better Business – three tools in one handy pack*

Agency's commitment to providing appropriate guidance to meet new legislative requirements.

The conference was attended by a wide variety of catering stakeholders, ranging from managers and chefs to enforcers and university lecturers.

Professor Eunice Taylor and other members of the Salford University team presented an in-depth view of the new pack. The 'Safer Food, Better Business' model builds on the Agency's success to date with its food hygiene campaign and is based on the '4Cs': cooking, cleaning, chilling and cross-contamination.

### Further information

Contact Fiona Tobin, tel: 020 7276 8480; email: [haccpteam@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:haccpteam@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## FSA Wales says 'keep well this winter'

As part of the Keep Well This Winter campaign in Wales, FSA Wales has awarded 20 small grants to organisations, to enable them to provide information and support on healthy eating to people aged 65 and over.

The grants, ranging from £100 to £1,000, have been allocated to bodies such as Age Concern groups, local health boards, a sheltered housing scheme, an OAP association, a community centre, a community co-operative, a health promotion unit, a community development trust and a local authority.

The funds will be used to support events include information days, healthy eating programmes, cookery sessions, healthy eating demonstrations, healthy eating

reminiscence boxes and taster sessions. A healthy eating factsheet, guidance pack and cookery book are also being funded.

On completion of their project, each organisation will provide the FSA with feedback on how their objectives were met.

FSA Wales has also produced its own healthy eating booklet, *Eat Well – A Guide to Healthier Eating for the Over 60s*, which offers nutritional and food safety messages and includes recipes. It will be available at the end of November 2003.

### Further information

Contact Vicki Reilly, tel: 029 2067 8912; fax: 029 2067 8919; email: [vicki.reilly@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vicki.reilly@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## Salmonella in tahini warning

The Agency has warned consumers not to eat a brand of tahini, a savoury paste made from ground sesame seeds, after tests showed it may be contaminated with salmonella. The affected brand, sold in glass jars with a screw-top lid, is called Morphakis Tahini – Crushed Sesame Seeds. All jars with the best before date of 31 December 2006 could potentially be contaminated. Anyone with this tahini at home has been advised to throw it away.

### Further information

The Agency's food hazard warning is at: [www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/alerts/tahini\\_fhw](http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/alerts/tahini_fhw) A picture of the product is at: [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/bigimages/morphakistahini.jpg](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/bigimages/morphakistahini.jpg)

## Plastics migration within safety limits

An Agency survey to find out whether chemicals from plastics in contact with food are getting into the food has found no instances of the chemicals exceeding legal safety limits. The safety limits for these chemicals take account of the amount people have over a lifetime to ensure they will suffer no long-term health effects.

The next phase of this work is already under way to find out if other types of plastics used in food packaging also comply with the law.

### Further information

The Food Survey Information Sheet is at: [www.food.gov.uk/science/surveillance/fsis-2003/fsis4303](http://www.food.gov.uk/science/surveillance/fsis-2003/fsis4303)

## Warning on drugged venison

The Agency has issued two food hazard warnings about eating venison products containing meat contaminated with the drugs Immobilon and Revivon. The second warning was issued when additional information came to light about the distribution of potentially affected products. While any contaminated products purchased may have been consumed, it is still possible that purchasers may have frozen them for consumption at a later date. Local authorities have been asked to consider providing appropriate local publicity.

### Further information

The latest food hazard warning can be read at: [www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/alerts/deerupdate](http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/alerts/deerupdate)

## Final Reports of Completed Research Projects

Copies of the following final research reports have been placed in the Agency's Library & Information Service (LIS). The reports may be viewed at the LIS, or a copy obtained for a handling fee of £10 (for individuals) or £15 (for institutions), which includes post and packaging (please make cheques payable to the Food Standards Agency).

### 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 please get in touch with the contacts shown below.**

Project  
R01049

### Title Development of a methodology for the prediction of doses from the consumption of marine foodstuffs, for past and current discharges

Division  
Radiological Protection and Research Management

Discharges of radioactivity have been made and are still being made to UK coastal waters. The radioactivity from these releases, if transported away from the discharge point by the action of currents, can transfer to sediment, where it can be taken up into marine foods. To estimate the impact of this contamination on people, the amount of radioactivity (activity concentration) in seafood from the UK coastal waters needed to be estimated. This project developed a methodology to predict marine food activity concentrations in UK coastal waters over time. The project outputs were spreadsheets for 22 sites that discharge radioactivity to UK coastal waters. These spreadsheets will enable the Agency to predict the effect of changes to the current discharge authorisations at each site on future activity concentrations in marine foods from UK waters.

### Further information

Contact David Webbe-Wood, tel: 020 7276 8742; email: [david.webbe-wood@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:david.webbe-wood@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project  
C02023

### Title A Multi-Element Survey of Infant Foods

Division  
Chemical Contaminants and Animal Feed

This survey, carried out in 2001, analysed a representative market share of infant foods (189 foods comprising formulae, rusks, meals, drinks and desserts) for a wide range of elements (aluminium, antimony, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, selenium, tin and zinc). The results provided information on the elemental concentrations in the main types and brands of infant foods and formulae on sale in the UK. The results have allowed infants' exposure to these elements from these foods to be assessed and published as a Food Surveillance Information Sheet.

### Further information

Contact Sarah-Jayne Rowles, tel: 020 7276 8731; email: [sarah-jayne.rowles@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sarah-jayne.rowles@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project  
M01012

### Title Study of the residues resulting from the use of hyperchlorinated water in poultry washes

Division  
Meat Science and Strategy

Chlorinated water has been used in the past for washing and lowering the temperature of poultry during processing. The formation of a group of chemical compounds known as chlorinated maleimides under artificial chlorinated poultry wash water conditions has been described in the literature. These compounds have been found to cause damage to bacterial DNA in the Ames test and are classed as potent bacterial mutagens. This project has attempted to repeat the published work and then demonstrate formation of the residues resulting from the use of hyperchlorinated water in poultry washes. Formation of these compounds has been unable to be demonstrated, putting some doubt on the original published findings. The study did identify other avenues to follow. The EU prohibition on the use of chlorinated water in poultry processing also means this programme will not support any further work involving chlorine/chlorinated water.

### Further information

Contact Mary Howell, tel: 020 7276 8373; email: [mary.howell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mary.howell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project  
A01029

### Title Development of an enzymatic method to determine fumaric acid in foods

This research has developed and validated a simple method to quantify the additive fumaric acid (E297) in food and drink. The results from this ring trial were successful and, along with other results from the validation, have shown the method to be suitable for the analysis of fumaric acid in sugar confectionery, jelly powder and other powdered foods.

### Further information

Contact Mark Willis, CS&T Division, tel: 020 7276 8559; email: [mark.willis@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mark.willis@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project  
ZB00021

### Title An Evaluation of the ADAS 'On-Farm' pasteurisation Project

An audit was undertaken during 2002 to test the effectiveness and appropriateness of an initiative, which has been running since 1995, aimed at increasing food-safety-management awareness among processors pasteurising milk on-farm. The study indicates that the ADAS documentation was of an acceptable standard, if out of date, and was well received by environmental health officers and on-farm processors, who found it helpful in meeting current regulations.

### Further information

Contact Dr Kevin Hargin, Microbiological Safety Division, tel: 020 7276 8953; email: [kevin.hargin@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.hargin@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Title Fruit and Vegetable Washing and Peeling Behaviour – Qualitative and Quantitative Research

This project showed that a strong correlation exists between demographic and/or ethnic groups and the consumption of peel of certain fruits and vegetables. The research revealed that most respondents washed all fruit and vegetables. This was even true in cases where the item was also to be peeled.

### Further information

Contact Claire Baseley, tel: 020 7276 9594; email: [claire.baseley@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:claire.baseley@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## Updated guidelines on investigation and control of foodborne disease in Scotland

A revision of the guidelines on the investigation and control of outbreaks of foodborne disease in Scotland was agreed by the Scottish Executive Health Department and the Food Standards Agency Scotland.

Part of the remit of the revision was to consider the roles and responsibilities of the Food Standards Agency Scotland and other national organisations, especially the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health.

The revision also considered the definition of a 'national outbreak', the development of a protocol for food and environmental investigations, the support mechanisms for local authorities and the current epidemiological investigation and its adequacy.

Those involved in the investigation and control of outbreaks of foodborne disease were consulted and a small working group set up to advise on the revision process.

The group met on four occasions between April and November 2001, and the draft revision was distributed for comments in July and August.

The working group recognised the need for guidance on general outbreaks and outbreaks of water borne disease and separate groups have been commissioned to develop specific guidelines in these areas.

These guidelines are recommended to all those involved in the investigation and control of outbreaks of foodborne disease in Scotland. Regular training and exercising of

these guidelines are important to develop expertise and establish the necessary team-working arrangements.

Local plans should be revised on a regular basis in light of these revised guidelines, recognising the role of the FSA and the need for co-ordinated approaches in tackling large outbreaks and those which involve more than one geographical area. The working group also recommended the development of standard setting and regular audit of the management of outbreaks.

### Further information

The guidelines can be read in full at: [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodbornediseasescot.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodbornediseasescot.pdf)

## Consultations

### MHS proposed performance targets

The Food Standards Agency's Meat Hygiene Division (Red Meat Branch) is seeking views on a draft package to interested organisations on Proposed Performance Targets for the Meat Hygiene Service for 2004/05.

The deadline for receipt of comments on the consultation package, which was issued on Tuesday 30 September 2003, is Friday 19 December 2003.

### Further information

More details are at: [www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/Consultations](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/Consultations) To receive a copy, please contact Karla West, Meat Hygiene Division (Red Meat Branch), Food Standards Agency, Room 315c, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH; tel: 020 7276 8349; fax: 020 7276 8312; email: [karla.west@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:karla.west@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk).

### Acting on incidents and surveys

The Agency has reviewed the range of options available for assessing, managing and communicating risks to the consumer as a result of Agency food surveys and food incidents reported to the Agency.

'Guidelines for assessing and acting on information from food incidents and food surveys' have been drawn up with the assistance of a stakeholder group including consumers, enforcement officers and people from the food industry.

The working group's terms of reference were: 'To assist the Food Standards Agency in the development of guidance to be used in deciding on the most appropriate way to respond to the findings of Agency food surveys or to incidents notified to it.'

'Such guidance will be primarily for the Food Standards Agency although the

aim is that, having been developed through a transparent and consultative process, the guidelines will be supported by our stakeholders.'

The main focus of the group's attention was to consider the criteria that the Agency should use to decide in each case whether action is required to protect the consumer interest and, if so, whether this should be limited to consumer information or advice, or whether products should be withdrawn from sale or recalled.

The guidelines can be read at: [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/assessact.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/assessact.pdf) Contributions are sought on the draft by 21 November 2003.

### Further information

Contact Colin Houston, tel: 020 7276 8440; email: [colin.houston@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:colin.houston@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## Reports

### FSA Wales survey shows pupils are shunning healthier lunch options

Research into school meals published by Food Standards Agency Wales shows that despite fruit and vegetables being more readily available, pupils have not yet begun to choose them.

According to the research, which explores the effect of introducing statutory minimum standards for school lunches in Wales:

- 51% of secondary school pupils were more likely to choose chips, with many meals consisting solely of chips;
- burgers and sausages are more popular than cuts of meat among both primary and secondary school children.

FSA Wales Director Steve Wearne said: 'The Food Standards Agency and the Welsh Assembly Government recognise that healthy eating is fundamental for proper growth and development in schools.'

'However, the diets of young people in Wales contain too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fruit and vegetables.'

### Further information

Read the full report at: [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsawaleschoolmeals.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsawaleschoolmeals.pdf)

## New COT working group established to consider uncertainty in toxicology

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) has established a new working group that will consider variability and uncertainty in toxicology.

This follows the publication in 2002 of a previous working group report on the Risk Assessment of Mixtures of Pesticides and Similar Substances, and in 2003 on Phytoestrogens and Health.

The aim of the Working Group on Variability and Uncertainty in Toxicology will be to develop a more systematic and transparent approach to risk assessment. The Working Group will review the sources of variability and uncertainty in risk assessment, and consider whether the current methodology should be refined.

The Working Group, which will meet under the chairmanship of Professor Peter Aggett (previously Vice-Chair of the COT) will draw on a membership that will provide wide clinical, scientific and mathematical expertise together with a non-specialist consumer perspective to the work of the group.

The Working Group's first meeting will be on 14 November 2003, and this will be followed by an open meeting on 3 February 2004. A draft report will be issued for consultation in 2005.

The COT believes that the FSA will find the considerations of the Working Group useful in allowing it to interpret the health implications of chemicals in food, particularly for subsets of the population who may be vulnerable as a result of

higher levels of consumption or more susceptible to harmful effects.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group will also help inform discussion of the expert panels and committees in the European Food Safety Authority and World Health Organisation that advise on the safety of food chemicals.

### Further information

For more details on the activities of the Working Group contact Keith Butler, tel: 020 7276 8522; email: [keith.butler@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:keith.butler@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## Notice of ACMSF open meeting

The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) will be holding its 50th meeting on Thursday 4 December 2003 at Trinity House in Central London.

### Further information

For more details on the agenda, or to register an interest in attending the meeting, contact Liz Stretton, tel: 020 7276 8946; fax: 020 7276 8907; email: [liz.stretton@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:liz.stretton@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk) Further information about the ACMSF is available at: [www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiologicalsafety/](http://www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/microbiologicalsafety/)

## Regulations

### Controlling feed additives

A new Regulation to control the use of feed additives and amino acids and their analogues in animal feed has now been published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJ reference L 268/29, 18 October 2003).

Regulation (EC) No. 1831/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2003 on Additives in Animal Nutrition will apply from 7 October 2004 and will replace the current Directive controlling the use of additives in feed – Council Directive 70/524.

The new Regulation provides for the

continued use of authorised products and for an assessment system for new products that will come under the auspices of the European Food Safety Authority.

A copy of the Regulation can be found on the European Union website at: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/1\\_268/1\\_268200310118\\_en00290043.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/1_268/1_268200310118_en00290043.pdf)

### Further information

Contact Allyson Allman, tel: 020 77276 8466; email: [allyson.allman@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:allyson.allman@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## New appointments to Consumer Committee

Two new members have been appointed to the Consumer Committee, which helps to ensure the views and interests of consumers are fully represented in the Agency's work.

Thomas Chan, an active member of the Chinese community in the UK, is a training and management consultant with extensive contacts with minority ethnic communities.

As chairman of the Chinese Takeaway Association (UK), he has been instrumental in working with the Chinese National Healthy Living Centre and the British Heart Foundation to improve the nutritional value of Chinese takeaway food.

He has undertaken research, community work, and advocacy work for a number of local authorities and sat on the Home Office's Metropolitan Police Committee and Race Relations Forum, and the Department of Health's National Strategic Group on Tackling Racial Harassment in the NHS.

Julie Friend is a freelance caterer and food writer and member of the residents association in south-east Bayswater, where she lives. She runs her own catering and food journalist business as well as being a member of various charities.

From 1994 to 2001, she was the Chief Executive of the charity MedicAlert, which provides identification for anyone who has a hidden medical condition, such as epilepsy.

She has worked closely with such groups as The Anaphylaxis Campaign and the British Allergy Foundation.

### Further information

More details on the work of the Consumer Committee can be found at: [www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how\\_we\\_work/consumercommittee/](http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how_we_work/consumercommittee/)

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