

## Agency publishes salt reduction targets



The salt targets will encourage manufacturers to reduce the salt added to food

The Agency has published voluntary salt reduction targets to further encourage food manufacturers and retailers to reduce the amount of salt in a wide range of processed foods.

The targets were developed using an open and consultative approach, including consultation with more than 250 different organisations together with a wide range of consumer groups, public health bodies and independent food technologists.

Eating too much salt is a significant risk factor in developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure can triple the risk of heart disease and stroke, and it causes or contributes to more than 170,000 deaths a year in England. At least 26 million people in the UK eat too much salt. The new salt

reduction targets will help progress towards bringing down the average UK salt intake to 6g a day.

The salt reduction targets apply to salt levels in the 85 food categories that contribute most to the amount of salt in our diet.

These include everyday foods such as bread, meat products and cereal products, and convenience products such as pizza, ready meals, savoury snacks, and cakes and pastries. Processed foods contribute about 75% of the salt in our diets.

The Agency is encouraged by the steady progress on voluntary salt reductions by the industry to date. For example:

■ Major retailers, including ASDA, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose have made good progress with salt reduction across a wide

range of products

■ The Association of Cereal Food Manufacturers has reduced the levels of salt in breakfast cereals by 33% since 1998

■ The Federation of Bakers has cut the amount of salt in bread by up to 30%

■ Kraft has lowered the salt in its cheese spreads and snack products by about a third

■ Members of the Food and Drink Federation have sought to reduce the salt in soups and sauces by 30%

Gill Fine, FSA Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health, said: 'Many consumers want to reduce their salt intakes to improve their health. To help make it easier for them, we need manufacturers and retailers to continue their efforts to reduce the amount of salt they add to foods. We are pleased with the work done by many parts of the industry to enable us all to reduce our salt intake. The guidelines we are launching are the next step in the programme of salt reductions.'

'Although challenging, we believe the salt levels set out represent a realistic rate of reduction that will have a real impact on consumers' intakes. We will review the targets in 2008, to ensure that progress continues to be made towards achieving the 6g maximum recommended salt intake.'

The Agency has received further commitments to long-term salt reduction programmes from a wide range

of organisations across all sectors of the food industry and continues to support further research into new approaches to reducing salt levels in foods.

Some organisations have already committed to going further and faster than the reduction targets.

The Agency is currently in the process of developing the next phase of its salt awareness campaign to build on the success of previous stages.

Work to develop a framework for self-reporting will continue in consultation with stakeholders following publication of the salt reduction targets.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the salt targets is at: [food.gov.uk/healthicreating/salt/devsalttargets](http://food.gov.uk/healthicreating/salt/devsalttargets)

### Public impact of the salt campaign

Twenty million more adults say they are cutting down on salt since the start of the Agency's salt awareness campaign in September 2004, while over half of all consumers (53%) say they are now checking food labels for salt. Most people who are cutting back on salt say they have reduced the amount of salt they add to their food at the table or when cooking and sales of household salt have already dropped by 10% in a year.

*See salt timeline, page 2*

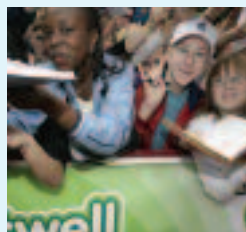
### Inside this issue

#### News

All the latest news from the Agency, including details on front of pack labelling, a labelling seminar, and activities organised by FSA Scotland and FSA Wales

#### Interview

Jon Bell, who left the FSA last month after six years – three as Chief Executive – reflects on the Agency's achievements and some of the challenges ahead



Soccer Six: targeting teenagers

#### FSA Matters

An update on the March Open Board Meeting, new appointments to the Agency, specialist committee news, plus the latest on courses and student placements



## Agency advice on oily fish remains unchanged

The FSA's advice that people should eat at least two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily, remains unchanged following claims made in a recent article in the *BMJ* (British Medical Journal) that question the health benefits of eating oily fish.

A group of experts drawn from two independent scientific committees that advise the Agency, the Committee on Toxicity (COT) and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), considered the balance of risks and benefits of eating oily fish in 2004. In its work this group took into account the main studies reviewed by Hooper *et al* in the *BMJ* and it is considered, therefore, that this study does not raise any new issues in relation to the Agency's advice on eating fish.

As *FSA News* went to press, SACN was due to write to the *BMJ* outlining its views on the issue.

## New regulations website launched for small food and drink firms

Small businesses in the food and drink sector can now keep abreast of changes to environmental legislation through a new website offering practical advice on regulations.

Businesses that register on NetRegs – set up by the UK's environmental regulators – will receive free email updates about environmental issues affecting them and links to further information and advice.

The e-alerts can be personalised to provide information relevant to the business.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

To register for the NetRegs e-alert service or to obtain further information on the environmental legislation affecting the food and drink sector, visit: [www.netregs.gov.uk](http://www.netregs.gov.uk)

# FSA scores with Soccer Six

As part of its continuing activity to encourage teenage girls to eat more healthily, the FSA will be sponsoring the young women's football teams at celebrity football tournament Soccer Six, this summer.

Soccer Six, in its 11th year, will involve celebrities battling it out on the football pitch for charity. Two events are taking place – one at Birmingham City on 14 May and the other at West Ham's ground in London on 21 May.

All of the female players' shirts will feature the address of the Agency's eatwell website, and healthy eating advice will be distributed at both events.

This sponsorship deal is a continuation of the FSA's ongoing campaign to help teenage girls make healthier diet and lifestyle choices. The three simple messages are:

- Eat breakfast
- Eat more fruit
- Drink water



Having fun – and learning to eat well

Continued from page 1:

## Timeline of some key salt events

Since 2003, the FSA has been developing a programme to help UK consumers reduce their salt intakes. The initiative forms an important part of the Agency's work to make healthy eating an easier option and reduce diet-related diseases.

### May 2003

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition publishes Salt and Health report that recommends a reduction in the average salt intake to 6g a day for adults.

### October 2003

FSA publishes a draft salt model, which examines the effects of potential reductions in the salt content of different food groups on overall population salt intake.

### February 2004

FSA starts an ongoing series of



In training: Nikki Sanderson (right) and Liz McLarnon reinforce the Agency's message to drink lots of water

Celebrities involved in this year's Soccer Six event include *Coronation Street* star Nikki Sanderson and former Atomic Kitten Liz McLarnon. Both young women will be helping the Agency to engage with teenage girls, encouraging them to make easy changes to their diets.

Nikki Sanderson said: 'It's great to be involved with Soccer Six and eatwell. It's good for teenage girls to look after their bodies and eating a balanced diet plays a big part in that.'

'There's a lot of pressure on girls to be thin, but feeling

good and being healthy is more important.'

Liz McLarnon said: 'I see lots of girls putting themselves on strict diets and they end up feeling miserable and tired. Being involved with Soccer Six is a great way to help show teenagers that eating properly is essential for their health. You certainly need a lot of energy to run around a football pitch.'

Young people would certainly benefit from improving their diets and getting more active. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey of young people highlighted a number of inadequacies in teenage girls' diets. As well as eating too much saturated fat and sugar, 45% of 11-14 year olds have low iron levels, which can lead to iron deficiency and anaemia.

Recent research by the FSA and *Sugar* magazine also highlighted some worrying trends in the eating habits of teenage girls, with many admitting to having been on a diet at some point and almost a quarter trying to eat 'as little as possible'.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information and advice on teenage girls' diets – including example meal plans – go to: [www.eatwell.gov.uk/teens](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/teens)

### August 2005

Public consultation on proposed salt targets published (it runs for 12 weeks). Summary of the commitments received from food organisations to reduce salt levels updated and published.

### October 2005

Public consultation on proposed salt targets closed. Salt campaign – second phase launched; runs until November 2005. Summary of salt-reduction commitments received from food organisations updated and published.

### January/February 2006

FSA holds a series of stakeholder meetings to discuss the comments raised by the public consultation.

### March 2006

Final salt reduction targets published by the Agency.

meetings with individual organisations and small stakeholder groups to discuss salt reduction work.

### September 2004

Salt campaign – first phase launched; runs until end of November 2004.

### February 2005

FSA and DH write to individual food organisations requesting updates of commitments to reduce salt in foods. Salt model finalised and published.

### April 2005

A summary of the commitments from food industry organisations to reduce salt in foods is published on FSA and DH websites. FSA holds stakeholder meeting to discuss the development of salt reduction targets in food categories.

# FSA agrees principles for front of pack labelling

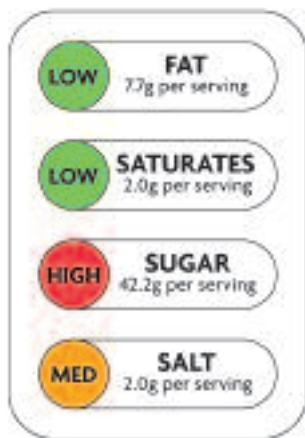
The Agency is recommending that voluntary front of pack signpost labelling schemes used in the UK should be based on four core principles.

Front of pack labelling should:

- provide separate information on fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt
- use red, amber and green colour coding to indicate whether levels of these nutrients are high, medium or low
- use nutritional criteria developed by the FSA to determine the colour code
- give information on the levels of nutrients per portion of product

Research conducted by the Agency found that consumers want a clear, colour-coded food labelling system to help them make informed choices about the food they eat. The research found that traffic light colours were key to helping people see at a glance whether a food has high, medium or low levels of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.

The Agency's recommendations, approved by its Board in March, were developed as a result of extensive consumer research and



One of the front of pack label options

## Industry support for the Agency's scheme

### Waitrose

Christian Cull, Waitrose Marketing Director, said: 'Waitrose and our customers feel that a consistent approach, as proposed by the FSA, will be the best way to allow consumers to make informed decisions about what they eat. It also leaves plenty of room on the back of pack for all the information on Guideline Daily Amounts that our customers expect.'

### Sainsbury's

Justin King, Sainsbury's Chief Executive, said: 'We support the use of a labelling system which uses traffic light colours. It is the simplest and clearest way of giving customers the information they are looking

for. We launched our own Wheel of Health labelling system, which is in line with the FSA's recommendations, over a year ago.'

### ASDA

Sue Malcolm, ASDA's Nutrition Manager, said: 'Customers don't want thousands of different types of nutritional labels in their favourite stores – that's why we are backing the FSA's proposals to get nutritional information across in a clear, consistent, simple and informative way. We see this as a combination of colour coding coupled to percentage GDA declarations and will be working closely with the FSA and other bodies to make this happen.'

feedback from supermarkets, manufacturers, consumer and public health groups.

Sainsbury's and Waitrose are the first retailers to apply the recommended colour-coded approach on products and Asda is expected to follow shortly.

The Agency will continue to encourage other supermarkets and manufacturers currently not adopting the Agency approach to do so, and will work with food businesses and consumers to monitor and evaluate the impact of the scheme.

FSA Chair Deirdre Hutton said the Agency's approach would deliver three main benefits. It would make it easier for consumers to eat more healthily, encourage consumers to look for and demand healthier foods, and

attracts the UK's top food and drink figures.

The format consists of a high-profile speaker addressing a topical food-related theme with a panel of experts responding to questions from the floor.

Food Standards Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton will chair the evening's proceedings. An



Consumers found colour coding helpful

provide businesses with an incentive to produce foods that are lower in fat, salt or sugar.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more about the signposting recommendations go to: [food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/signposting](http://food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/signposting)

announcement of the main speaker will be made shortly.

The next lecture, on 23 January 2007, will be sponsored by the Food Standards Agency. The Real Good Food Company will be providing the post-lecture buffet supper for delegates, and Nestlé UK the accompanying wines and soft drinks.

## Labelling meeting and seminar for stakeholders

The Food Standards Agency is holding a stakeholder meeting on 21 April 2006 to help inform its eight-week consultation on the European Commission discussion paper 'Labelling: Competitiveness, Consumer Information and Better Regulation for the EU.'

The discussion paper forms part of the Commission's review of food labelling. Formal proposals are expected in 2007.

The meeting, which is being held at Hotel Russell, Russell Square, London WC1B 5BE, will not discuss nutrition labelling.

The morning session will begin with a presentation on the EU review by Alette Addison from the Food Standards Agency.

This will be followed by a discussion on the EU Commission Consultation Paper that will include: structure of the legislation; scope of the legislation; control of information provided voluntarily; labelling of alcoholic drinks; label clarity; origin labelling; SMEs.

In February 2006 the Agency, with the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, organised a conference on food labelling in Rotterdam, which gave participants a chance to debate what future food labelling might look like.

A separate afternoon session at the London conference will offer stakeholders a similar opportunity to have a 'back to basics' look at the role of food labelling.

The following questions will be addressed:

- What information should be on food labels and why?
- Is there any information that is less important and is there a possible hierarchy of information?
- How could information, demanded by consumers, be presented?
- How could the effects of the introduction of new labelling legislation be minimised for business especially small businesses?

This seminar will be run as a discussion forum to stimulate debate among all stakeholders. No consensus or formal conclusions will be sought.

## Agency sponsors City Food Lecture

The FSA is one of three new sponsors of the annual City Food Lecture, which takes place at London's historic Guildhall.

The lecture, set up six years ago by the seven City Livery Companies involved in the food industry (Bakers, Butchers, Cooks, Farmers, Fishmongers, Fruiterers and Poulterers),

## New Director to head FSA communications

The Food Standards Agency has appointed Terrence Collis (below) as its new Director of Communications.

Mr Collis has had a successful and varied career in a range of media and communications roles, predominantly in the private sector.

His most recent roles have been Director of Corporate Communications at National Westminster Bank and Director of Group Corporate Communications at Lloyds TSB. He has spent time on secondment to the Department of Transport and has worked with a wide range of trade bodies and consumer organisations.

Mr Collis said: 'I am delighted to be joining an organisation where everybody seems so committed to helping people make better choices and live safer, healthier lives.' He will join the Agency after the Easter holiday period.



Terrence Collis

## Specialist committee appointments

Professor David Phillips has been appointed as the new Chair of the Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment from 1 April 2006.

Dr Barry Elliott (Syngenta CTL) and Dr David Lovell (University of Surrey) have been appointed as members of the Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment from 1 April 2006.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details contact Khandu Mistry, tel: 020 7972 4946; email: [khandu.mistry@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:khandu.mistry@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

# Agency appoints interim Chief Executive

John Harwood (right) has been appointed interim Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency. He took up post following the departure of the Agency's Chief Executive, Jon Bell, at the end of March.

John Harwood has extensive experience of leading and managing major public bodies.

He successfully established and led the Learning and Skills Council for England, the UK's largest spending non-departmental public body, and was Chief Executive of two highly-regarded local authorities – the London Borough of Lewisham and Oxfordshire County Council. More recently he has been the interim Chief Executive of Cumbria County Council.

He also has non executive experience through his current roles as the chair of a leading international education



John Harwood: the FSA provides a vital service for everyone in the UK

management company and consultancy, and as Chair of an Oxfordshire based environmental charity. He is a Senior Associate Fellow of Warwick Business School and a member of the Court of Oxford Brookes University.

John Harwood's wide experience of leading public sector organisations will be invaluable in helping the Agency

to build on what it has already achieved in its first six years.

Asked about joining the FSA, he said: 'The FSA performs a vital service for everyone in the UK, so it is an exciting challenge to be invited to join such an important team. I look forward very much to working with my new colleagues and drawing on my experience and skills to help the Agency in the months ahead.'

## Agency Board member's term of office extended



Chrissie Dunn

FSA Board Member Chrissie Dunn (pictured), a member of the Food Standards Agency Board since March 2003, has accepted an invitation from the Secretary of State for Health to serve on the Board for a further period of two years – until 28 February 2008. Her initial appointment expired on 28 February 2006.

In addition to being a member of the FSA Board, Chrissie Dunn is also Chair of the Meat Hygiene Service Board.

## New members appointed to Scottish Food Advisory Committee

Three new members have been appointed to the independent Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC), which provides independent advice on food issues relate to Scotland.

The new members are:

- James Arbuckle, Farms Director, Dunecht Home Farms;
- Dr Catherine Benton, Former Drinking Water Quality and Public Health Manager, West of Scotland Water and Scottish Water;
- Amanda O'Donoghue – Former Group Technical and Development Manager, Enterprise Foods Limited. They will serve up to three years on the committee.

Catherine Brady has also been reappointed for a further two years to the committee after serving an initial period of three years.

SFAC is made up of two

Board members of the Food Standards Agency, appointed by Scottish Ministers, and independent experts who are selected for their experience and practical knowledge of areas such as nutrition, food-related science and consumer interests.

SFAC Chair Graeme Millar said: 'Coupled with the recent appointment of Professor Bill Reilly to the FSA Board and the committee, the incoming members will help consolidate the excellent work – across the food and public health sectors – that has been done by their predecessors.'

He also thanks outgoing members Anne Campbell, William Davidson and Professor Phillip Thomas for their hard work and dedication during their tenures as committee members.

## Message from the FSA's acting Chief Scientist

I am very pleased to be writing my first column as the Agency's acting Chief Scientist.

The FSA has a good reputation for being an organisation with science at the heart of its policy making. The quality and integrity of the scientists working throughout the Agency are fundamental to this reputation.

Furthermore, we rely on our independent scientific advisory committees and on the research scientists who work with us to get the evidence.

My challenge is to build on the scientific foundations laid by our former Chair Sir John Krebs, and the former Chief Scientist Jon Bell. I have set myself two tasks.

The first will be to develop the work on the governance of science agreed by the Agency's Board in February 2006. This is about

developing trust by enabling the Board and all the Agency's stakeholders to see more clearly how we get from the scientific evidence to our policies and decisions. This transparency will facilitate challenge and will strengthen the integrity and accountability of the process.

My second task will be to foster scientific excellence. I want to make sure that we recruit, develop and maintain scientific excellence in our staff and also that we can draw on a wide range of external expertise across all the sciences. I also want to make sure that we fully engage the scientific community as one of our crucial stakeholders.

This research supplement will continue to bring you highlights of Agency science.

I want to use my column to draw your attention to more general

scientific issues, and initiatives that the Agency is taking.

If you have any issues you would like to see explored, please contact David Atkins or Julie Norman by telephone at 020 7276 8015 or email: david.atkins@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

*Andrew Wadge*



Andrew Wadge, who was appointed acting Chief Scientist by the Agency's Board in March

## Agency research to be given quality assurance audits in 2006/07

The Food Standards Agency bases its policies and advice on the best scientific evidence available and public confidence in that evidence is vital, we believe.

The Joint Code of Practice for Research (JCoPR) was developed jointly with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Biotechnology and

Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), to help ensure funded  
*continued at bottom of next page*

## Final reports of completed research projects in the Information Centre

(February 2006)

### **C03 Mycotoxins and process contaminants (including nitrates) – research**

A study to compare high and low input farming methods using a HACCP-like approach to establish whether this factor plays a significant role in subsequent storage mould flora or in any mycotoxin production during storage (C03004)

### **A01 Food additives – research**

Development and validation of an ELISA for the quantification of carragenan in foods (A01038)

### **B11 Verocytotoxin-producing E. coli O157**

Development and validation of methods for the detection and characterisation of verocytotoxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) in foods (B09007)

### **Q01 Food authenticity – research**

Nitrogen factors for turkey meat (Q01024)

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

### **N02 Diet and cardiovascular health**

Fielding, B.A., Roberts, R., Bickerton, A., Karpe, F., Gilbert, M. and Frayn, K.N. (2004) 'Comparison of GC-MS and GC-cIRMS for the measurement of [13C] palmitate enrichment in stable isotope study in vivo in man'. *International Journal of Obesity* 28: S165.

Gill, J.M.R., Brown, J.C., Bedford, D., Wright, D.M., Cooney, J., Hughes, D.A., Packard, C.J. and Caslake, M.J. (2004) 'Hepatic production of VLDL1 but not VLDL2 is related to insulin resistance in normoglycaemic middle-aged subjects'. *Atherosclerosis* 176: 49-56.

### **N05 Optimal nutrition**

McKillop, D.J., Pentieva, K.D., Scott, J.M., Strain, J.J., McCreedy, R., Alexander, J., Patterson, K., Hughes, J., McNulty, H. (2003) 'Protocol for the production of concentrated extracts of food folate for use in human bioavailability studies'. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* 51 (15): 4382-8

Sanderson, P., McNulty, H., Mastroiacovo, P., McDowell, K.F., Melse-Boonstra, A., Finglas, P.M., Gregory, J.F. (2003) 'Folate bioavailability: UK Food Standards Agency workshop report'. *British Journal of Nutrition* 90: 473-479

Strain, J.J., Dowey, L., Ward, M., Pentieva, K. and McNulty, H. (2004) 'B-vitamins, homocysteine metabolism and CVD'. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society 63: 597-603. Impact factor: 3.287.

Tedstone, A. Symposium on 'Micronutrient interactions and public health' Food Standards Agency: nutrition, Proceedings for the Nutrition Society (2004), 63: 501-503

Teucher, B. and Fairweather-Tait, S.J. (2003) 'Dietary sodium as a risk factor for osteoporosis: where is the evidence?' *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 62: 859-866

Continued on page 3

# Review of the Agency's C03 and C04 programmes (Mycotoxins, Nitrate & Process Contaminants)

The Food Standards Agency recently reviewed its research and survey programme for mycotoxins, nitrates and process contaminants (C03 & C04).

A panel of independent experts, chosen for their expertise in the field of contaminants, reviewed 48 projects and presented their findings at a meeting held with the Agency in May 2005.

The research and survey programmes were reviewed as to their ability to meet stakeholders' needs, scientific/technical merit and their relevance to Agency policy.

Ninety per cent of the completed projects reviewed were considered to have satisfactory or above average scientific and technical merit and to have met or bettered their policy objective.

In addition to the expert appraisal of individual projects, a meeting of 62 stakeholder representatives was held to discuss and establish areas of importance for future work.

Proposed future work for mycotoxin research included the development of methods of analysis, sampling methods and more research into mycotoxin/food combinations.

In addition, the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control points) work done to date was found to be of value and it was thought that more should be done in this area, paying attention to the close links with good agricultural practice and good manufacturing practice and the 'farm to fork' approach.

In the area of process contaminants, future work was proposed on the estimation of the levels of acrylamide formed under domestic

conditions and industrial/caterers processing, to help put the risk into perspective for consumers.

For both areas, a revised assessment of exposure levels based on the UK diet, incorporating geographical, ethnic and social variations was suggested.

A number of recommendations were made to further share information between the Agency, the industry and European Union Member States.

Strengthening links with research done in the industry and with EU Member States was regarded as being an important aspect of this.

The review has demonstrated that the current research and surveillance programmes on mycotoxins, nitrates and process contaminants have provided and will continue to provide the required information to formulate mitigation strategies including codes of practice to inform industry on the best way to protect consumers.

The review has also provided a platform for open debate amongst stakeholders as a means of consulting widely on issues that would ultimately be used to provide sound consumer advice.

This review and recommendations made will be used to develop future Agency strategy in this area.

### **Further information**

Final reports of the programme reviews are available on the Agency's website at: [food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/contaminantsresearchmycotoxins/c03andc04progreview/](http://food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/contaminantsresearchmycotoxins/c03andc04progreview/)

## continued from page 1 Audit of Agency research

research is of a high and reliable quality.

The JCoPR was issued in May 2003, and all Food Standards Agency and DEFRA contractors applying for funding have been required since June 2004 to make a declaration of compliance with the JCoPR provisions.

To monitor compliance, the Agency and DEFRA have now engaged the United Kingdom Accreditation Service, through open competition, to audit a number of projects in the financial year 2006/2007, against the JCoPR.

The audits will seek to ascertain levels of compliance as well as identify possible improvements in any areas of research

management in those contractors that are subject to audit. The audits are also intended to highlight and share learning points and best practice examples among all contractors, which should assist future JCoPR compliance.

### **Further Information:**

To find out more about the The Joint Code of Practice for Research go to: [food.gov.uk/science/research/researchpolicy/qualityassurance/qacopres/](http://food.gov.uk/science/research/researchpolicy/qualityassurance/qacopres/)

If you have any queries regarding the JCoPR, contact Asif Chowdhury, tel: 020 7276 8994; email: [asif.chowdhury@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asif.chowdhury@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## Research published and available in the FSA Information Centre

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

### Further information

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

Project T07025

### Factors influencing the susceptibility to and characteristics of kiwi fruit allergy

Division

#### Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects Division

Kiwi fruit was first introduced into the UK diet in the late 1960s, and consumption has increased steadily since then. In the 1970s very little allergy to kiwi fruit was reported although reports of reactions were common in the 1980s, predominantly in adults. It was not until the 1990s that kiwi fruit allergy was recognised in children and young infants. The findings of this self-reported study indicate that the most severe reactions tend to be seen in young children and highlight important features of the allergy that further our clinical understanding. The age, timing and severity of reactions were examined from the results of self-administered questionnaires that were completed by 273 people. The age at which these patients had their first reaction ranged from four months to 71 years and 33 of them had had a reaction to kiwi by the age of five. Nearly half of these young children reacted severely on their first known exposure to kiwi. A large number of these subjects reported suffering symptoms in less than five minutes. Reactions reported included tingling and sore mouth, swelling of the lips, tongue and face, rash, vomiting and abdominal pain and, in the most severe cases, breathing difficulties, wheezing and collapse. It was recommended that this matter should be investigated further and this prompted the FSA funded project T07038, which examined the characteristics of kiwi allergy in greater detail.

### Further information

Contact Joelle Appleby, tel: 020 7276 8516; email: [joelleappleby@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:joelleappleby@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project T07011

### Immunochemical reactivity to peanuts and nuts in allergic individuals

Division

#### Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects Division

This three-year project aimed to establish whether there is a difference in allergic reactions to peanuts and other nuts between adults and young children, and the possible reasons for this. The researchers found that children developed allergic reactions to peanut first, usually before the age of two. After this, they went on to develop allergic reactions to other nuts as they were exposed to them, and by the age of 10-15 most of those seen reacted to more than one nut. Children had milder reaction than adults. The researchers have developed a management plan for reducing further allergic reactions in nut allergy sufferers. They have also recommended that those who are allergic to one type of nut should avoid ingestion of others, and that children with nut allergy should be assessed periodically for the development of multiple allergies.

### Further information

Contact Joelle Appleby, tel: 020 7276 8516; email: [joelleappleby@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:joelleappleby@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project T09002

### Cellular and genomic responses to toxicity

Division

#### Chemical Safety

The aim of this project was to investigate possible links between one type of food component and the development of diet related-cancer. The project examined the

Thane, C.W. and Coward, W.A. (2004) 'Dietary intake and sources of phyloquinone (vitamin K1) according to age of British adults from a recent national survey'. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 63: 95A.

Thane, C.W. and Coward, W.A. (2004) 'Dietary intake and sources of phyloquinone (vitamin K1) according to social class in British adults surveyed in 1986-7 and 2000-1'. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 63: 125A.

#### N09 Food Acceptability and Choice

Stewart-Knox, B., Hamilton, J., Parr, H. and Bunting, B. (2005). 'Dietary strategies and uptake of reduced fat foods'. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 18: 121-128.

McKinley, M.C., Lewis, C., Robson, P.J., Wallace, J.M.W., Morrissey, M., Moran, A. and Livingstone, M.B.E. (2005) 'It's good to talk: children's views on food and nutrition'. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 59: 542-551.

Woolfe, J. (2005) 'Meeting the challenge of changing children's food habits – what the Food Standards Agency is doing'. *Food Science & Technology* 19: 35-37.

#### T05 Phytoestrogens in the diet

Grace, P.B., Taylor, J.I., Low, Y.L., Luben, R.N., Mulligan, A.A., Botting, N.P., Dowsett, M., Welch, A.A., Khaw, K.T., Wareham, N.J., Day, N.E. and Bingham, S.A. (2004) 'Phytoestrogen concentrations in serum and spot urine as biomarkers for dietary phytoestrogen intake and their relation to breast cancer risk in EPIC-Norfolk'. *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention* 13: 698-709.

Low, Y.L., Taylor, J.I., Grace, P.B., Dowsett, W., Scollen, S., Dunning, A.M., Mulligan, A.A., Welch, A.A., Luben, R.N., Khaw, K.T., Day, N.E., Wareham, N.J. and Bingham, S.A. (2004) 'Phytoestrogen exposure correlation with plasma estradiol in postmenopausal women in European Prospective Investigation of Cancer and Nutrition-Norfolk may involve diet-gene interactions'. *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention* 14: 213-220

Matsumara, A., Ghosh, A., Pope, G.S. and Dabre, P.D. (2005) 'Comparative study of oestrogenic properties of eight phytoestrogens in MCF7 human breast cancer cells'. *Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*. 94: 431-443.

#### T07 Food intolerance

Bateman, B., Warner, J.O., Hutchinson, E., Dean, T., Rowlandson, P., Gant, C., Gundy, J., Fitzgerald, C. and Stevenson, J. (2004) 'The effects of a double blind, placebo controlled, artificial food colourings and benzoate preservative challenge on hyperactivity in a general population sample of preschool children'. *Archives of disease in childhood* 89: 506-11.

Fox, A.T and Lack, G. (2005) 'High Environmental Exposure to Peanut in Infancy as a Risk Factor for Peanut Allergy'. *Journal of Allergy & Clinical Immunology*; 115(2) Suppl:34.

Vance, G.H.S., Grimshaw, K.E.C., Briggs, R., Lewis, S.A., Mullee, M.A., Thornton, C.A. and Warner, J.O. (2004) 'Serum ovalbumin specific IgG responses during pregnancy reflect maternal intake of dietary egg and relate to the development of allergy in early infancy'. *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* 34: 1855-1861.

Vance, G.H.S., Thornton, C.A., Bryant, T.N., Warner, J.A. and Warner, J.O. (2004) 'Ovalbumin specific IgG & subclass responses through the 1st five years of life in relation to duration of egg sensitisation and the development of asthma'. *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* 34: 1542-1549.

way a known chemical carcinogen (benzo[a]pyrene), sometimes present as a contaminant in food, altered the way human cells functioned. The study looked in detail at the changes in the levels of specific genes and proteins in the cells in response to exposure to this chemical. The researchers found that benzo[a]pyrene increased the level of some genes and proteins involved in the metabolism of chemicals, and decreased the level of genes that regulate cell growth and division. These responses may be associated with the mechanisms by which benzo[a]pyrene exerts its effects.

#### Further information

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Project T05010

## Absorption and metabolism of dietary phytoestrogens in humans: effects of age, gender, food matrix and chemical composition

Division

### Chemical Safety

Phytoestrogens are weakly oestrogenic chemicals present naturally in some plant-based foods, notably soya. The way phytoestrogens are handled in the body after consumption of soya foods is poorly understood. This project examined in detail the uptake and metabolism of phytoestrogens in humans and looked at whether there are differences in these processes when different types of soya food are eaten (fermented versus non-fermented food and solid versus liquid foods). In addition, the study looked at whether there were differences in these processes between male and female or between young and older adult consumers. The results showed that differences were seen in the absorption and metabolism of phytoestrogens depending upon the type of soya eaten and the gender of the consumer, but there did not appear to be an effect of age on phytoestrogen metabolism.

#### Further information

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This research supplement was published by the Food Standards Agency in April 2006. For more information about about *FSA News*, contact the editor at: [frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:frank.chalmers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

Project N05034

## Interaction between silicon intake and vitamin D and K status on markers of bone health in older women

Division

### Nutrition

This project was divided into two parts.

The aim of the first part was to determine the silicon content of foods commonly consumed in the UK. Food and beverages, chosen in conjunction with the Agency, were purchased and prepared for analysis. The silicon content was then analysed and a database was established for the UK. Findings from the study showed that beer, unrefined cereals, bananas and green beans contained the highest amount of silicon. The aim of the second part of the study was to examine whether silicon intake was associated with bone mineral density (BMD) in postmenopausal women in Scotland. Using results from a previous Food Standards Agency (FSA) funded study (N05001), in which women were supplemented for a period of two years with a placebo or vitamin K1 and/or calcium and vitamin D3; silicon intake and its association with BMD was investigated. Silicon intake was found not to be associated with BMD in postmenopausal women in this study. The results also suggested that silicon intake did not affect response to the supplements placebo or vitamin K1 and/or calcium and vitamin D3 and did not significantly effect the association between other nutrients and BMD over a two year period.

#### Further information

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Project N09011 follow-up

## Validity and reliability of a short questionnaire for assessing impact of cooking skills interventions

Division

### Nutrition

CookWell, project N09011, was a community-based, food skills (cooking) programme developed, implemented and evaluated by the University of Dundee.

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More on the Agency's work can be found at:  
[food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk) or at [eatwell.gov.uk](http://eatwell.gov.uk)

The intensive research methods used provided direction for the core aspects of evaluation that might usefully be measured, but are not transferable to community-run food skills interventions, of which there are now a considerable number in the UK. This follow up project therefore aimed to develop a valid and reliable short questionnaire designed to measure the impact of cooking skills interventions on knowledge, attitude and food choice. Following development, the questionnaire was applied and tested within a community project undertaking the CookWell programme in West Lothian. The final questionnaire comprised questions about meal preparation, confidence in cooking, usual food consumption patterns, knowledge about fruit and vegetables and knowledge of food safety measures, and post-intervention includes questions on the cooking intervention itself. The tool, which provides a standardised method of evaluating cooking skills interventions could assist in the development and evaluation of multi-centre cooking interventions.

#### Further information

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Project N05039

## Cognitive function, emotional well-being and dietary factors in the Caerphilly cohort of older men

Division

### Nutrition

This study used data collected over 25 years as part of the Caerphilly Collaborative Cohort Study (2,500 men aged 45-59 years at baseline) to examine the associations between dietary factors and cognitive function and emotional well-being. The key finding from this secondary data analysis was that men who had been breast-fed as infants and whose birth weight was below the median attained significantly higher test results in certain aspects of cognitive function compared with men who had been formula-fed.

#### Further information

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To contact the Food Standard Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit directly, please telephone: 020 7276 8762; or email the unit at: [MB-RCU@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:MB-RCU@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

# Celebrity chef serves up a treat for Scottish primary school pupils

Celebrity chef and *Strictly Come Dancing* star James Martin cooked up some tasty dishes for schoolchildren, when he called in at Dalry Primary School, St John's Town of Dalry, Dumfries and Galloway, recently.

Eight-year-old Hazel Banner of Dalry School scooped first prize in the FSA Scotland food hygiene poster competition with a design showing the importance of washing your hands thoroughly.

The competition invited all of Scotland's primary schools to design posters promoting good food hygiene as part of the FSA's Food Hygiene Campaign. The Agency was delighted to receive more than 3300 entries from 128 primary schools.

The celebrity chef gave a cookery demonstration to pupils and their families and teachers, and presented a framed print of the winning design to Hazel as part of her prize.

On the menu were berry and banana smoothies, salmon fishcakes, charred vegetables and chicken pannini with chicory and lemon salad, salad nicoise,

summer fruit pudding and baked chocolate and anise mousse.

James Martin said: 'I am delighted to be here to celebrate the school's success, and hope the demonstration will encourage more youngsters to become involved in the kitchen at home.'

'It's also important that young people learn that doing simple things like washing your hands thoroughly and making sure food is fully cooked can make a huge difference in helping to prevent food poisoning.'

FSA Scotland Director George Paterson said: 'The competition encourages young people to think creatively about food safety messages and at the same time it is a fun activity.'

The judging panel, which thought that the standards of entries was excellent, felt that Hazel Banner's winning design put across the message to 'wash your hands thoroughly' exceptionally well.

The judging panel that chose the winning designs comprised Stewart Cordiner, Associate Head of School, Gray's School of



Looking to the future: scottish schoolchildren get a taste of Recipe for Success

Art, Aberdeen; Erik Porter, Senior Graphic Designer, Hampton Associates, Aberdeen; Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSA Scotland; Marion McArthur, Head of Audit, FSA Scotland.

Hazel's winning design – chosen on the basis of artistic merit, originality and effectiveness in promoting food hygiene messages – was displayed on bus shelter sites across the country during the festive season.

Hazel was awarded £300 and her school received £1000. The school has used the award to upgrade its reception area.

A further 11 highly commended designs, along with the winner, feature on the FSA Scotland 2006 calendar.

The highly commended schools were awarded £250 to spend on FSA Scotland-approved projects and the pupils received £50 per poster and a framed poster print.

# FSA helps Wales to 'get cooking'

Following the launch last year by FSA Wales of the online 'Get Cooking' resource, the Agency and the National Federation of Women's Institutes Wales (NFWI-Wales) have been working in partnership to develop the Get Cooking project in Ceredigion, Powys, Montgomery, Anglesey, Clwyd, Flint and Carmarthenshire, Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire.

The project involves holding practical classes, over a five or six-week period, in the basic preparation and cooking of food on a low budget for small groups of vulnerable young people aged 14-25.

Courses are being held at venues such as community centres, schools and youth clubs, and participants can range from parenting groups to young offenders. Funding for the project has been secured from the Welsh Assembly Government

Health Challenge Wales Voluntary Sector Grant Scheme.

One course, held at the Bettws LIFE centre, near Newport, was attended by six young mums, while their children were in a crèche. The course helped the young women to develop basic skills in the preparation and cooking of food. At the end of



Shena Sarjeant, standing, and Get Cooking project members from Bettws and their children enjoy a meal after the practical session

each session the children joined their mothers to eat the dishes that had been prepared.

Rhian Connick, Head of NFWI-Wales, said 'Since the removal of cooking skills from the national curriculum in 1990, practical food education has not been adequately addressed. Young people's lack of skills in

preparing and cooking food has led to poorer diets and to more dependency on expensive and pre-packaged meal.

'With the rise in childhood obesity, this project addresses the need to educate young people to look after their health by eating a sensible diet and encourages them to take greater responsibility for not only their own health but also that of their families.'

Shena Sarjeant, WI member and Get Cooking Co-ordinator for the Bettws project, said: 'The opportunity to encourage young people to enjoy cooking using basic healthy ingredients in a friendly atmosphere has been the most rewarding work in which I have ever been involved.'

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more on the Get Cooking project contact Sarah Thomas, tel: 029 2022 1712

# Handing over the reins



Jon Bell: the Agency has come a long way

Dr Jon Bell, who has been at the centre of the Food Standards Agency since its inception – as Director of Food Safety Policy, Chief Scientific Adviser, Deputy Chief Executive and, for the past three years, Chief Executive – is moving to pastures new. Here he talks to *FSA News* about the Agency's achievements and some of the challenges it may face in the period ahead

In many ways, the UK Government took 'quite a courageous step in setting up the Food Standards Agency', says Dr Jon Bell, who stepped down as the Agency's Chief Executive at the end of last month.

'The Agency was granted powers that, at the time, were unprecedented. Saying it could publish its views and its advice to Ministers, without permission from Ministers, was really a very big step forward,' he says, reflecting on the Agency's six years of operation.

'Over my time here I would say that this has worked extremely well – as well as anyone could have hoped – and the Agency's achievements have been considerable.'

'One of the achievements, initiated well before my time as Chief Executive, has been the establishment of an open and honest approach, bringing in people at the start of policy development, rather than at the end.'

Then there are the policy outcomes. One of the foremost must be the very real possibility that the Agency will hit its target on food borne disease reduction, he says. 'That would be a tremendous achievement, as up to now few, if any, countries have been able to have that impact on the reduction in food-borne disease.'

The reduction being witnessed in salt levels in food is another huge achievement, he says. 'One that wouldn't be happening without the lead being shown by the Agency.' Then there is the role played by the Agency in focusing attention on the promotion of foods to children.

'We've played a huge role in that too, including identifying the need to do something

about it before anyone else.'

The efforts made by the Agency to enable the country to move smoothly from the Over Thirty Months Rule [a BSE control] to BSE testing 'shows that the Agency assesses risks carefully, does so publicly and thereby carries people with it'.

More recently, the Agency's drive for front of pack signposting has produced

**'The drive for front of pack signposting shows that having generated the evidence to support our policy we've stood our ground against considerable industry pressure'**

another significant achievement, he says. 'It shows that having generated the evidence to support our policy we've stood our ground against considerable industry pressure, first to do nothing and then to accept a non colour coded system, although it remains to be seen to what extent we can persuade those who haven't come on board on colour coding to do so. In the meantime, we have generated a considerable amount of support for our criteria within the food industry as well as among non Governmental organisations.'

But this doesn't mean that there haven't been difficult moments, he says.

The Agency's views on organic food have not always been popular with the organic sector, and its position on GM has sometimes been portrayed as being anti-consumer, he acknowledges.

Another difficult issue was over the pyres for foot and mouth, when the Agency was asked for its views on cattle returning to pasture land near where pyres had been burning. 'There was a lot of nervousness in Government about what we might say,' he says. 'But we outlined our advice in a very honest and open way and it was well received.'

'There haven't been many such issues – but I suppose you could say that if there hadn't been any then the Agency's powers weren't being tested properly.'

'Of course, people talk as if the Agency has been around for ages, and forget that it has only been in existence for six years,' he says. 'We've come an enormously long way by anybody's standards. If you consider the extremely positive outcomes of the recent Consumer Attitudes Surveys, and the surveys of stakeholders, we have much to be proud of. But in this business you're only as good as your last decision, and to have made pretty much the right decisions for the last six years is impressive.'

This is largely down to the dedication and commitment of Agency staff, he says. 'What the staff have achieved since the Agency was established is phenomenal and they have frequently gone well beyond what could reasonably be expected.'

But making sure that the Agency continues to be fit to deliver on all the policy areas identified in the Strategic Plan

2005-2010 will be a major challenge for the incoming Chief Executive, he suggests.

What is required now, he says, is a change in culture that will enable more empowerment and greater individual responsibility.

'Greater empowerment is essential in order to unlock the huge amount of talent within the organisation. Although it punches well above its weight at the moment, it often does so by the sheer effort of the staff.'

'There will always be occasions when this is required, but it shouldn't become the norm. I think there needs to be a general review of priorities to ensure the most important ones are at the top of the list. This has already begun and should roll out more widely as the year progresses.'

'Staff will always be the Agency's most valuable resource,

**'People talk as if the Agency has been around for ages, and it has only been in existence for six years. We've come an enormously long way by anybody's standards'**

and I am extremely grateful for the support that everyone has given me over the years. I know that the Agency will continue to go from strength to strength and I wish everyone the very best of luck for the future.'

# March 2006 Board update

The Food Standards Agency held an Open Board Meeting in Glasgow on Thursday 9 March 2006. It was attended by 70 stakeholders and members of the public and viewed on live webcast by about 1000 people.

## Report from FSA Chair

Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton reminded Board Members that the meeting was the last that would be attended by the Agency's Chief Executive, Dr Jon Bell.

She said that Dr Bell, who had helped to set up the Agency and then became its Director of Food Safety Policy, Chief Scientist and Deputy Chief Executive – later becoming its Chief Executive – had been responsible for much of the Agency's progress over the past three years. She said that he should be proud to be leaving at a time when the latest consumer awareness survey shows the highest levels of consumer awareness and trust achieved by the Agency. She wanted to take the public opportunity, on behalf of the Board, to thank Dr Bell for his enormous contribution to the FSA and to wish him well in the next phase of his career.

The Agency Chair then updated the Board on meetings she had attended since the previous meeting in February 2006. These included the annual conference of the National Farmers' Union; meetings with industry trade bodies, companies, supermarkets and manufacturers, and a range of non-governmental organisations, to talk about signpost labelling; and with the Policy Issues Council of the Institute of Grocery Distribution.

## Chief Executive's report

Agency Chief Executive Dr Jon Bell updated Board Members on developments since the previous meeting including on Avian Influenza; Benzene in soft drinks; Sudan I; Lifting of the Ban on British Beef; Malicious Contamination of Kingsmill Bread; and the findings of the Agency's sixth Consumer Attitudes Survey.

FSA Scotland Director George Paterson also presented the Board with a Strategic Overview of the Agency in Scotland.

## Board report: SEAC Sheep subgroup position statement on atypical scrapie

This paper drew attention to a position statement by the SEAC Sheep Subgroup on a recently recognised form of TSE disease in sheep known as atypical scrapie.

The Board:

- noted the content of the SEAC sheep sub group statement and the issues regarding atypical scrapie
- agreed that there should be no change in the Agency's advice on the consumption of sheep or goat meat or dairy products but that this advice should be reviewed in the light of emerging evidence
- endorsed the need for additional research
- reaffirmed the Agency's commitment to place all knowledge of the issue in the public domain, including research questions to be put forward
- requested that the Agency contact the authorities in other countries that supply the UK with sheep and sheep products to see if these countries were free of atypical scrapie
- agreed that a more detailed paper should be discussed at the April Board meeting

## Board paper: Signpost labelling

This paper described the evidence on front of pack signpost labelling, summarised consultation responses and proposed an approach based on a set of core principles.

The Board:

- agreed that there had been a significant change in the attitudes of manufacturers and retailers on front of pack signpost labelling since the Agency had first raised this issue
- noted the evidence on consumer understanding of the information presented in the signpost labelling schemes tested, and on consumer preferences
- noted the outcome of the consultation on the signpost labelling proposals
- recommended that businesses



The March Board: held in public and viewed on live webcast by 1000 people

adopt signposting schemes based on all four of the core principles set out in the paper (see this issue page 3)

- agreed that the Agency should work with stakeholders to promote the recommended scheme and use of it; and that it should work with adopters to develop a strategy to communicate the agreed core messages
- agreed that the Agency should work with stakeholders to assess the impact of signpost labelling schemes

## Board paper: National measures for UK meat plants

This paper proposed a number of variations to EU Food Hygiene Regulations to accommodate the needs of remote or small meat plants.

The Board:

- commented on the proposals outlined
- agreed the principles set out in the paper but felt clarification was needed of the terms 'local' and 'satisfactory'
- felt that there should be an emphasis on plants 'earning the right' to operate a meat plant business
- suggested that there should be further thought given to the throughput criteria to be used in the case of wild game
- accepted that the Agency should press for UK trichinella-free status
- agreed that there should be a continued low level survey of wildlife and pigs to maintain the UK's trichinella-free state

- agreed to seek the consent of the EU Commission and other Member States to the proposals

## Board paper: Harmonisation of specified risk material controls when the beef export ban is lifted

In the event that the ban on UK exports of beef is lifted, the UK will be required under EU law to lower the threshold at which vertebral column becomes specified risk material (SRM) from 30 to 24 months.

The Board:

- agreed that, when the beef export ban is lifted, the removal of vertebral column SRM for 24-30 month animals in the UK should be permitted in local authority authorised butchers
- agreed that in the case of head meat, removal is only allowed in slaughterhouses for the time being, but that this position is reviewed after a suitable interval of time
- requested a further paper on the remaining issues in the summer

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The March Board papers are in full at: [food.gov.uk/aboutus/ourboard/boardmeetings/boardmeetings2006](http://food.gov.uk/aboutus/ourboard/boardmeetings/boardmeetings2006)

The proceedings can be followed on video or audio at: [www.flyonthewall.com/FlyBroadcast/FSA/GlasgowBoard0306/](http://www.flyonthewall.com/FlyBroadcast/FSA/GlasgowBoard0306/)

A longer summary is at: [food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/mar/openboard0306](http://food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/mar/openboard0306)

## Student placement schemes offered

The Food Standards Agency is inviting local authorities in England to apply for funding for an additional Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP) or Trading Standards Officer (TSO) student placement at their authority.

For the past three years, the Agency has funded a scheme in partnership with local authorities to help address the well known difficulties in funding placements for environmental health and trading standards students. Placements are fundamental for enabling EHPs and TSOs to qualify, and the lack of places is a significant contributory factor to the present recruitment problems for both professions.

The Agency, along with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Office of Fair Trading (OFT), Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and Trading Standards Institute (TSI), have recently reviewed the scheme and, because of its success, have decided that it should continue for the academic year 2006-2007.

The Agency is pleased to report that over the past three years, nine students have benefited from the scheme and eight local authorities have participated.

Students in the scheme spend approximately six months with central Government departments to acquire relevant experience of various environmental health or

### 'Students in the scheme spend six months with Government departments to acquire relevant experience'

trading standards disciplines and six months at the local authority.

The scheme is applicable to those EHP students completing either the CIEH Practical Training Logbook or the new Experiential Learning Portfolio (ELP), as well as those TSO students working to the new qualification framework.

For these new placements, local authorities are responsible for recruiting, employing and paying the students. Central Government will pay local authorities an amount equivalent to the salary

and on-costs they incur in respect of this employment (while the student is placed with central Government departments), and this should be at the same level as the period of placement with the local authority. For their time with central Government departments, students are seconded from local authorities under separate contracts.

In addition to food, aspects of health and safety, pollution, contaminated land and noise nuisance – for environmental health – and consumer product safety, animal health and welfare, fair trading and metrology – for trading standards – are covered during the time students spend with central Government and its partners.

To be eligible to take part in the scheme from September/October 2006 local authorities need to show that they will be using the scheme to recruit an additional student above that planned initially. Such expressions of interest should be received no later than 5 May 2006.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Interested local authorities should contact Bob Pilling, tel: 020 7276 8436; email: [robert.pilling@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:robert.pilling@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

## UK meat plant approval programme

The Food Standards Agency has begun an ongoing programme of approval visits to all UK meat plants. New EU hygiene regulations, which came into force on 1 January this year, require all meat plants in the UK to be approved in order that they may continue to trade.

All plants that were operating under cover of a licence at the end of last year will be able to continue to trade until an approval visit has been carried out.

Alick Simmons, FSA Veterinary Director said:

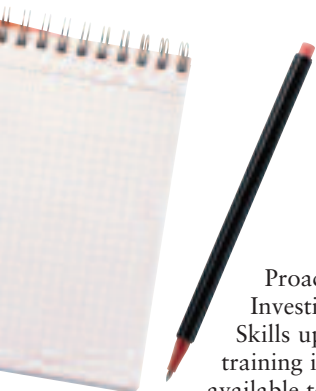
'The FSA is committed to protecting public health and ensuring that industry is compliant with regulations. The Agency will take a firm but fair approach to re-approving meat plants and will offer as much help and support to businesses as it can. However, where appropriate action is not taken in order to comply with the regulations, the FSA will not hesitate to refuse approval and, therefore, non-compliant plants may have to close, subject to appeal.'

The FSA has been working with industry over the past 12 months to help businesses comply with the new regulations. The Agency has contacted all premises that will be affected to inform them of the changes in regulations. The FSA has worked with industry representative bodies to publish compliance guidance and has also offered and carried out free appraisal visits to some 300 businesses. The FSA will continue to support industry and give as much help as it can to meat plants to enable them to comply.

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## Training for enforcement officers



Proactive Investigation Skills update training is available to local authority food law enforcement officers

in England. The course is part of the continuing programme of quality update training for enforcers at a cost that is affordable to local authorities. The course is not available for the general public, students or consultants.

Following the unprecedented

number of applications to attend the course that was held at different venues around England in 2005, a number of officers who applied to attend were unable to secure places.

After an evaluation of the training course, a number of changes were made and a further course was held in February 2006.

The success of this revised course has prompted the Food Standards Agency to provide training on three further dates during the summer of 2006.

The dates and locations of the course are:

- 13-14 June 2006, at Cheadle House, Manchester
- 4-5 July 2006, at Weetwood Hall, Leeds
- 12-13 July 2006, at HTS Lydiard Park Residential Training Venue, Swindon

The course is residential with accommodation and meals paid for by the Agency. Delegates will pay their own travel costs. The offer of a place will be sent to successful applicants in due course. In the first instance, only one delegate from any local authority will be considered.

The number of places on each course is restricted to 24 and priority will be given to those who would benefit most.

The deadline for applications is 28 April 2006.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

The application form is at: [food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/trainingflyer06.pdf](http://food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/trainingflyer06.pdf)  
For more details contact Bob Pilling, tel: 020 7276 8436; email: [robert.pilling@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:robert.pilling@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)