

Croeso | eatwell

Welcome to eatwell! The Food Standards Agency has launched a Welsh-language version of its eatwell website, to ensure that the country's more than half a million Welsh speakers are able to access the Agency's consumer advice online.

The eatwell website in English was launched in 2005, and offers advice on safe and healthy eating for consumers of all ages.

A team of FSA staff from Cardiff and London have overseen the translation of all the English language content and its deployment on the new Welsh-language site, which went live on Monday 31 March.

This follows the launch of the Welsh version of the salt.gov.uk website late last year.

According to the last census in 2001, over half a million people spoke Welsh, and a survey in 2004 revealed the following:

■ 21.7% (611,000) of all those

aged 3 and over could speak Welsh. This compares with 20.8% in the 2001 Census.

■ 57% (315,000) of Welsh speakers considered themselves fluent in Welsh.

■ Of those who could speak Welsh, 62% spoke Welsh daily. 88% of fluent speakers said that they spoke Welsh daily.

■ Welsh was the language of their most recent conversation in the case of 58% of fluent speakers.

In 1993 the Welsh Language Act established the Welsh Language Board and required public bodies to prepare and implement a Welsh Language Scheme. The first Food Standards Agency Scheme was launched in 2002.

In November 2007 a consultation was launched to get stakeholder input into the updated Welsh Language Scheme which will cover the period



2008-12. This consultation finished in February 2008 and the revised scheme will be published later in the year.

Steve Wearne, Director of FSA Wales, said: 'The eatwell website has been an acknowledged source of advice on healthy eating for consumers for several years. It was developed as part of the Agency's strategy to help consumers make informed choices, make it easier for people to choose a healthy diet, and

reduce diet-related disease.

'As part of the Agency's commitment to its revised Welsh Language Scheme, due to be launched later this year, development of a Welsh version of this advice and information has been a priority.'

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Welsh language version of eatwell can be found at: eatwell.gov.uk/?lang=cy

New Agency Chief Executive takes up post



Tim Smith (left) took up post as Chief Executive of the Agency at the start of April. He takes over from John Harwood, who had been Chief Executive of the Agency since March 2006.

Tim Smith was previously Chief Executive of Arla Foods, now part of Arla Foods amba, Europe's largest dairy producer.

He has a degree from Leeds University in microbiology and zoology, and has spent his entire career in the food industry.

Following his appointment, he said: 'I've been described as a 30-year veteran of the food industry, which is fair. But now I work for the Food Standards Agency, and its values are mine – one hundred percent.'

'Food is an issue of national importance, and there is no doubt that we have tough challenges ahead of us, especially in the fight against obesity.'

Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton said: 'Tim's food industry

background complements the experience already embedded in the senior leadership team. He also understands the issues, challenges and opportunities faced by the FSA at this time and will provide the Agency with a clear strategic direction.'

FURTHER INFORMATION

More on Tim Smith can be found at food.gov.uk/aboutus/how_we_work/profiles

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Campaign to get businesses registered



Food poisoning. Word gets around. For help on how your new business can avoid it, visit food.gov.uk/startingup

The Food Standards Agency has been running a campaign aimed at encouraging food businesses to register with the environmental health service at their local authority and help them run their business safely.

Anyone setting up a new food business, or already running a business, has been encouraged to visit the Agency's website for advice on how to do things the right way.

The campaign, which aims to make sure all businesses are registered, has been highlighting the risk of doing things the wrong way by showing that it makes good business sense to serve food that is safe to eat – food hygiene helps prevent food poisoning and protects a business's reputation with customers.

Advertisements have been advising food business operators to visit food.gov.uk/startingup, a dedicated web page that brings together various resources, including links to the Safer food, better business section on the Agency's website, and provides information about who needs to register, how they can register and what else they need to do.

Activity has focused on the metropolitan areas in England and Wales where there are large numbers of restaurants.

The campaign, which is due to be concluded in mid-April, has included local radio adverts, bus stop posters and adverts in relevant trade press and on trade websites.

YO! Sushi says Yes! to traffic light labels

Food businesses and health organisations are continuing to add their backing to the Agency's recommended approach to front-of-pack nutrition labelling.

Restaurant group YO! Sushi has become the first catering establishment to adopt multiple traffic light labels and has produced a booklet for its customers that provides nutritional information with traffic light labelling for all of its dishes.

The booklet also makes it easier for people with a food intolerance or allergy to choose dishes that are soya, gluten or wheat free.

Ian Turner, Health and Hygiene Manager at YO! Sushi, said that the traffic light approach helps customers enjoy a 'yummy yet nutritious and balanced meal'.

He said that the 'at-a-glance nutritional system will be an additional benefit to all our health-conscious customers'.

The Agency hopes that YO!

Sushi's support of the scheme will encourage other restaurants and caterers to consider how they can help their customers make more informed choices about healthier eating when dining out.

National Express, the east coast main line train operator, has also started using traffic light labels on its on-board catering, to enable busy travellers make healthy choices.

Analia Lopez, Catering Product Development and Delivery Manager for National Express, said: 'National Express East Coast's on-board catering range and restaurant service menus have been designed to give passengers greater choice and reflect their expectations in terms of healthier eating.'

'We have adopted the FSA traffic light labelling scheme on our range of sandwiches in the café bar to enable passengers to make a more informed choice as well as offering nutritional information.'



At the same time, the Faculty of Public Health has added its weight to the health organisations backing front-of-pack traffic light labelling.

Professor Alan Maryon-Davis, President of the Faculty of Public Health said: 'The whole point of front-of-pack nutritional labelling is that it should be simple enough to help busy shoppers make instant choices about healthier options.'

'Only the traffic light scheme fits the bill. The rival GDA scheme is too complicated, less practical and applies only to the theoretical "average adult".'

FURTHER INFORMATION

More on traffic lights can be found at: eatwell.gov.uk/trafflights

New diversity course for local authorities

Following a successful pilot, the Agency is to hold ten one-day diversity courses for local authority food law enforcement officers at different locations around England in June, July, September and October 2008.

The training courses, called 'working effectively with diverse communities', are for local authority food law enforcement officers and aim to enable them to work more effectively with food business operatives from diverse communities.

By the end of each one-day course, participants should have increased their understanding of:

- current equalities legislation and statutory duties and how this fits with the role and remit of local authority

enforcement officers

- the national, organisational and individual context for equality and diversity
- the basic cultural/religious/social/business practices and etiquette in a number of key cultural groups
- the principles of good practice in developing good working relationships
- the principles of good practice in cross-cultural communication
- where to find further support materials and resources

Dates of courses

Local authority food groups are invited to bid to host the course on one of the following dates offered:

18th June 2008

1st July 2008

3rd July 2008

8th July 2008

10th September 2008

16th September 2008

7th October 2008

9th October 2008

15th October 2008

22nd October 2008

FURTHER INFORMATION

To obtain more details, or if a food group wishes to host a course, contact Bob Pilling, tel: 020 7276 8436; email: robert.pilling@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk If you have any further enquiries about this course or would like further information, please contact Bob Pilling as above.

Participants and FSA staff on the pilot diversity course



Funding offer for EHP students

The Agency is inviting local authorities in England to apply for 'match funding' for an additional environmental health practitioner (EHP) student placement at their authority.

For the past five years, the Agency has funded a scheme in partnership with local authorities to help address the well-known difficulties in funding student placements.

Placements are fundamental in enabling EHPs to qualify, and the lack of placements is a significant contributory factor to the present recruitment problems for the environmental health and trading standards professions.

The Agency and a number of central Government departments and regulatory bodies have agreed to continue the scheme for the academic year 2008/09.

Match funding

The Agency is, therefore, inviting local authorities in England to apply for match funding from the Agency, for an additional EHP student placement at their authority for 2008/09. Expressions of interest should be received no later than 25 April 2008.

Students in the scheme spend approximately six months with

central Government departments to acquire relevant experience of various environmental health disciplines, and six months at the local authority. The scheme is applicable to EHP students completing either the CIEH Practical Training Logbook, or the new Experiential Learning Portfolio.

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).

Valuable experience

Sarah Leake (above), a student EHP with Wolverhampton City Council, is currently on placement at the FSA and has found the experience valuable.

She said: 'It's been really interesting and informative, and I think it would be beneficial to all student EHPs.'

'It gives you an insight into how all the organisations work, and allows you to identify the people you will have to liaise with in the future.'



Sarah Leake: a valuable experience

To be eligible to take part in the scheme from September/October 2008, local authorities need to show that they will be using the scheme to recruit an additional student above that planned initially.

They should also provide details of the arrangements they will have in place to support the student. The Agency will select potential local authority partners in consultation with the other Government departments.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

Scores on the Doors to be single national scheme

The FSA Board last month agreed that a single nationwide Scores on the Doors scheme should be put in place to make food business hygiene ratings available to consumers.

This decision was based on experience with over 100 schemes that have been running over the past two years and demonstrates the Agency's commitment to enable consumer choice.

The Agency will consult on two possible schemes:

- a four tier system, with three stars and a fail rating
- a three tier scheme with 'Pass' or 'Improvement Required' certificates being issued, alongside a fail rating – as per the scheme that has been piloted in Scotland

A 12-week consultation will be launched, and the Agency will review the responses and work with local authorities to finalise and implement the scheme.

Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton said: 'Scores on the doors is an important step in empowering consumers to make informed choices about the food they eat. The pilot schemes have provided valuable data to inform the decision of the Board and I would like to extend the Agency's thanks to all of the local authorities who implemented and maintained these and other Scores on the Doors schemes.'

'Our data show that the introduction of a single nationwide scheme is clearly supported by all stakeholders and we will work with local authorities and food businesses across the country to put this in place.'

The FSA is currently recommending a voluntary approach to the display of scores. These scores will also be available to consumers via the Internet. We will continue to work with local authorities to monitor how this operates in practice.

At this stage the Agency does not believe advocating a mandatory national approach would be in line with the principles of better regulation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Scores on the Doors paper for the Food Standards Agency Board can be found at: www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/board/fsa080306.pdf

Specialist catering course held in Devon

Environmental health officers in Devon went back to the classroom recently – to be more correct the kitchen – to learn about how dishes are planned and put together in commercial kitchens.

Nick Mann, Principal Environmental Health Officer (EHO) at Exeter City Council, and John Cunningham, former head of chef training at Exeter College, received support from the FSA to help develop a course to train EHOs in food terminology and preparation techniques and gain a better appreciation of practices in commercial kitchens.

The ground-breaking course took place on 10, 11 and 12 March at Exeter University and discussions are now taking place with the FSA to consider the role of such courses in the future.

Nick Mann said: 'The course will equip the EHO with the skills to understand the food content of the menus they see on their visits, allowing them to



Back to the kitchen: learning about high-risk ingredients

help the restaurant write safe methods and ultimately produce safe food. This is particularly relevant with the increasing number of chefs preparing dishes with high risk ingredients but using traditional methods.'

Members of the City Council's food safety team trialled different elements of the course before Christmas and this was refined into a three-day course:

two days in the kitchen to experience food preparation and determine the food safety hazards associated with specific dishes, followed by one theory day covering microbiology, food technology and safe methods.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further details, contact Nick Mann, tel: 01392 265792.

Fish decontamination position clarified

The Agency has written to the fish trade, food industry, trading standards and environmental officers to clarify the position on the use of certain products to decontaminate fish. The letters, available at the link below, reiterate earlier advice that there are no substances approved by the European Commission to remove contamination on the surface of any products of animal origin. This means that at present only drinking or clean water may be used to remove 'surface contamination' on fish.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The letters can be found at: food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/mar/fishdecon

Food sampling advice video now online

As part of its continuing commitment to low cost training for local authority food enforcement officers, the Food Standards Agency has now made available its food sampling video online. The video is aimed at environmental health and trading standards officers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The video can be found at: <http://www.flyonthewall.com/FlyBroadcast/FSA/FoodSamplingAdvice/>
A few copies are still available in VHS format and can be obtained by contacting: enforcement@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Subscribe to our RSS feeds

You can now subscribe to an RSS (really simple syndication) feed for our food and allergy alerts and our various press releases.

If a website publishes via RSS you can automatically get the updated content via a 'news aggregator' or 'news reader'. Our RSS feed will contain a brief summary and link back to our web content.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Find out more about the Food Standards Agency's RSS feeds at: food.gov.uk/aboutus/aboutsite/rss

How good are we at judging what's risky to our health?

Some of our perceptions of risk in our diet fly in the face of science, according to a new survey by the Agency.

The snapshot survey looked at how consumers perceive the risks associated with various food issues in comparison with the scientific evidence.

The results show people's opinions about food and risk in relation to bird flu, raw milk and genetically modified food, and whose advice they are more likely to trust on health issues.

The survey was conducted for the first meeting of the Agency's new and independent General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS), held on Tuesday 11 March.

The meeting, chaired by

respected British neuroscientist Professor Colin Blakemore, was followed by an open panel debate looking at the question: 'Should we trust what scientists say about food?'

The debate, held as part of National Science and Engineering Week, included among its panelists the *Guardian's* 'Bad Science' columnist Ben Goldacre.

The overall purpose of GACS is to offer independent challenge and advice on how the Agency collects and uses scientific evidence. The membership of the committee includes 13 expert members and two lay members.

More information on the

GACS meeting can be found in the research supplement in the middle of issue issue of *FSA News*.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More on the survey is at: food.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/2008/mar/badscience



Update on further research into skin-on sheep meat (smokies)

In September 2007, the Food Standards Agency advised that it was proposing new research into skin-on sheep meat, known as smokies.

A contract has been awarded to the Central Science Laboratory for a study that will investigate whether residues from medicines used during the sheep's lifecycle are present in sheep skin, potentially posing a risk to consumers.

It had been anticipated the research would start this April. However, the Agency was able to bring the start date forward to 1 February 2008 and it is expected the research will be completed by 30 April 2009.

The new work will build on published research commissioned by the FSA, which found that under controlled conditions, skin-on sheep carcasses could be produced hygienically, as reported in the journal *Meat Science*. An abstract of this report can be found at the link below.

The effectiveness of current withdrawal periods of veterinary medicines will be a key element of the new research. Withdrawal periods ensure that any medicine residues in meat from animals are below a safe limit to protect

the consumer. A related desk study has looked broadly into this issue but found that current withdrawal periods do not take into account the presence of skin-on sheep meat.

To address these gaps in knowledge, the new research will aim to determine whether certain medicines, including those that control external parasites and flies in sheep and concentrate in the skin and skin-fat, could pose a risk to consumers. Sheep feet with the skin on that have been scalded and had their hair removed are legally available for consumption. These items will be used as the testing product in the new study.

This new research will add to the evidence base required to

determine if and how skin-on sheep carcasses can be produced hygienically and safely.

It is too soon to speculate when the Agency will be in a position to approach the European Commission to suggest a change in the current law.

In the short-term there is no prospect of the law being changed to allow approved slaughterhouses to produce skin on sheep. Consequently, the production of smokies in the UK remains illegal. The FSA will continue to work with local authorities to ensure the law is enforced.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The scientific paper can be found at www.sciencedirect.com



The research will analyse veterinary medicines that may be present in sheep skin

Royal start for general advisory committee

The independent General Advisory Committee on Science held a successful first open meeting on Tuesday 11 March at the Royal College of Physicians, London.

The new committee has been established to give independent challenge and advice on how the Agency collects and uses scientific evidence.

It is chaired by leading scientist Professor Colin Blakemore and its members include 13 expert members (nine are chairs of the scientific advisory committees that advise the Agency) and two lay members.

Its main tasks are to:

- provide independent challenge and advice on Agency science.
- advise on general and strategic science and research issues
- develop good practice and fit-for purpose science processes

The audience at this open meeting saw the committee discuss its role and how it wanted to operate – agreeing on the importance of providing credible, independent challenge to the Agency and engaging actively with a wide range of expertise and opinion.

The committee also discussed its

busy work programme and initial priorities, which included how to evaluate success for the Agency's science, Agency research priorities and strategy, good practice for scientific committees, and horizon scanning.

In the afternoon following the open meeting, the committee hosted an open panel debate on the role of science in the choices we make about food.

Further information

Minutes of the first GACS meeting will be published soon on the committee's web pages at www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/gacs/ You will also find meeting papers there, and information about the GACS and its work.

To contact the GACS secretariat go to: gacs@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or telephone: 020 7276 8277.



Out in the open: the first meeting of the General Advisory Committee on Science

Welcome challenge to Agency's science

This year's National Science and Engineering Week, held from 10 – 14 March, provided lots of opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience and participate in events relating to science, engineering and technology, writes Agency Chief Scientist Andrew Wadge in his monthly diary.

'To coincide with National Science and Engineering Week, the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) held its first meeting at the Royal College of Physicians (see page 1). The committee, chaired by Professor Colin Blakemore, will provide independent challenge on our scientific work and report to the FSA Board.

'I am pleased that the work of this strategic committee is now underway and, together with our new Social Science Research Committee, this will further strengthen the governance of science in the Agency. The SSRC will be chaired by Professor Sir Roger Jowell, and I look forward to their first meeting and reporting on progress here.

'The GACS also held an open debate on "Should we trust what scientists say about food?" An eminent panel of scientists comprising Professor Blakemore; Professor Kay-Tee Khaw of the Academy of Medical Sciences; Professor Erik Millstone, Professor in Science

and Technology Policy at Sussex University; and author of the weekly column on Bad Science in *The Guardian* Ben Goldacre, were joined by an audience of about 80 people.

'A key feature to emerge was the need for a clear audit trail of how we get from the science to policy, recognising that science is not monolithic and encompasses many opinions and that there is often considerable uncertainty in our understanding.

'I was interested to hear that a major new survey commissioned by the Research Councils UK (RCUK) and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)

"Public Attitudes to Science 2008" suggests that the public is becoming more positive about science. The survey highlights people's concerns about how science is governed and regulated and that there is a genuine need for scientists to communicate the results of their work at an earlier stage than is happening currently.

'The full survey can

be accessed online via the Research Council's website (see below). I would be interested to read on my blog what you think about the survey.

'To celebrate the end of National Science and Engineering week, the Agency hosted a fun, general knowledge quiz for all staff, during which groups of scientists took on "everyone else". On the day "everyone else" won, which maybe provides another reminder that we scientists don't always know everything.

'On a more serious note, the Science Review of the Agency by the Government Office for Science is now underway, and the first meeting of the Steering Panel took place on 7 April.

'At the meeting the Chair, Professor John Beddington, and Members presented their views on the areas for review as well as selecting potential case studies and peer review projects. This was one of three meetings that will take place during the Science review.

'I look forward to reporting on the outcome of this important review sometime later this year.'

Further information

The Research Council's website is at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/sis/pas.htm>



FSA Chief Scientist
Andrew Wadge

Review of the FSA's nutrient profiling model

The FSA's nutrient profiling model was adopted in 2005 as a tool for the advertising regulator Ofcom to use to differentiate foods that are high in fat, salt or sugar from those that are not, with the aim of contributing to improving the balance of food advertising to children.

Since April 2007, the nutrient profiling model has been used as part of the controls implemented by Ofcom on the advertising of foods to children on TV.

As reported in *FSA News* 71 (October 2007), the FSA Board agreed in 2005 that the FSA's nutrient profiling model should be reviewed after a year of use to assess its effectiveness in differentiating foods on the basis of their nutritional composition, in the context of Ofcom's UK broadcasting controls.

As part of the process, the review panel has asked stakeholders to identify any issues on the practical and technical application of the nutrient profiling model with respect to its intended purpose. Issues raised were published on the Agency's website in February 2008.

The panel is now considering these issues and whether any modifications to the nutrient profiling model are justified. To help inform the panel's deliberations, an academic workshop hosted by the Agency took place

on 28 February 2008 to enable the wider academic community to input its knowledge and expertise on nutrient profiling.

The workshop, held in central London, was attended by independent academics from Europe and the USA and included a series of presentations and break-out group discussions.

The panel is currently drafting its

recommendations on the nutrient profiling model, which will go out to public consultation in June 2008.

Further information

More on the Review, including a summary of issues raised, can be found on the Agency's website at: food.gov.uk/healthierating/advertisingtochildren/nutlab/nutprofilereview



The nutrient profiling model has been used as part of the controls on TV advertising implemented by Ofcom

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

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

Further information

Contact Dr John Dixon, Assistant Librarian, Food Standards Agency, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH, tel: 020 7276 8060; email: john.dixon@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

For technical information on any of the research summarised here, please get in touch with the contact shown below the relevant report.

Programme B10 – Microbiological antibiotic resistance

Assessment relative to other pathways of the contribution made by the food chain to the problem of quinolone resistance in micro-organisms causing human infections (B10004)

Campylobacter is the most common cause of foodborne illness in the UK. Since the introduction of quinolones in human and veterinary medicine, campylobacter, in both humans and animals, has been quick to develop resistance to this antimicrobial.

The role of the food chain (in particular the use of quinolones as a therapeutic in food producing animals) in the emergence of quinolone-resistant campylobacter in humans is uncertain. The aim of this project was to assess, relative to other pathways, the contribution made by the food chain to quinolone infection in humans, using a quantitative risk assessment approach.

A number of identified risk pathways were investigated. These were:

- food: chicken (conventional, free-range, organic, non-UK), pigs, vegetable crops
- environment: public water supplies, pets (dogs and cats)
- human: foreign travel, human use of ciprofloxacin for the treatment of campylobacter

A number of other potential exposure pathways were considered but a quantitative risk model could not be developed due to lack of suitable data. These were: turkey, halal chicken, private water supplies, rendering, recreational water activities, wildlife, visits to pasture, and farm/abattoir workers.

It was concluded that the majority of quinolone-resistant campylobacter (QRC) cases in the UK (59.6%) are attributable to QRC exposure while abroad.

It was estimated that chicken consumption was the source of 8% of cases of which 1.3% and 6.7% were attributed to domestic and non-UK chicken respectively. Contact with pets (dogs and cats) was the source in 3.63% of cases,

whilst clinical treatment of quinolone-susceptible campylobacter accounted for less than 1.5% of total cases.

In total, pig meat consumption, public water consumption and crop consumption on average contributed less than one QRC case per year. It was concluded that these sources are not significant for human QRC cases.

Approximately 70.7% of total cases are estimated to be attributable to these quantified pathways. Therefore 30% of total cases are the results of sources different to those considered here.

Further information

Ian Smith, tel: 0207 276 8975, email: ian.smith@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Programme B15 – Eggs and Poultry

Campylobacter spp. in housed broiler flocks: the influence of flock husbandry practices on the frequency of colonisation (B15001)

This project, an extension to B03008, looked in more detail at the relative roles of the different aspects of flock management that might influence the colonisation of campylobacter in broiler flocks and/or affect the susceptibility of the birds to colonisation.

This project, one of the largest and most comprehensive studies ever undertaken into the epidemiology of campylobacter in housed broiler production, examined 789 poultry flocks with a caecal survey between December 2003 and March 2006.

Flock health, flock management data and climatic factors were all considered in the analysis in order to try to identify potential risk factors for campylobacter infection.

Key findings were:

- a minority (35%) of flocks were infected with campylobacter prior to first thin, when a proportion of the flock are removed by hand
- only 6% of flocks were entirely positive for campylobacter prior to first thin
- there is marked seasonality in poultry flock infection rates e.g. campylobacter infection was higher in summer and autumn compared with winter and spring

- farm data, mostly from the South West region, showed a downward trend in the prevalence of positive flocks. One company reported that flock infection rates fell from 76% in 1993 to 21% in 2005

- some farms in the study consistently produced either negative flocks or flocks with low levels of infection

- disease thought to be caused by *avian pathogenic escherichia coli* (APEC) was significantly associated with campylobacter infection.

The data suggests that there has been quite a marked change in the epidemiology of campylobacter in housed broiler flocks in Great Britain over the past five to ten years.

The findings also begin to challenge the dogma that campylobacters are 'normal' gut flora in broilers. The data suggest that campylobacter may be better able to infect the chicken gut of a compromised host and the reasons for this need to be established.

Identification of potential risk factors for campylobacter infection may allow improvements in flock husbandry practices which will reduce prevalence of campylobacters in broilers.

Further information

Ian Smith, tel: 0207 276 8975, email: ian.smith@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

A systematic search for information on diet-based anti-campylobacter intervention measures intended for chicken production (B15010)

A possible approach to controlling campylobacter colonisation in poultry is the use of dietary interventions to modify the intestinal bacterial flora of the chicken gut. The aim of this systematic literature review was to identify potential diets and dietary components and their corresponding effect on the bacterial flora of the chicken gut.

Preventing campylobacter from infecting poultry is extremely challenging. However, a substantial reduction in positive birds at slaughter would reduce the incidence of human campylobacter infection. The review includes international sources including databases and trade publications looking at the effects of diets and diet-based interventions used in commercial chicken production.

The review concluded that interventions based on dietary feed additives and components have the potential to help control campylobacter in poultry production and are worth further investigation. Such interventions could potentially be developed into procedures to manipulate the gut microflora of poultry and thereby control campylobacter colonisation.

The literature review identified gaps in the scientific knowledge. For example, a large

spectrum of compounds have shown anti-campylobacter activity *in vitro* but only a small number have been investigated for anti-campylobacter activity *in vivo*.

Therefore, there is a need to focus on *in-vivo* studies, in particular to investigate:

- the *in vivo* effects of essential oil components
- the *in vivo* effects of organic acids against acid-intolerant bacteria such as campylobacter
- the *in vivo* effects of oligosaccharides
- the effects of cereal grain types

Various studies have shown the importance of feed particle size on the microflora of the chicken gut. Differences are observed between whole, pellet and mash cereal grains. The use of whole or coarse grains could reduce feed costs to industry.

Further information

Ian Smith, tel: 0207 276 8975,
email: ian.smith@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Review of current information on campylobacter in poultry other than chicken and how this may contribute to human cases (B15019)

Poultry is thought to be a major source of campylobacter. Campylobacter infection is the most common cause of human bacterial gastroenteritis in the UK. Most studies have investigated the incidence of contamination

in chicken only. Therefore, there is a need to consider other poultry species such as turkey, goose, duck, quail, guinea fowl and game birds, as consumption of these species is increasing in the UK.

A literature review on the prevalence of campylobacters in poultry other than chicken was carried out. This included prevalence in the slaughterhouse and at retail sale. The degree of overlap, between strains from poultry sources and serotypes identified in case control/outbreak data held by the Health Protection Agency, was assessed and used to prepare a risk assessment of the occurrence of human campylobacter infection.

There are no standardised testing procedures for campylobacter in non-chicken poultry produced in the UK. For turkeys the reported prevalence ranged from 0 to 52% and was highest in September with a secondary peak in January/February. For ducks, prevalence ranged from 0 to 90%. No campylobacter testing is carried out for geese, farmed game and end of lay hens.

There are a number of *C. jejuni* strains that are more commonly isolated from patients exposed to contaminated poultry meat other than chicken, but these strains are not exclusive to this food group.

Nevertheless, the association does suggest a clear contribution of non-chicken poultry to human campylobacter infection. However, as chicken is such a strong risk factor it is difficult to estimate the role, although it is likely to be small.

Further information

Ian Smith, tel: 0207 276 8975,
email: ian.smith@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

FSA funded research published in peer reviewed journals

A03 – Chemical Contaminants from Food Contact Materials

Chaudhry, Q., Scotter, M., Blackburn, J., Ross, B., Boxall, A., Castle, L., Aitken, R., Watkins, R., Applications and implications of nanotechnology for the food sector, *Food Additives and Contaminants*, 2008, 25 (3), 241-258.

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B15 – Eggs and Poultry

Allen, V.M., Bull, S.A., Corry, J.E., Domingue, G., Jorgensen, F., Frost, J.A., Whyte, R., Gonzalez, A., Elviss, N., Humphrey, T.J. (2007) Campylobacter contamination of chicken carcasses during processing in relation to flock colonisation. *International Journal of Food Microbiology* 113: 54-61.

Bull, S. A., Allen, V.M., Domingue, G., Jorgensen, F., Frost, J.A., Ure, R., Whyte, R., Tinker, D., Corry, J.E., Gillard-King, J., Humphrey, T.J. (2006) Sources of Campylobacter spp. colonizing housed broiler flocks. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* 72: 645-52.

Other reports available in the Information Centre

Programme A05 – Food irradiation

The Safety of Irradiated Foods: A literature review (project A05009)
Development of a validated method for the determination of tartaric acid and tartrates in food (A01055)

Programme B15 – Eggs and poultry

A systematic search for information on diet-based anti-campylobacter intervention measures intended for chicken production (B15010)

Review of current information on campylobacter in poultry other than chicken and how this may contribute to human cases (B15019)

Programme E03 – Enforcement

The identification, analysis and potential remedy of the problems experienced by small and medium enterprises in complying with food law requirements (E03002)

Programme M01– Meat hygiene: microbiological safety

A mini review of the causes and incidence of pericarditis in poultry (M01035)

Programme M03 – Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs)

Empirical determination of Central Nervous System (CNS) and Dorsal Root Ganglia (DRG) contamination of carcasses and its reduction using alternative procedures (M03026)

Programme N02 – Diet and cardiovascular health

A dose response study of the effects of increased fruit and vegetables intake on vascular function (N02030)

Programme N05 – Nutritional status and function

Comparing fresh and processed fruits and vegetables as sources of bioavailable phytochemicals (N05051)

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To subscribe to the newsletter, to receive printed or electronic copies, contact Celia Dunphy, tel: 020 7276 8829, email: celia.dunphy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
For more on the Agency go to: food.gov.uk or: eatwell.gov.uk
To contact the Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit, telephone: 020 7276 8762; or email the unit at: MB-RCU@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Awards for local food action projects in Wales

FSA Wales has been announcing the winners and runners-up of its annual AFAL (Awards for Food Action Locally) awards.

The AFAL award scheme, launched in November 2003, recognises individual or team contributions to local nutrition initiatives that have made a positive impact on the diet or eating habits in the communities they serve.

The five winners and runners-up are each awarded a grant to invest in their initiative as well as a celebratory handmade wooden plate and framed certificate.

The five winners of the 2007/08 AFAL awards are: the Grow your Grub! project providing farm to fork teaching to primary schoolchildren in the Vale of Glamorgan; the Cyrenians Community Centre, which engages hard-to-reach groups in Swansea; the Healthy Eating Teen Cuisine project for year 9 and 10 pupils in Flintshire; the Riverside Community Market Association community garden, working with black and minority ethnic groups in Cardiff; and Swansea Community Farm – for its Healthy Living Activity Days.

The runners-up were: Café Coed's Food for Thought project; White Rose Primary's After School Cookery Club; Bryn cynon's Over 60s' Dinner



Caroline Kitson from FSA Wales (left) with children attending a Swansea Community Farm Healthy Living Activity Day

and Dance Club; the Pen Yr Enfys allotment project; and Thornhill's Cosy Kitchen initiative.

In a change to previous years, the winners and runners-up are being presented with their awards at the project location. This allows all of the project service users and volunteers to be involved in the presentation and gives FSA Wales officials the opportunity to fully engage with the projects and talk to people

whose lives have been improved by the initiative.

A full report on the winning projects will appear in a future issue of *FSA News*, but as *FSA News* went to press two Awards have been presented in Swansea.

The children of Swansea Community Farm received an Award for their Healthy Living Activity Days as did the Owl & Parrot Café, a project that is based at the Cyrenians Community Centre.



Service users at the Owl & Parrot Café in the Cyrenians Community Centre

Safer food means better business in Wales

Food Standards Agency Wales has been working with local authorities all over Wales to help small catering businesses, such as restaurants, cafés and takeaways, comply with food hygiene regulations and ensure that food is safe for customers to eat.

The Agency has sponsored workshops across Wales to train food business operators on Safer food, better business, the Agency's guide to food safety management. To date, approximately 650 food handlers have attended 38 workshops, including specialist sessions aimed at Chinese and Asian restaurant owners.

Jane Davies, Assistant Director, Local Authority Enforcement for FSA Wales, said: 'These workshops have reinforced the

messages given in the Safer food, better business packs and have raised awareness among food business operators of the measures they need to take to ensure they are complying with food hygiene regulations and to plan and implement an adequate food safety management system.

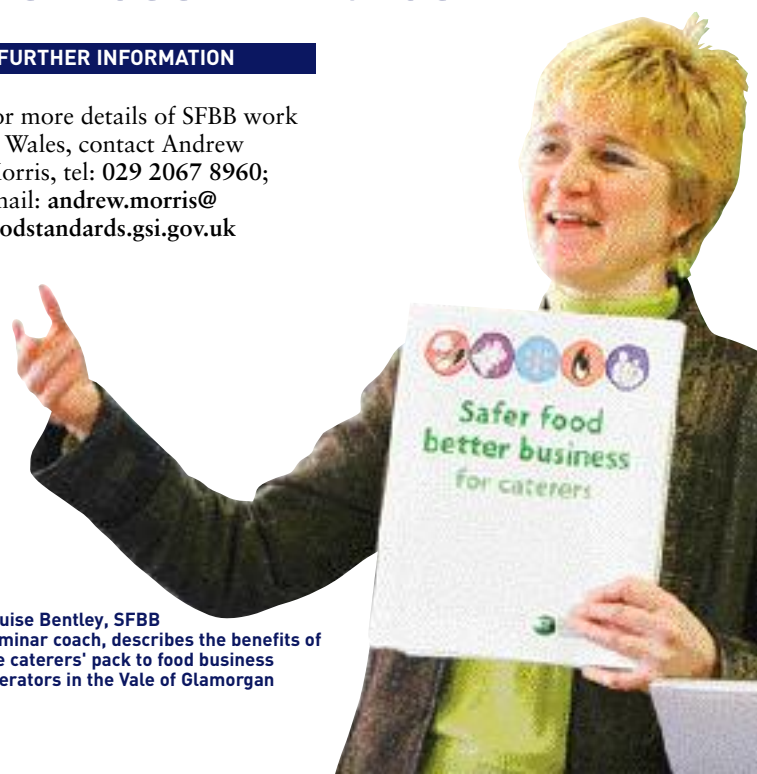
'The packs and workshops deliver messages in a practical and easy to understand format to help operators overcome any problems they may have in understanding the legal requirements and to ensure they know how to prepare food safely, train their staff adequately and, in doing so, protect their business' reputation.'

Further workshops are planned for later this year.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details of SFBB work in Wales, contact Andrew Morris, tel: 029 2067 8960; email: andrew.morris@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Louise Bentley, SFBB seminar coach, describes the benefits of the caterers' pack to food business operators in the Vale of Glamorgan



Scottish children's diet too high in sugar



Children in Scotland are eating too much sugar, according to a Food Standards Agency Scotland survey.

The survey, which looked at the sugar intake of 1,700 Scottish children aged between three and 16 years old, found that the main sources of sugar in youngsters' diets were soft drinks, confectionery, biscuits and cakes.

The Scottish Dietary Target stipulates that less than 10% of the total calories consumed should be Non Milk Extrinsic Sugars (NMES), which are

sugars added to food and drink, table sugar and those present in fruit juices.

Key survey findings include:

- The average NMES consumption was 17.4% of calorie intake, which is higher than the Scottish Dietary Target of 10%. In the 2004 Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey, intake was 17.1% and in 1997 it was 16.7% in the National Diet and Nutrition Survey.
- NMES intakes were higher in older children; sugar consumption was 15.8% of

calories in three to seven year olds and up to 19.1% in 12 to 17 year olds.

- Intakes were higher in those living in less affluent areas, where more high sugar foods such as soft drinks were consumed.
- The results suggested NMES intake was significantly higher in children who had been treated for dental decay – 18.5% compared to 16.1% for those who had not received treatment for decay.
- There was no evidence of a difference in average consumption between children who were overweight and those who were not. This could be due to the youngsters eating less at the time of the study or under-reporting what they ate.

FSA Scotland Assistant Director Jim Thomson said: 'This is the first type of survey of its kind to be carried out with children in Scotland and, disappointingly, it provides evidence that youngsters are consuming a lot more sugar than the 10% target.

'It underlines the ongoing need for FSA Scotland to continue to work with other organisations,

particularly the Scottish Government, to promote a healthy balanced diet and give children the support and information they need to make better dietary choices.'

Shona Robison, Minister for Public Health in Scotland, said: 'While it is disappointing to note the high level of sugar intake of children in Scotland, we are actively working on policies to encourage youngsters to make healthier choices.

'These include introducing standards for healthier meals in schools and the free school meals pilot for children in primary one to three.

'Long-term change to improve diet requires support from many areas, including parents, the public and the private sector.'

FURTHER INFORMATION

The survey of sugar intake among children in Scotland final report can be found at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sugarintakescot2008rep.pdf
A summary report of the survey can be found at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sugarintakescot2008summ.pdf

Recipe for success goes down well in Dumfries

FSA Scotland continued to serve up good advice on healthy and nutritious eating with the latest event in its Recipe for Success roadshow, held on 4 March in Dumfries.

TV Chef Phil Vickery (from *Ready Steady Cook* and *This Morning*) performed some culinary magic to a capacity crowd in the Easterbrook Hall, at the same time explaining how to handle food safely and hygienically. TV newscaster and presenter Fiona Armstrong hosted the evening.

Lydia Wilkie, FSA Scotland Assistant Director, said: 'Our research with consumers shows that more and more people are taking an active interest in the food they eat – so these events are an important way for us to speak directly to the public about issues that matter to them, such as labelling, eating a healthy, balanced diet, cooking

nutritious food for themselves and preparing food safely.

'It's very important that consumers have as much clear and reliable information about food as possible in a format that is accessible, useful and appealing. This is what these shows are all about – and they have proved a highly entertaining and inspiring evening where people are encouraged to ask questions about Phil's cooking or indeed on any food-related topic.'

The event was Phil Vickery's fifth Recipe for Success show working with FSA Scotland and he commented: 'I hope the demonstration encourages more people to make healthier eating choices and take up cooking at home as well as trying new dishes.

'It's also important that people know about good food hygiene and cook food properly to make

sure it is safe as well as tasty.'

Also on the menu for discussions – in addition to delicious food – were hot topics such as food labelling, how to reduce salt in your diet and how to avoid food poisoning.

The latest information on diet and nutrition, including the

FSA's food labelling traffic lights scheme, and food safety and hygiene information were on display before the cookery demonstration started.

Recipe for Success won the Best Live Event category at the Scottish Communicators in Business Awards 2007.

Below from left: Lydia Wilkie, Phil Vickery and Fiona Armstrong



New legislation on spreadable fats and dairy products



Changes are being made to domestic legislation in light of the new Council Regulation (EC) No. 1234/2007. The regulation establishes a common organisation of agricultural markets and specific provisions for certain agricultural products.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 revises a number of specific commodity regulations and its creation forms part of a wider simplification and streamlining exercise of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The new regulation applies to all agricultural products that are covered by Common Market Organisations (CMOs) and includes rules on Dairy Designations and Spreadable Fats.

From 1 July 2008, Council Regulations 1898/87 (on the protection of designations used in the marketing of milk and milk products) and 2991/94 (laying down standards for spreadable fats) will be repealed and Regulation 1234/2007 will apply from that date. As a result, it is necessary for national legislation to be updated and amended accordingly.

The Food Standards Agency wrote to interested parties on 12 March 2008, and this letter, along with the draft Statutory Instrument, can be found online (see further information).

FURTHER INFORMATION

Any comments on the regulations should be emailed to: Shifra.Sheikh@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or in Northern Ireland to mairead.davidson@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Spreadable Fats and the Milk and Milk Products Regulations (England) 2008 The letter to interested parties dated 12 March 2008 and draft Statutory Instrument is at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sfmp2008ip080312.pdf

Spreadable Fats and the Milk and Milk Products Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 Letter to interested parties dated 14 March 2008 and draft Statutory Rule is at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sfmp2008niip080314.pdf

Update on emergency measures on Chinese rice products

The Agency has written to food businesses and local authorities to alert them to new testing and analysis requirements for imports of rice products from China.

This is in the wake of a European Commission committee decision last month to put special requirements on these rice products to make sure they do not contain an unauthorised genetically modified (GM) rice known as 'Bt63'. The measures come into force on 15 April.

The Agency is not aware of any health implications for consumers who eat rice products containing 'Bt63'. Bt63 is an unauthorised genetically modified organism and so should not be on the market.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The draft Commission Decision coming into force 15 April 2008 can be found at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/enfe08016comdec.pdf Read the February 2008 story at:

food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/feb/rice

The letter sent to food businesses can be found at: food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/enfe08021.pdf

New meat regulations and guidance

'Name of the food' labelling requirements relating to added starch and added protein in meat products that look like 'plain' meat are being removed from the Meat Products Regulations 2003. This change is required to reflect changes in European legislation and is being made by The Meat Products (England) (Amendment) Regulations (MPR) 2008 and equivalent legislation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Regulation 5 of the MPR requires that certain things are mentioned in the name of the food for meat products that could otherwise be confused by consumers with meat that has no added ingredients. Regulation 5 applies in addition to the name of the food requirements in regulation 8 of the Food Labelling

Regulations (FLR) 1996.

Regulation 5 MPR is unchanged in relation to provisions about added water and ingredients from different animal species to the meat, which are of particular interest to consumers. The

amendment will, however, mean that name of the food provisions for starch and protein (unless derived from a different animal species) will now be regulated solely under regulation

8 of the FLR. Regulation 5 of the MPR will not apply.

To aid compliance with the regulation 5 of the MPR, and help explain the relationship between the MPR and FLR, the Agency will issue new guidance. This guidance will cover both legal compliance and best

practice advice on the labelling of added ingredients in meat products within the scope of regulation 5 of the MPR.

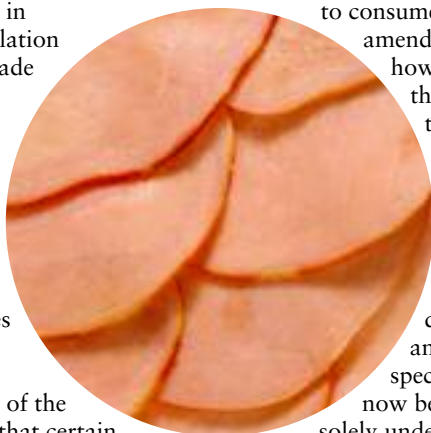
The amending Regulations came into force on 6 April 2008 and the guidance will be published on the Agency's website shortly. The Regulations will be available from the Office of Public Sector Information (formerly HMSO) in due course (see further information below)

The Agency formally consulted on both the amending Regulations and the guidance. The consultation closed in November 2007. All responses to the consultation have been taken into consideration.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Regulations will be found on the Office for Public Information website at: www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/index.htm

For more details, contact: Fiona Claudius, tel: 020 7276 8152, e-mail: fiona.claudius@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk



Codex Committee on Food Labelling

The 36th Session of the Codex Committee

on Food Labelling (CCFL) will be held in Ottawa, Canada from 28 April – 2 May 2008.

The Session is being convened under the authority of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which implements the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization (WHO) Food Standards Programme, and is open to member nations and associate members of both organisations and to observers. It will be attended by delegates from the Food Standards Agency as UK representatives.

The Codex Alimentarius is a collection of internationally adopted food standards, codes of practice, guidelines and recommendations. They have been created for the purpose of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.

Although these standards do not have statutory force, an increasing number of countries align their food standards with Codex following WHO agreements that say that Codex standards are favoured in international trade disputes.

The provisional Agenda for the 36th Session includes:

- consideration of labelling provisions in draft Codex standards
- implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health
- guidelines for the production, processing, labelling and

marketing of organically produced foods

- labelling of foods and food ingredients obtained through techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering
- general Standard for the labelling of prepackaged foods (quantitative declaration of ingredients)
- discussion paper on advertising in relation to nutrition and health claims
- modified standardised common names.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details on this meeting and the discussion papers go to the Codex website at: www.codexalimentarius.net or contact Janet McKenzie, tel: 020 7276 8172.; email: Janet.McKenzie@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

New Chair for Committee on Toxicity

Professor David Coggon OBE, has been appointed Chair of the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT). This appointment is initially for three years. He has been a member of the COT since 1 April 2007.

Professor Coggon is Professor of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at Southampton University, where he works in the Medical Research Council Epidemiology Resource Centre. He has been engaged in epidemiological research for more than 20 years, concentrating mainly on occupational and environmental

causes of disease, and has published numerous papers.

He has experience of committee work as Chair of several national and international bodies including the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and Depleted Uranium Oversight Board. He has also been a member of the COT Working Group on Organophosphates; the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (both DH); the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (DWP), and the Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards (DETR), and has been an expert advisor for the World Health Organization and the

International Agency for Research on Cancer.

At the same time as announcing the appointment of Professor Coggon, FSA Chair Deirdre Hutton took the opportunity to thank Professor Ieuan Hughes who was due to retire as Chair of the COT as of 31 March 2008.

Appointments to COT are made strictly on merit and in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The COT website is at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk>

Race and Gender Equality Schemes

The Agency is seeking views and comments on the Food Standards Agency's Race Equality and Gender Equality Schemes. These schemes describe how the Agency plans to meet the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Equality Act.

In particular, the Agency would welcome comments on:

- additional measures for inclusion in the Action Plans
- views on the arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of FSA policies

The Agency's first Race Equality Scheme was published in 2002 and the list of functions and policies reviewed in 2005. The current Race Equality Scheme can be found online (see further information). The Agency is now consulting on a revised version for 2008–2011.

The Agency is consulting on its first Gender Equality Scheme for 2007–2010 published on 30 April 2007.

Responses are requested by 9 May 2008.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The race equality and gender consultation documents are at: food.gov.uk/consultations/ukwideconsults/2008/equality2008
The current Race Equality Scheme can be accessed from the same webpage. All comments and views should be sent to Bethan Campbell, tel: 020 7276 8635; email: bethan.campbell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Register for research review

There is still time to register for the review of the Food Standards Agency foodborne diseases research programme. The review takes place from 23 to 25 June 2008 at the University of Warwick. The deadline for registration is 30 April 2008.

The Agency is currently reviewing and evaluating its research programmes in the area of microbiological safety. Programme reviews are intended to provide interested parties with the opportunity to discuss the work that has been funded by the Agency and to help identify priorities for the future.

As part of this process the Agency is formally evaluating the B14 Foodborne Diseases research programme with other relevant projects through an invited panel of independent experts.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More details and application forms are at: food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jan/b14researchmeeting or contact Helen Long, tel: 0207 276 8793; email: helen.long@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk



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