

Commissioning of nitrate survey of leafy green vegetables

Status: Closed

Date launched: 10 February 2020

Closing date: 13 March 2020

Summary of responses

PDF

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About this consultation

There has been a long-established European Commission requirement (EC/1258/2011) requesting member states to annually communicate results of nitrate monitoring in leafy green vegetables, and report on the progress of the adoption of codes of good agricultural practice by industry.

Previously the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has funded the continuous monitoring of nitrate levels in leafy green vegetables over a period of more than eleven years. The results from the last survey period 2014 to 2019 and [earlier monitoring surveys have been published](#).

A new survey is being commissioned to monitor tissue nitrate levels in domestically grown leafy green vegetables, thereby providing a snapshot of UK compliance rates with legislative maximum levels set in Commission Regulation (EU) No 1258/2011 of 2 December 2011 amending Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels for nitrates in foodstuffs.

The approach differs from previous survey campaigns in that the scope will include domestically grown produce only. There will be less emphasis on those categories where there has been an observed steady decline in nitrate occurrence such as iceberg lettuce and a greater focus on rocket where levels continue to increase year on year. There will also be a ramping up in sampling of kale, chard, bulls-blood, land cress and baby leaf to investigate how nitrate levels are fluctuating in these categories as market share increases.

We invite your comments on the survey design and how the occurrence data might be used to identify potential mitigation measures to further reduce nitrate levels.

All comments should be sent by email to ian.smith@food.gov.uk

Responses are kindly requested by 13 March 2020 or earlier if possible.

Scope of proposed survey

Samples will be collected at primary production from recruited UK growers. The sampled produce should include:

- Fresh lettuce; iceberg type;

- Fresh lettuce, non-iceberg type;
- Fresh Spinach;
- Rocket;
- Other leafy green vegetables (chard, bulls-blood, baby leaf, land cress and kale)

The field samples will be representative of the different growing regimes e.g. open air and protected for the summer and winter growing seasons, typical of the domestic salad crop sector

Specification requirements

- The collection and analysis of 150 individual field samples of domestically grown fresh iceberg lettuce, fresh non-iceberg lettuce, fresh spinach and rocket on a national scale, to be conducted on an annual basis for up to five years with a break point at year two to review progress;
- Include other leafy green vegetables specifically, chard, bulls blood, baby leaf, land cress and kale as a component of the survey;
- Prepare and analyse the samples using procedures in accordance with EU directives or UK equivalents;
- Full details of each sample will be recorded in a database and reported annually to the FSA along with full methodologies, results and interpretation including long term trends, in the context of nitrate maximum levels set in UK legislation in the form of an annual report and a final report at the end of the survey period;
- Monthly result summaries will be reported to the FSA and individual sample results notified to the participating growers;

Publication of response summary

Within three months of a consultation ending we aim to publish a summary of responses received and provide a link to it from this page.

You can find information on how we handle data provided in response to consultations in our [Consultations privacy notice](#).

Further information

This consultation has been prepared in accordance with [HM Government Consultation Principles](#). If an Impact Assessment has been produced, this is included in the consultation documents. If no Impact Assessment has been provided, the reason will be given in the consultation document.