

## FSA backs CFA/BRC shelf-life guidance for RTE foods

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has publicly endorsed the new best practice guidance document on the shelf life of ready-to-eat food in relation to *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) published by CFA and the British Retail Consortium (BRC). This is the first time FSA has published such an endorsement and the full text can be seen at [www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/foodguid/readytoeat](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/foodguid/readytoeat).

'The Shelf life of ready to eat food in relation to L. monocytogenes - Guidance for food business operators (the Shelf Life Guidance) is a free publication designed to help businesses - from small food outlets to major food manufacturers - calculate an accurate time period for people to eat food and minimise the risk of illness. The Guidance is also designed to help firms meet European Union microbiology rules - in particular Regulation (EC) No. 2073/2005 which sets limits on micro-organisms, such as listeria, in food. Complex issues are explained in an easy to understand way for staff at all levels of expertise and real life worked examples show how the advice should be put into practice including consideration of ingredients, manufacturing environment and data to support (or otherwise) the assigned shelf life. Worked examples include:

- New Product - Cold Smoked Salmon and Fresh Watercress Sandwich (Technical)
- New Product - Cold Smoked Salmon and Fresh Watercress Sandwich (Simplified)
- Justifying the shelf life of an existing product - Cold Smoked Salmon and Fresh Watercress Sandwich
- Altering an Existing Recipe - Brie with Garlic and Herbs (Technical)
- Altering an Existing Recipe - Brie with Garlic and Herbs (Simplified).

Dr Paul Neaves (Specialist Cheesemakers Association) led the development of the brie examples and Mr Bob Salmon (Food Solutions) led the development of the simplified examples.

During a discussion on Lm at the May 2010 FSA Board meeting, CFA's approach was

praised by Tim Smith, FSA's Chief Executive, who noted the "passion and commitment from people like the Chilled Food Association, their members and others who are working extremely hard because their business is based on eliminating that kind of risk..."

The guidance was developed by a coalition of organisations chaired by the BRC, including CFA, CIEH, LACORS, HPA and FSA and is available as a free download from [www.chilledfood.org/MEDIA/NEWS/2010/New+Shelf+Life+Guidance+for+Ready+to+Eat+Foods](http://www.chilledfood.org/MEDIA/NEWS/2010/New+Shelf+Life+Guidance+for+Ready+to+Eat+Foods).

## New CFA chairman



Ian Arnold, MD of Kettleby Foods representing Samworth Brothers is the new chairman of CFA. Ian studied Food Technology at the University of Reading, before starting with Burton's Gold Medal Biscuits, Blackpool. Following

a move to Maynards Confectionery he then transferred internally to run a start-up venture business making extruded crispbreads. Experience in chilled started when he was appointed site Director to Campbell's Chilled Foods for 3 years making Chinese ready meals. This was followed by a spell at Geest making fresh pasta and at Hazlewoods, Warrington making Italian cuisine meals. For the last 12 years he has been at Kettleby Foods, a Division of Samworth Brothers making predominantly British cuisine ready-meals. He has group co-ordination role for technical activities and has served on CFA's Executive Committee for over 10 years.

Ian replaces Helen Sisson of Greencore plc. At the AGM held in June, the meeting noted Helen's "substantial contribution to CFA, her perspective and energy, which has been invaluable and greatly appreciated."

## CFA market data update available

CFA has recently updated its market data section on its website and now includes information from 1999 to 2009 ([www.chilledfood.org/about/market-data](http://www.chilledfood.org/about/market-data)). CFA's Annual Report 2009 is also available on the website.

## CFA decontamination protocols for produce

Many studies of the efficacy of produce decontamination agents give unreliable results as they do not take into account (a) the time taken for bacteria to attach themselves to plant material or (b) the enhanced robustness of the attached organisms to decontamination efforts. In order to introduce a common scientific basis for experimental work in this area and to introduce further consistency into produce washing CFA, in conjunction with the Institute of Food Research, Norwich has been working on various protocols designed to help small and large businesses alike:

Part 1 - an experimental protocol on how to attach bacteria to plant surfaces and  
Part 2 - a protocol for the assessment of washwater decontamination efficacy to be used with current washing approaches, ranges and forms of presentation of produce enabling baseline comparison of the effect on wash-water decontamination by using various sanitisers.

CFA has also produced a produce washing protocol designed to introduce consistency into produce washing particularly by ingredient suppliers and by users of prepared produce as ingredients. The aim is to set out how to use optimal levels of sanitisers such as hypochlorite at the correct pH and contact time.

Parts 1 and 2 are already available to CFA members and will be ready for publication in a peer-reviewed journal in the future.

CFA Members are promoting the produce washing protocol to suppliers to the sector. The protocol is available from the CFA website.

## CFA and WRAP discuss date and storage instructions on labels

CFA and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) are in discussion on proposals to change consumer use instructions on labels e.g. 'freeze-by' instructions.

There is no indication of safety problems with current consumer practice but helping consumers to better understand and have confidence in what food can be frozen - and when - could make a significant contribution to reducing food wastage. According to WRAP at least 380,000 tonnes of food is thrown away because it has passed a use by date, but this waste could be avoided through checking the date and either cooking or freezing before the end of the use by date. WRAP is, therefore, proposing a move away from 'freeze on day of purchase' labelling to align with FSA guidance that food can be safely frozen up to the date mark, and help consumers by giving them the option of freezing food they had planned to eat but couldn't. WRAP is currently undertaking research to help support this change.

CFA's prime consideration is food safety and to ensure a consistent approach across the food industry. It has previously commented on draft FSA guidance on the application of use by/best before dates and on the development of the Food Information Regulation.

CFA has regular contacts with WRAP on both its retail and domestic sector waste minimisation programmes. It is a member of the consortium running WRAP's Prepared Foods Resource Mapping project and the Confidence in Compost programme's Technical Advisory Committee.

## Personality of the year

Kaarin Goodburn, CFA's Secretary General, has been short-listed for 'Personality of the Year' at this year's Food Manufacturing Excellence Awards. This award is given to the individual who has done most over the past year to raise the profile of food and drink manufacturing. Other candidates include: Jimmy Doherty, TV presenter and farmer; Fergal Leamy, head of Greencore USA; Paul Lindley, MD, Ella's Kitchen; Lise Madsen, founder Honeyrose Bakery; Ross Warburton, President, Food & Drink Federation.

Votes must be cast by 24th September. The winner will be announced at the Awards Dinner at The Savoy in London on 2 November 2010. For information and to vote visit: [www.foodmanawards.co.uk](http://www.foodmanawards.co.uk).

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