

Hygiene training guidance for multi-cultural environments

In September 2004, the Northwest Food Alliance (now Food Northwest) organised a one day conference to look at the challenges of managing ethnically-diverse teams. At the conference it became clear that the development of an increasingly diverse workforce requires new approaches to facilitate supervision and training and allow workers to be consulted and to voice their concerns. As a result a guidance document was developed for the food industry entitled 'Working Safely in a Multicultural Food & Drink Industry'.

As with the rest of the food industry, the chilled food industry has always employed seasonal workers to help to maintain appropriate manning levels as volumes fluctuate and to meet the requirements of supermarkets which are increasingly operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Even though most overseas nationals are actually employed by an agency rather than being directly employed, CFA members take very seriously their obligations as good employers. For example, appropriate translators are available to help ensure that employees fully understand the health, safety and hygiene requirements of their jobs. Employers must also provide information, instruction, training and supervision in an understandable format for all workers, irrespective of their national origins, first language or literacy.

Recently, CFA has set up its own working group to develop, with FNW, more specific hygiene-focused training guidance of relevance to the chilled food sector. Under the working title 'Food Hygiene and Preparation in a Multicultural Food and Drink Industry', the guidance will highlight good practice and will be targeted at food and drink processing companies who directly employ, or who use the services of a labour provider to supply, workers who may be from different cultural backgrounds. The guidance will outline procedures and give practical examples of action which employers can take to ensure that their legal and moral obligations are met.

In addition, a recruitment consultancy, Horizon European, working on literacy and English for speakers of other languages, has agreed to participate.

It is anticipated that the CFA Guidance will be published in 2008.

New member

CFA is pleased to welcome W S Bentley Growers Ltd as an Associate Member. Based in Gomersal, West Yorkshire, W S Bentley are specialist growers, processors and distributors of high quality salads, supplying supermarkets, wholesalers, distributors and caterers.

CFA handwash poster in Polish & Portuguese

CFA's highly successful handwash poster is now available in Polish and Portuguese, free for a limited time only, as downloadable files from the CFA website. Other language versions are under development. These language versions are designed to help member companies who employ workers from overseas and translations were provided using Polish, Portuguese and other language speakers within CFA member companies.

Print copies of the original English language version can be ordered (price £25 per pack of two A3 and four A4 size posters including VAT and P&P in the UK) from the CFA online shop (http://shop.chilledfood.org/acatalog/Factory_Hygiene.html).



CFA and sustainable development

CFA has set up a new Sustainable Working Group to replace its Environment Working Group with the aim of bringing together environmental and sustainability-related work issues impacting on the sector. The working group will engage with policy makers, such as the Environmental Agency, DEFRA and the DTI and aims to identify and facilitate ways of helping CFA members comply with regulatory and other requirements, e.g. FISS and its Champions Groups reports.

Clarity in terminology and legislation

To help agencies and authorities including the FSA and the Health Protection Agency understand industry terminology, CFA is preparing a 'Glossary of Terms' covering terms derived from legislation, CFA guidance and other documents along with some terms not previously defined by CFA.

The need for this Glossary has been highlighted in HPA's investigative work in the supply chain when issues arise, and on implementation of the EU Microbiological Criteria Regulation (MCR) where varying interpretations of the term 'ready to eat', for example, have arisen.

The interpretation of this term was agreed with the Food Standards Agency and other parties in the CFA/BRC Guidance on the MCR, the second edition of which was published in December 2006 and which continues to be popular with over 33,000 downloads from the website <http://www.chilledfood.org/content/guidance.asp>.

The MCR Guidance aims to help food businesses meet the requirements of the EC Regulation which came into force in January 2006. In addition, CFA's Microbiological Testing and Interpretation Guidance complements the MCR Guidance and sets out how microbiological testing fits

into HACCP, where sampling should take place and how data should be interpreted and acted upon.

Both sets of guidance and the terms within them clearly have a role in HACCP implementation and general legal hygiene requirements.

The Glossary will play a key role in assuring clarity in communications between industry and authorities. Once finalised it will be forwarded to various regulatory agencies and will be available on the CFA website.

CFA presentations

On 5 July 2007, CFA's Secretary General, Kaarin Goodburn, gave a presentation on the EC Micro Criteria Regulation with special reference to produce at the Society of Applied Biology Summer Conference in Cardiff, (<http://www.sfam.org.uk/index.php>).

Also in July, Kaarin Goodburn gave an online lecture on the UK chilled food industry, its controls and ethos for the University of Georgia, USA. The lecture is part of a largely online course where graduates participate in interactive lectures on a variety of topics, such as HACCP, QA, dairy foods, seafood, fresh cut produce.

Kaarin has also been invited to speak on the EC Micro Criteria Regulation at the International Association of Food Production Third European Symposium on Food Safety from 18-19th October in Rome, Italy. The Symposium, entitled 'Advancements in Food Safety' is in collaboration with ILSI Europe and the World Health Organisation (WHO). (<http://www.foodprotection.org/meetings/Education/Europe07Main.asp>).

CFA/FSA Annual Dinner

John Harwood, Food Standards Agency (FSA) Chief Executive, and Gill Fine, FSA's Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health, attended the CFA Annual Dinner in London on 4 June 2007.

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