

## CFA secures United Nations agreement on Listeria

CFA has secured agreement at a recent United Nations FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Food Hygiene Committee meeting to reject zero tolerance as the sole regulatory approach for *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm).

For the average healthy person the risk of becoming ill with listeriosis from food is very small and scientific evidence has shown that *Listeria* are consumed commonly with no ill effects. Because of this, EU legislation supports a risk-based policy allowing up to 100 colony-forming units of Lm/g (with certain exceptions) present in food at the end of its shelf life. In contrast, the US, traditionally, has favoured a zero tolerance approach for Lm for all foods. This means that the presence of any amount of the bacteria is not permitted. But this target is impossible to achieve consistently as Lm is ubiquitous in the environment. In addition, the US chilled food market is very different from the UK where manufacturers apply shorter shelf lives than elsewhere in the world. In the US, as a result of the zero tolerance policy, there is relatively little testing for Lm in foods.

CFA has consistently argued that the best way to control Lm is through monitored preventative measures and appropriate controls and, in December 2008, the United Nations FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Committee on Food Hygiene, at its meeting in Guatemala, adopted this approach with the US finally agreeing to abandon its rigid adherence to the zero tolerance policy. The agreement is due to be ratified this summer and will prevent, potentially, many hundreds of unnecessary product recalls every year in the UK alone saving hundreds of millions of pounds Sterling, protecting reputations, the continued risk basis of EU regulation and food safety.

CFA played an instrumental role in bringing about this agreement by providing the European Commission (EC) and FSA with scientific and practical data supporting the demonstrable validity of the 100cfu/g limit within a controlled shelf life. As part of this work CFA made extensive input into two EU-level shelf life guidance documents which were agreed by the EC in November in support of the EU position at the UN.



## Kaarin Goodburn MBE

CFA's Secretary General, Kaarin Goodburn, was awarded the MBE for services to the food industry in the June 2008 Queen's Birthday Honours' list. On 18th

December she was presented with her award by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace.

### EFSA Expert Database

Also among her achievements, Kaarin Goodburn has been included in the EFSA Expert Database set up, in cooperation with Member States, to provide a database of external scientific experts able to assist EFSA's Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels, networks and working groups. Scientists with relevant expertise were invited to apply and candidates who met the validity and eligibility criteria have been included. The aim of the database is to develop a more effective and flexible response to EFSA's growing workload whilst enhancing the transparency of EFSA's expert selection process.

## CFA invited to join UKFFoST Executive Committee

CFA has been invited to appoint a representative as an observer to the UK branch of the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFOST). The UK Federation of Food Science and Technology (UKFFoST) aims to provide a means of presenting considered recommendations and advice on food science and technology matters of national concern (e.g. the organisation and funding of national food research).

The UKFFoST Executive includes observers from: The Royal Society, FSA, DEFRA, Leatherhead Food and Campden Food & Drink RAs. Members include professional bodies and learned societies whose aims and objectives are consistent with UKFFoST's own. UKFFoST also supports young food scientists, e.g. through awards to help them attend the World Congress of Food Science & Technology.

# NEWS WE WASTE CFA

## CFA welcomes clearer classification on waste

CFA has welcomed a recent WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) decision to change the way domestic food waste is categorised in their calculations. Accepting that their current terminology is confusing WRAP have now agreed that their 'ready meal' category should be split so that waste from 'store bought' ready meals is kept separate from waste from 'take-aways'.

CFA had criticised WRAP for persistently linking ready meal manufacturers and take-away restaurants when it comes to food waste because it is misleading and damages the perception of ready meals. In its "The Food We Waste" Report, published last summer, WRAP set out domestic food waste as divided into different categories and claimed that 440,000 'ready-made meals' were thrown away by consumers. CFA disputed these figures as estimated waste levels were extremely high compared to the market data and urged WRAP to change its definition arguing that most of the wastage identified relates to take-aways and not store-bought meals.

WRAP have now indicated a more realistic estimate of waste from these categories. Of the total 215,000 tonnes, around 81,000 tonnes represents waste from store-bought ready-meals and 88,000 tonnes from take-aways. The remainder is considered impossible to determine. CFA has welcomed the decision to change WRAP terminology which, it hopes, will ultimately lead to more accurate information and improvements in minimising food waste.

CFA and individual members have been active in waste minimisation for many years, often playing a leading role in the development of research priorities and progressive industry and Government policy. For example, the Defra Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (FISS) Champions Group on Waste was chaired by CFA Member Dr Gus Atri of Northern Foods, and Kaarin Goodburn was a member of the Group.

CFA is actively involved in a range of waste minimisation initiatives including:

- £750k SUSSLE (Sustainable Shelf Life Extension) research programme to better understand and explore the extension of the shelf life of chilled foods by using tailored reduced energy heat processes, enhancing quality without compromising safety;
- funding research at Sheffield Hallam University comparing energy usage and waste arising from domestic vs industrial production of lasagne;
- Defra-funded projects at the Open University investigating attitudes towards organic waste-derived materials, and at Cranfield/IGD on the impact of trade relationships on waste;
- WRAP projects on the usage of waste in agriculture - CFA's aim being to ensure that appropriate technical standards are in place to prevent the safety of crops being compromised.

For more information contact Kaarin Goodburn on 01536 514365 or visit <http://www.chilledfood.org>.

## CFA presentations

Kaarin Goodburn, CFA's Secretary General, has been invited to give a number of presentations in 2009 including:

1. 'Microbiological Standards in Practice' at the Leeds Applied Food Microbiology Course for EHOs, food microbiology and food safety professionals at Weetwood Hall Hotel and Conference Centre, Leeds in April 2009.
2. 'Management of E coli O157 in fresh fruit and vegetable produce: How can we be safe?' at the Royal Society for Public Health Conference on 'E coli: Cases, Controls and Common Sense' to be held on the 13 May 2009, in London.
3. 'Microbiological Criteria' at the Warwick Food Microbiology Course for EHOs and QA Officers at Warwick University from 14-16 September 2009.

For information about these events visit: <http://www.chilledfood.org/events/events.htm>.

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