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Image: unsplash.com/@autumnmott

## Sunflower oil shortage and substitution

The consequences of Russia invading Ukraine continue to resonate around the world and the food industry. Ukraine supplies up to 80 per cent of the UK's sunflower oil and more than 2,500 chilled foods are now affected, with hundreds more impacted from sunflower oil-containing ingredients.

The industry is urgently looking at alternatives, such as rapeseed. CFA is engaged with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and defra on the need for derogation or flexibility on labelling. The impacts of such changes cannot be understated, with millions of labels on thousands of foods affected. CFA Director General Karin Goodburn said: "We are in a perfect storm when it comes to labelling – industrial action at a major supplier of food labels is already impacting stocks and there is no room on pre-printed labels or pack sleeves to accommodate the extra information. Rapid policy decisions are needed to ensure our members can adapt to meet these new demands being made of them."

In order to keep food supplies flowing FSA and Food Standards Scotland are advising consumers that some food products labelled as containing sunflower oil may instead contain refined rapeseed oil. Consumer trust is a priority and FSA has looked into the food safety risk of this substitution, particularly for those with food allergies, and found it to be very low. Furthermore the seed oil industry has no evidence of refined rapeseed oil containing any allergenic protein. However, the UK is not self-sufficient in rapeseed oil so the use of further substitutes is being assessed.

The issue goes beyond sunflower oil. Ukraine is a huge exporter of proteins and wheat, and Russia a source of ammonium nitrate and phosphate for the fertiliser industry. Global Ukrainian grain exports in 2018 were more than 40 million tonnes, 13.6 million tonnes of which were to the EU. Losing these raw materials will result in higher prices for businesses and for consumers.

## The impact of COVID – a diet of cake and lasagne!



CFA's analysis of chilled food sales for 2021 reveals the impact of COVID on the UK's eating habits. Lockdown restrictions, and the general uncertainty, appeared to have increased an appetite for comfort food – leading to a diet of more cake and chilled prepared meals.

The total value of the UK chilled prepared food market for 2021 was £14.4 billion (excluding some categories of foods for which data are no

longer available) – an increase of 7 per cent on 2020.

Sales of chilled ready meals were up by 22 per cent on 2019, with chilled cakes showing strong growth, being up by 13 per cent. However, sales of prepared mixed tray salads and chilled prepared fruit were also up (by 19 and 13 per cent respectively) showing a strong recovery from the COVID-induced decline of 2020. Perhaps reflecting the nation's desire for a diet to lose those lockdown pounds.

The lockdown closure of many workplaces and offices inevitably lead to a decline in prepared sandwiches and wraps during 2020, with the market down by around £1bn. However, the sector showed strong signs of recovery

last year with sandwich sales up by 18 per cent and wraps up by 33 per cent.

CFA Director General Karin Goodburn MBE takes up the story: "The consequences of the necessary restrictions on our movements and lifestyles are starkly revealed in our eating choices since 2020. While many households explored home baking, the convenience of chilled ready meals was clearly still a draw.

And, with dining out off the agenda, people have perhaps enjoyed more 'special occasion' foods, such as cakes, at home. There is no doubt that the chilled food industry suffered during 2020. However, we're encouraged by these figures, with most food categories showing increased, or stable, sales, and to note that the industry shows strong overall market growth, particularly in 2021. It is good news for the 100,000 people who rely on the industry for their livelihoods and for the many millions of people who enjoy the exciting range of chilled foods currently available."

A full breakdown of the market data, commissioned from Kantar, is available on the CFA website [chilledfood.org/our-market/](https://chilledfood.org/our-market/)





# Sustainability position statements published

Two new online documents have been published outlining CFA's position on ethical employment and agricultural sustainability.



## Ethical employment

As part of the Association's ongoing commitment to sustainability, its members aim to work in their own businesses and with their suppliers to improve working conditions and human rights.

CFA members take pride in being trusted and ethically responsible businesses, and want their customers and consumers to be confident that everyone working in their supply chains does so in safe conditions and are treated fairly.

This commitment is driving members to work in their own businesses, and with suppliers, to

continuously improve working conditions and human rights, and to tackle issues such as modern slavery and hidden exploitation.

With their sourcing of raw materials from a worldwide supply base, CFA members can have significant influence on how suppliers operate and behave. Members expect their suppliers to comply with all applicable laws, regulations and codes within their countries of operation and, where these are considered inadequate, to meet the more stretching standards recognised by the UK and UK customers.

To aid its members in addressing these matters, CFA member-only working groups offer opportunities to discuss specific issues, and the association feeds the view and experiences of the sector to Government, enforcers and other stakeholders.

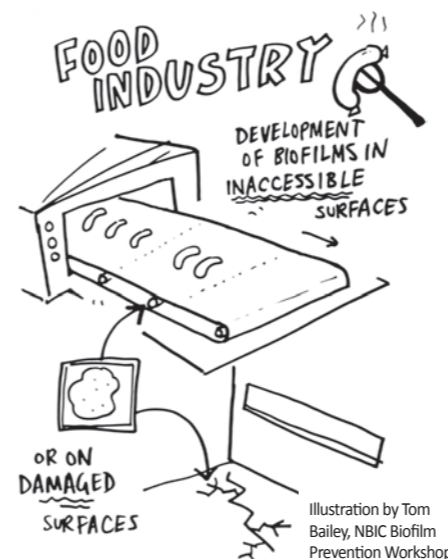
The full position statement can be found here: [chilledfood.org/ethical-employment-in-agriculture-and-food-production/](https://chilledfood.org/ethical-employment-in-agriculture-and-food-production/)

## Sustainability in agriculture and fresh produce

Agriculture plays a unique role in the drive towards sustainability in the supply of chilled food. This means growing food and using production processes that do not pollute the environment, that conserve natural resources including water, increase resource efficiency and reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and are economically efficient, safe for workers and protect the communities.

This position statement covers all aspects of agricultural sustainability: waste, land use and soil health; water; natural capital, environment and biodiversity, and pesticide use; GHGs, packaging and, finally, supply chain management. It outlines CFA's approach to each aspect, as well as notes of progress made and ambitions for next steps.

The full position statement can be found here: [chilledfood.org/sustainability-in-agriculture-fresh-produce/](https://chilledfood.org/sustainability-in-agriculture-fresh-produce/)



## The future of biofilms

Prevention of biofilms is a key activity of NBIC (National Biofilms Innovation Centre) and in November 2021 CFA's Dr Ken Johnston joined its multi-disciplinary workshop to share knowledge and identify needs for future research and innovation in the field.

Almost half (49%) of NBIC's Proof of Concept projects funded since 2018 have been on the prevention of biofilms, covering medical, dental, household, environmental and marine applications. As the keynote presenter commented: "The sheer scale of interdisciplinarity required is staggering" when working on innovative approaches to biofilm prevention. A new approach in the laboratory, new performance standards and reproducible biofilm testing methods are all required to allow meaningful claims.

Food industry concerns about biofilms on surfaces inaccessible to cleaning, and on damaged surfaces, were the focus of one breakout group. It learned of past international long-running outbreaks of Listeriosis caused by inadequate cleaning of food manufacturing areas which has allowed *Listeria* to persist, probably in biofilms, and contaminate the food.

Regulations governing sanitizer use in the industry and regulatory classification of food contact surfaces, make it difficult to introduce innovative cleaning agents and set approval processes for potential new anti-biofilm food contact surfaces. However, ways to make better use of existing agents and to bring innovations proven in other application sectors could be very interesting.

The academic community is working on:

- Phytochemicals from common foods which disrupt biofilm formation through properly understood mechanisms
- Modelling and engineering the flow of liquids over a surface at a microscopic scale to design out bacterial adhesion
- Switching the wettability and adhesive properties of a surface by external changes (e.g. pH, light) to make the surface inhospitable for colonisation by bacteria

Future research results and collaborative projects should show interesting progress on these, and other topics.

## And the winners are....



Awards season is in full swing with CFA members honoured with some of the industry's most prestigious prizes. Congratulations to Moy Park who scored a hat-trick at the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Awards with Dr Gary McMahon named Food Safety Champion (above left on right), Ursula Lavery (above right) winning the Outstanding Food & Drink Industry Leadership Award and Moy Park's Culinary Academy picking up the Food and Drink Sector Skill Award.

Cranswick plc was recognised in Food Manufacture Magazine's Excellence Awards, winning the sustainability category. Moy Park also scored highly on the night with Megan Afford a finalist in the Apprentice of the Year category and the company in the final of Meat Poultry & Seafood Manufacturing Company category. Megan also shares her apprentice experiences on the Chilled Education website. [chillededucation.org/studies/megan-afford/](https://chillededucation.org/studies/megan-afford/)



And still on the subject of awards, CFA's Director General Karin Goodburn was made an Honorary Fellow of the ISFT in March. The prestigious title is held by only 20 other leading lights in the field of food science and goes to those who have "made extensive personal contributions to the working and progress of the Institute and to the food science and technology profession".

## The £60m cost of Brexit certification red tape

CFA continues to work with food and feed trade associations, hauliers, farmers and veterinary and environmental health professional organisations (via the Sanitary and Phytosanitary – SPS – Working Group) working directly with Government to resolve trade issues and to highlight the continuing financial and human cost of post-Brexit red tape. (CFA News #56)

In just one year (to November 2021) the new Export Health Certificates (EHCs) requirements imposed on exports to the EU is estimated to have cost at least £60m in paperwork, with more than 288,000 EHC applications requiring the equivalent of 580,000 certifier hours – 285 certifier years. The number of EU vets registering to work in the UK has dropped by more than two thirds since 2019, exacerbating already extreme demands on the veterinary cohort and severely depleting the availability of qualified staff to certify the paperwork required for export both to the EU and wider world.

To cover these additional costs, Great Britain's food industry would have needed to generate around £3bn of total additional sales (assuming a 2 per cent profit margin) in the first year of Brexit. These new costs mean that many food businesses can no longer afford to export to the EU. And many companies no longer trade with their previous largest export market, impacting on livelihoods and the GB economy.

Short shelf-life foods are particularly impacted by the new requirements.

Time-sensitive Just In Time production and distribution means that any delays in the transportation compromises the ability to sell them. Consequently, GB export to the Continent of short shelf-life chilled prepared foods is now largely unviable.

Businesses continue to work hard to navigate these barriers. The SPS Certification Working Group is chaired by CFA's Karin Goodburn: "These already disturbing figures in fact underestimate the total cost to the industry as they exclude bulk orders of EHCs from the Animal and Plant Health Agency made in one request and the wider costs of Brexit SPS requirements.

"Without urgent action the situation is only set to deteriorate and there are no quick fixes. However, we are proposing solutions and call on Government to support us in ensuring the viability of our food businesses."

The issue was covered in the national consumer and trade media, including the Financial Times. Further details, including the proposals, are on the CFA website: <https://bit.ly/3Nud11N>

## Health and Safety support



The many benefits of CFA membership include the sharing of expertise and best practice as well as mutual support. A recently established WhatsApp group for Health and Safety managers in CFA member companies is already proving useful for its participants. CFA's Dr Ken Johnston is running the Health & Safety Working Group and is happy to add H&S managers in CFA member companies to his contact list. Members should contact Dr Johnston with their mobile number, company name and job title.

## Simplifying risk assessment for fresh produce



Anyone working in fresh produce will be interested to hear about a new resource to help with risk assessments to assure Good Agricultural Practice and food safety, including irrigation water and field worker hygiene. Food Standards Scotland have developed an invaluable online risk assessment tool for fresh produce. Its easy to use approach uses multiple choice questions and gives detailed information at the end of the assessment. And, importantly, it's free. It can be found on the Food Standards Scotland website: <https://bit.ly/3IC1bz0>



## Not to be sniffed at....



A decision by Morrisons to scrap the 'use by' dates on its fresh milk and encourage people to use a sniff test instead sparked lively discussion in January. WRAP's communications around this move were challenged by CFA's Karin Goodburn, who, concerned that people may use this method for checking other food types, questioned the clarity of the messaging. She noted that the sniffing approach would not be at all appropriate to unpasteurised milk as it has gone through no risk reduction process. Morrisons' intention is to reduce the amount of milk wasted, so they are retaining the date of production on bottles but leaving it to the user to assess freshness.

The debate around the issue prompted comments from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland. The FSA told the BBC that: "When dealing with food generally, sniffing is not an appropriate safety test, especially with products that could cause food poisoning."





## Easter eggs-periments!

The library of Store Cupboard Science experiments continues to expand – with more than 60 suggestions now available on the CEd website. The latest set takes the topical theme of eggs and includes making a golden egg (just take a pair of tights and an egg!), turning eggshells into chalk and testing for freshness. All the ideas can be found on the CEd website: [chillededucation.org/store-cupboard-science/](http://chillededucation.org/store-cupboard-science/)

## Listeria awareness

CEd resources are not just for young people – they're useful to anyone talking about food safety – as colleagues from 2sfg (pictured here) discovered. Nicola Benniston, the company's Divisional Technical Controller was delighted to use CEd's MicroTrumps for her *Listeria* training with colleagues.



## Members enjoy a resource refresh

There can never be enough people talking about careers in chilled food and Chilled Education is always keen to support CFA members in their own outreach work. With face-to-face events still uncertain, the team recently held an online meeting with members. In the session Karin Goodburn, Charlotte Patrick, Gill Harrison and one of CEd's young scientists Morgan (above) talked through the resources and demonstrated some of the experiments. Participants welcomed the chance to hear about CEd, declaring the session "really useful" with "lots of great stuff we can share with colleagues."

## New career paths insights



More CFA colleagues have shared their CVs to provide inspirational career advice and tips. Greencore's Kate Savio and Bakkavor's Caroline Floyd, Rebecca McSweeney, Peter Winstanley (above) and Andrew Haines (not pictured) are the latest to be profiled. Who's coming up with new ideas for what we eat? Who's focussed on food safety? Whose passion for fresh food has given them a brilliant career? Who is looking out for future food talent and....which of our interviewees swapped *Star Wars* aspirations for a successful career in chilled food production?? Find out on the CEd website: [chillededucation.org/career-paths/](http://chillededucation.org/career-paths/)

## Getting social



Chilled Education has some amazing resources so it's good to be able to talk about them to support national initiatives. In the last few months the team has taken to its social platforms to lend its voice to some important, and very relevant, subjects including National Apprenticeships Week, International Women's Day, Food Waste Action Week and British Science Week. Follow CFA on Twitter [@ChilledFood](https://twitter.com/ChilledFood) and CEd on Facebook [@ChilledEducation](https://facebook.com/ChilledEducation).

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