IN THIS ISSUE: Ukraine; market data; sustainability; Brexit; Listeria latest; CEd online

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.

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/
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 Dr Ken Johnston is running the Health & Safety CFA WhatsApp group for Health and Safety managers.

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 ensure food safety. Agriculture and Food and Environment 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:


CFA NEWSLETTER APRIL 2022

The £60m cost of Brexit certification red tape

The number of EU vets registering to work in the UK has dropped by more than 70% since Brexit, requiring the equivalent of 580,000 certifier hours – 285 certifier years. The UK is struggling to meet its SPS requirements imposed on exports to the EU is estimated to have cost at least £60m in paperwork, with more than 288,000 HC 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 70% since Brexit, 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 70% since Brexit, requiring the equivalent of 580,000 certifier hours – 285 certifier years.

CFA News #56

APRIL 2022

The future of biofilms

Prevention of biofilms is a key activity of NBC (National Biofilms Innovation Centre) and the FSA (Food Standards Agency) made in one request and the wider costs of Brexit SPS requirements imposed on exports to the EU is estimated to have cost at least £60m in paperwork, with more than 288,000 HC applications requiring the equivalent of 580,000 certifier hours – 285 certifier years.

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 consultations including being a member of the FSA industry group feeding into the review. CFA has expressed concern about the lack of alignment to present to the June session of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food Botulinum Working Group, which is reviewing the entire risk basis of FSA’s guidance.

Vacuum Packing/ MAP latest

In 2016 CFA brought together a group of trade associations to respond to the Food Standards Agency’s (FSA) amended guidance to the “10 day rule” (CFA News #46). Following this, in 2020, CFA announced it had secured, with Quadram Institute Bioscience, a research project entitled “The other 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.

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Listeria response update

As reported in CFA News #48 CFA has been leading a pan-industry group to respond to the EU’s expected proposed changes to Listeria monocytogenes (Lm) legislation. CFA has now developed the UK position, with supporting technical data from CFA’s vast Mtm dataset, and is using it to build an alliance of UK companies, trade associations, European federations and other international parties in readiness for the expected EC consultation on Lm before the end of the year. CFA Director General Karin Goodburn has a presentation on the issue which can be viewed on the Safe Food Knowledge website:

http://bit.ly/36Q6Mr

And the winners are….

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”.

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. WWF’s communications around how such reforms 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.”

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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 are also 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 worksupply base, CFA members can have sigificant 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 customers.

To aid its members in addressing these matters, CFA member-only working groups offer biodiversity expertise and grant funding. This 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/

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 deplete 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 community.

This position statement covers all aspects of agricultural sustainability: land, water and soil health, water; natural capital, environment and biodiversity, and pesticide use; GHG, 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/
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 and CEd on Facebook @ChilledEducation.

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/

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.

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/

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.”

Getting social

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