

IN THIS ISSUE: Food security, *Listeria*, waste reduction, biocides, data collection, CE'd news

Keeping affordable food on tables



Wheat fields in Ukraine. Image: Polina Rytova on unsplash

In September CFA joined other major food associations (including the Provision Trade Federation, British Meat Processors Association, British Poultry Council, Cold Chain Federation, Federation of Wholesale Distributors, UK Flour Millers) in an open letter to the UK Government asking for urgent help for food businesses facing rising energy prices (in some instances four or fivefold increases to fuel bills) and multiple supply chain challenges.

Emphasising the food industry's key part in the UK's critical national infrastructure, vital to the economic and physical health and well-being of millions, the letter called for: help to lower the burden of energy prices; help with obtaining credit, insurance and other financial guarantees and support with input costs, labour and logistics. It also called for the maintenance of standards to give the level playing field needed when dealing with the international trade vital to food security and resilience, given climate change and other threats.

However, the letter is not exhaustive in its list of challenges currently facing CFA members. The ongoing war in Ukraine continues to disrupt commodities (CFA News #57) with the need for substitution requiring ongoing flexibility of labelling options. Crops have also been affected by the UK's record-breaking summer temperatures adding to stresses on supply of fresh produce, other crops and animal feeds.

Non-food supply chains are also being disrupted by these factors and lingering COVID-related systemic market, workforce and production system changes and Brexit's impact on both the feasibility and cost of trading.

EU's proposed *Listeria* legislation latest

The EU's proposed potential changes to *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) legislation (CFA News #56) continue to attract attention.

It is understood that next year (2023) the EC will engage with Member States to seek a common understanding of the rules. A recent European Court case has raised clarifying points regarding the interpretation of criteria and, could result in major changes to *Lm* criteria in the EU Microbiological Criteria for Foodstuffs Regulation 2073/2005 and, potentially, to established effective approaches to shelf life validation and verification of ongoing control.

The expanding Industry *Listeria* Group (ILG) run by Karin Goodburn comprises more than 30 CFA members, UK trade associations, retailers and the European meat processors' association (CLITRAVI). The ILG's Position has also been endorsed by the European Chilled Food Federation and is broadly supported by the European Salmon Smokers' Association.

The Position on the potential changes opposes challenge testing to set shelf life rather than established methods such as storage trials combined with data streams from Day of Production and End of Life sampling coupled with environmental monitoring data.

Given the common root cause of listeriosis outbreaks being insufficient environmental hygiene controls, specific guidance for FBOs and enforcers on effective environmental sampling and the use of data gathered is being developed by CFA to support the Position.

Listeria Shelf Life Guidelines challenged

The ILG has challenged Campden BRI's Guideline 81: "Demonstrating control of *Listeria* in ready to eat (RTE) foods. *Listeria* control: how should you approach it?". Whilst some ILG members were part of the recent review which started prior to lockdown, Campden now acknowledge that some component parts are inaccurate and the final document displays an uneven balance in the emphasis of other parts. As CFA Director General, Karin Goodburn, explains: "This document, despite its title, does not cover the whole process of demonstrating control of *Listeria*. Instead, it focusses more on claimed advantages of challenge testing compared to both durability studies and predictive modelling, which are standard proven effective approaches. We have written to Campden critiquing Guideline 81 as it is incorrect in terms of legal requirements regarding criteria 1.2 of EU 2073/2005, it misrepresents obligations on food businesses with respect to shelf life and ignores established best practice in terms of food and environmental sampling and use of data, heavily promotes challenge testing as the only means of establishing shelf life and is potentially dangerous in other respects."

Campden BRI has reviewed the comments and have agreed to remove the original document from its website, at CFA's request. Work continues with the aim of arriving at a legally valid, useful and practicable document.



Know Your Onions (and Beetroot)!

CFA's suite of best practice publications provides guidance to both growers and producers of chilled, minimally processed, ready to eat (RTE) food, helping ensure risks are minimised throughout the food chain.



The latest in the portfolio is designed for chilled food producers using raw salad and vegetable ingredients where the edible portion is grown in the ground and the final foods are RTE.

'CFA: Best practice in the preparation of beetroot and onion for minimally processed, RTE applications' focuses on those two ingredients to help minimise challenges regarding potential *Listeria* contamination. It is important that businesses are aware of any specific risks for these types of ingredients when used raw in RTE foods, and understand why they can occur, to enable them to focus on particular handling and processing steps designed for their mitigation. In addition to providing specific best practice guidance on risk management for beetroot and onion, the principles can be applied to other minimally processed, RTE ingredients where the edible portion is grown in the ground - such as carrots and spring onions.

The guidelines will be published later this year on www.chilledfood.org

Tens of millions of meals redistributed

CFA continues to show its commitment to sustainability with the news that, since 2017, its members have redistributed more than 29 million meals.

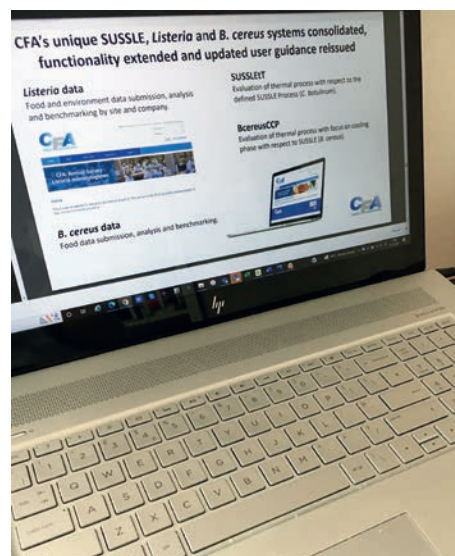
These were primarily chilled ready meals, sandwiches, desserts, sandwich fillers, pies, soups and sauces. Redistribution of such large quantities is made possible through CFA members' partners including FareShare and the UK's largest redistributor of surplus food – Company Shop. Some meals were sold in CFA members' staff shops at a discounted price.

FareShare passes on the food to charities and community groups that provide to those in need, and Company Shop resells to its members, which include NHS employees, members of the armed forces and those in receipt of means-tested benefits, providing them with access to low-cost food, advice, mentoring and support. They also operate Community Shop, a social enterprise that helps people living in deprived areas.

Dr Rachel Hackett, chair of CFA's Sustainable Development Working Group explains "We are especially proud of our success in this field. Not just because of the quantities of meals but due to the nature of the foods involved. The short shelf life of chilled food means that it has to be distributed as soon as possible to retain its safety and quality making it a fast-moving and highly time-sensitive operation."



A mine of information – data collection and use



The CFA members-only, confidential microbiological databases collect and store members' sampling data for *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) and *Bacillus cereus* (*B. cereus*).

CFA's *Lm* survey was established in 2003 to assess and demonstrate the efficacy of the industry's controls and provide for benchmarking. It comprises some 4 million food and production environment datapoints entered by CFA members, shared with fellow member contributors on a consolidated basis. This provides valuable benchmarking information for members and, when appropriate, the wider food industry via briefings by CFA. The consolidated *Listeria* and *B. cereus* datasets are available to all contributing CFA members.

The *B. cereus* dataset of CFA members' routine testing of fully thermally processed non-High Care foods has been compiled since 2014. It is used by CFA to monitor foods that have been produced using the SUSSLE Process - a specific thermal process giving chilled foods extended shelf life.

Every two years SUSSLE users must undergo training by CFA and pass an examination to retain access to the technology and associated software.

Nine major UK retailers have signed confidentiality agreements with CFA enabling eligible manufacturers to supply them with chilled foods using SUSSLE.

In 2021/22 CFA brought the SUSSLE software and the *Listeria* and *B. cereus* databases together into one system. Development of the new user management system, due for introduction by Q1 2023, is designed to enable members to manage colleagues' use of the system, improving functionality.

The SUSSLE user database will continue to be managed solely by CFA as access requires training and maintained CPD.

Biocides

The Food and Biocides Industry Group (FBIG) has written to the World Trade Organization, European Commission, the UK Government and European trade federations highlighting fundamental issues regarding the incorrect legal basis being used by the EU to regulate hygiene biocides, i.e. as plant protection products (PPPs). This follows the EU planning to halve the Maximim Residue Limits (MRLs) for the quaternary ammonium biocide didecyldimethylammonium chloride (DDAC) in products of plant origin.

The EU does however appear to continue to recognise the importance hygiene biocides play in assuring food safety and the necessary use of DDAC in production of products of animal origin as they are not proposing a similar MRL reduction for those foods. This point was secured by FBIG in 2017 (CFA News 47). FBIG contends that contaminants legislation would be the most appropriate regulatory approach for hygiene biocides, not PPP law.

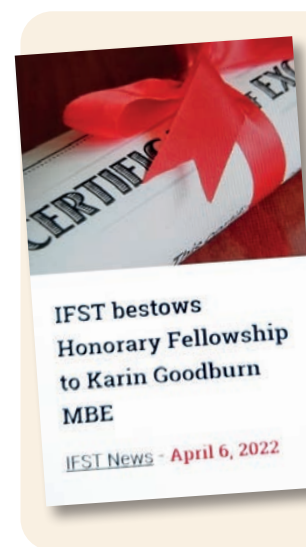


Image Alexandre Lallemand on Unsplash

Exploring solutions to Brexit paperwork

The consequences of leaving the EU continue to impact the food industry with the issue of certification red tape and its associated costs (CFA News 55, 56 & 57) impacting on viability of exports to the bloc. Industry efforts to propose and help test potential solutions, including the trialling of e-certification, continue in earnest and regular sessions of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Working Group chaired by Karin Goodburn are being held with the UK Government. Meanwhile the certification paperwork (estimated to be costing industry ~£60m in 2021) continues at a rate of about £4.5m a month to mount, even though exports to the EU are down.

In addition, the Government's Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, which is expected to pass through Parliament next year, may result in the scrapping or amendment of a raft of legislation, raising concerns regarding the future ability to trade with the EU and potentially internally within GB and the UK.



The honour is all hers!

In April, CFA Director General Karin Goodburn was awarded this year's Honorary Fellowship of the IFST.

The highly prestigious award recognises an IFST Member or Fellow who has made extensive personal contributions to the working and progress of the Institute and to the food science and technology profession.

On receiving the honour Karin said: "Food science is more than a single discipline, encompassing pure science, technology, nutrition, sustainability and food security. I maintain that any subject can be taught using food as the focus, and that food teaching should draw on food science in its broadest terms. No one can live without food so its future has to be nurtured through inspirational teaching and communication at all levels by all of us in the profession, supporting IFST."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Revising CFA Best Practice Guidelines

CFA's respected 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Production of Chilled Food' are widely recognised as the benchmark in the chilled food industry. The fourth edition was published in 2006 and is being revised for publication intended in 2023. The *Guidelines* cover all aspects of chilled food production hygiene.

Vacuum Packed/ MAP foods: ACMSF risk review

In June, CFA Director General Karin Goodburn was invited to present to members of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF), who are currently reviewing the risk basis of FSA's guidance on the control of non-proteolytic *Clostridium botulinum* in vacuum packed and modified atmosphere packed chilled foods. ACMSF offers expert advice to the UK Government.

The ACMSF sub-group is specifically focusing on toxin production and growth of botulinum toxin-producing *Clostridia* in chilled foods. Karin set out research and other work carried out over the last 30 years including by industry with Government funding (e.g. SUSSLE). Included in the session were a series of questions from the sub-group on subjects ranging from fridge temperatures to accessibility of relevant research. Karin's presentation was well-received and further involvement invited. A full report from the sub-group is expected in the first half of 2023.

Exploring the science of sandwich making



It's been a while since the Chilled Education team were out meeting students and teachers. So it was a pleasure to have Greencore colleagues join CFA's Charlotte Patrick at the University of Northampton's STEAM event back in June. The event showcased careers in the sectors of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths to primary and secondary schools.

The success of the day was based on its interactive sessions and Greencore's team enjoyed challenging the young students on the many elements behind sandwich production. As Charlotte explains: "Sandwich making could be seen as a relatively straightforward activity. But we demonstrated this is not the case! The many considerations really got the students

thinking. They quickly grasped what makes a sandwich fit for sale, and why some never make it to the chilled aisle (but perhaps to a redistribution centre instead). Negative factors included mayonnaise on the wrapper film, uneven filling distribution and damaged packaging.

"I think we got the message across that chilled food production is much more than cooking. It's science, engineering (think about the production line and its sandwich skillets!), technology and maths – with some art included too."

New case studies on website



Food Science Graduates Lauryn Beggs (left) and Beth Edwards are the latest colleagues to share their experiences on the CED website. Both graduated from the University of Leeds and both are now Technical Graduates with Greencore. Lauryn is particularly enjoying sampling the variety of roles available in the industry and Beth loves the fast-paced nature of the work. More about how they're finding their new lives in chilled can be found at: www.chillededucation.org/food-teacher-case-studies/

Store cupboard science ideas

The summer break gave CED the chance to revisit some of its favourite Store Cupboard Science experiments. A special selection, titled Seven Weeks of Food Science Fun was sent out to CED's Cool Schools ready to share with everyone before schools broke up. The varied selection included making ice cream (pictured below), extracting DNA from summer strawberries as well as new experiments: 'puffy paint', changing the colour of tea and preparing fish to eat, without heat. The summer experiments, and some fun ideas for Halloween and Christmas can be found on the CED website:

www.chillededucation.org/store-cupboard-science/



Some of the resources showcased at an ASE science fair.

Second resource refresh

Following the success of the first online session CED offered another chance for CFA members to hear more about the range of its resources and how they can be used in careers outreach work. Attendees to the session included colleagues from Greencore, Samworth Brothers and Oscar Mayer. They heard about career paths and profiles as well as the library of Store Cupboard experiments with curriculum links and practical details. A tailored presentation for use by members was also shared. The response? – "Lots of great stuff we can share with colleagues."

Inspiring with experience

CED has forged new links with a national charity that connects young people to businesses with the aim of giving those young people the skills, experience and confidence they need in the changing world of work. The charity, Young Enterprise, invited CFA Director General Karin Goodburn to record two video presentations giving an idea of the range of opportunities, offer tips and explain why the industry offers the coolest careers.

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