35 Years of CFA

For a certain generation 1989 is simply the title of a Taylor Swift album. While for others it’s a year of milestones: the fall of the Berlin Wall being most notable. It also marked the beginning of another era with the beginning of CFA: ‘A New Association for a New Generation of Food’.

CFA LAUNCHED IN MAY 1989 AT THE CHILLED FOOD FAIR.

The busy first 25 years were celebrated in CFA News 41, and the intervening decade has been equally event-filled. The Association continues with its policy work, science and research (with a focus on food safety and the monitoring and control of Lm amongst other organisms), as well as its education activities. New topics, such as Brexit, demand attention whilst ongoing projects continue to evolve, as revealed here:

CFA BEST PRACTICE PRODUCTION STANDARDS
The bedrock of CFA’s work

1989 – Started with best practices in manufacturing guidance, focusing on Listeria, and launched simultaneously with its accreditation scheme. Accreditation taken up by BRC and now BRCSS covering 22,000+ sites around the world. The standards have been revised numerous times. A raft of other CFA best practice guidance has been issued including: ‘Microbiological Testing & Interpretation Guidance’ (2016) and ‘Getting the Best from Third Party Laboratories’ (2021).

VAC PACK/MODIFIED ATMOSPHERE PACKAGING/
Clostridium botulinum 1992 – ongoing


• 2016 – Consultation on revising FSA guidance – CFA-led consortium of industry and researchers in concerted lobbying for science-based guidance.
• 2018 – CFA-led international industry consortium in developing shelf-life guidance regarding non-proteolytic C. botulinum (npb).
• 2022 – Karin Goodburn gave evidence to ACMSF subgroup review.

BREXIT (www.chilledfood.org/brexit)
• 2016 to date – CFA chairs and is a member of the SP5 Certification Working Group (30+ trade associations and business representatives from across the UK food sector)
• 2023 – Submission made to TBC inquiry into challenges businesses are facing.
• 2024 – (Jan) leads letter from FSA to Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs outlining issues posed by BTOM and suggesting solutions. Continued regular engagement with Government, other associations and members to resolve issues.

SUSSLE

Hundreds of SUSSLE foods on the market and all major retailers have signed confidentiality agreements enabling them to use it with eligible CFA members.

• 2023 – CFA brought the SUSSLE software and the Listeria and B. cereus databases together into one system, designed to better enable members to manage colleagues’ use of it, and improve functionality.

BIOCIDES (www.chilledfood.org/PBIG)
• 2012 – Set up Food and Bioicides Industry Group. Successfully challenged EC chloride MRAs approach and secured recognition by EC of the need to protect food safety when regulating biocides.
• 2018-19 – Karin Goodburn appointed to Global Food Safety Initiative’s (GFSI) ‘Chemicals in Food Hygiene’ Tech WG
• 2020 – Issued raft of guidance to FBOs for different sectors as to how to minimise chlorate traces in food, supported by HSE.

SUSTAINABILITY (www.chilledfood.org/sustainability)
• 2003 – Initiated gathering of production sites’ food waste (and other) data. Formalisation of Sustainable Development WG.
• 2005 – Defra Waste Champions Group
• 2009 – Sustainability Aims first agreed focussing on energy, waste and water.
• 2016 – CFA is a founding signatory focussing on of waste reduction and sustainability charity WRAP’s Court205 (C205) Commitment.
• 2023 – CFA Members redistributed 38.5 million meals since 2017.
• 2024 – Continues to support the evolved Court2030 Commitments

FRESH PRODUCE
A range of guidance documents are available on CFA’s Shopify site (https://bit.ly/3VAtaIu), including: ‘Best practice in the preparation of beetroot and onion for minimally processed, RTE applications’ (2022), and ‘CFA Protocol for Spot Buying of Produce to be used as Ready to Eat’ (2023).

• 1995 – Established Ready to Eat fresh produce Good Agricultural Practice
• 2005-2008 – LNK Project AFM234: Defra-funded research on the attachment of pathogens to cut fresh produce
• 2020-2022 – Microbiological safety elements taken up by GFSI in its benchmarking requirements for GAP standards.

LISTERIA AND DATA COLLECTION (www.chilledfood.org/listeria)
• 2004 – Food data for 2003 began being submitted by members
• 2006 – Data collection expanded to include environmental
• 2010 – CFA/BRC/FSA Listeria and shelf-life guidance issued
• 2021 – Industry Listeria Group established to prepare for changes to 2073/2005 and global regulatory developments in Listeria
• 2023 – Environmental sampling programme management guidance issued
• 2024 – Dataset comprises some five million food and production environment datapoints entered by CFA members, providing valuable benchmarking information for members and, when appropriate, the wider food industry

HEALTH AND SAFETY
• 2016 – Signatory to HSE Common Strategy for Improving Health and Safety in the Food and Drink Manufacturing Industry.
• 2023 – Signatory to revised Common Strategy

CHILLED EDUCATION
• 2011 and ongoing – Initiated multi-award-winning Chilled Education programme with development of range of resources to inspire and inform next generation of chilled food scientists.
• 2020 – New range of resources tailored to be delivered at home during and post the COVID-19 pandemic. A themed list is free to download: https://bit.ly/3tvdFLU

ONGOING SITE VISITS
• 2000 – Began programme of chilled food production site familiarisation visits for civil servants. >300 people on 60 visits to date.

A fuller history can be found on the CFA website: https://bit.ly/4Ibg8cG

CFA is celebrating its anniversary by offering a 35 per cent discount for documents on its Shopify website. Just enter 35CFA at the checkout.