

IN THIS ISSUE: *Listeria*; fresh produce; *E.coli*, Brexit, Chilled Education and more

CFA-led *Listeria* guidance supported by FSA and FSS tops 1,500 downloads



CFA’s guidance Assuring Safety of Ready-to-Eat Food (RTE) in Relation to *Listeria monocytogenes* and Regulation 2073/2005 has been downloaded more than 1,500 times since its launch in January 2026—reflecting the demand across industry, enforcement and the wider food sector for authoritative, practical guidance ahead of the change to the law on 1 July 2026 in the EU and other jurisdictions applying EU law, e.g. Northern Ireland.

This guidance is a major update of the 2010 CFA/BRC/FSA shelf life guidance and was developed by the CFA-led Industry *Listeria* Group in direct response to questions arising from the amendment to EU Microbiological Criterion 1.2b. A point the guidance makes clear: the 1 July change does not alter the fundamental shelf life determination requirements that have been in place under Regulation 2073/2005 for nearly 20 years. The amendment tightens the regulatory consequence where a Competent Authority is not satisfied with the basis of shelf life for an RTE food supporting the growth of *L. monocytogenes* – it does not introduce new methods or mandatory testing regimes. There is no change to longstanding safety or shelf life requirements.

The guidance places HACCP at the centre of food safety assurance and covers shelf life establishment and evidencing, environmental monitoring, ingredient controls, worked examples, enforcement support, and a Q&A addressing common operational and enforcement questions. It was developed with input from major retailers, trade associations, manufacturers, the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland. Copies are available here: <https://bit.ly/4rtqmLI>

*“This vital guidance brings practical clarity to the steps manufacturers and other food business operators must take to assure the safety of RTE foods with respect to *L. monocytogenes*, including how to establish and evidence shelf life. It places prevention at the centre of operations – with strong HACCP, backed by good hygiene and robust prerequisite programmes.”*

**Karin Goodburn MBE, Chair, Industry *Listeria* Group,
Chilled Food Association**

*“We welcome this updated industry-led guidance, which provides practical advice to help food businesses manage the risk of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods. It will support manufacturers, retailers, and enforcement officers in meeting regulatory requirements and maintaining high standards of food safety.”*

**James Cooper, Deputy Director of Food Policy, Food Standards Agency and
Garry Mournian, Head of Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Food Standards Scotland**

CFA on the road – spreading the word on *Listeria* guidance

Since the publication of the guidance, CFA Director General Karin Goodburn MBE has had a packed schedule of presentations and speaking engagements, ensuring that the key messages reach the widest possible audience across industry, government and enforcement.

2025 engagements laying the groundwork included presentations to the Campden Microbiological Interest Group (March), the Co-op technical team (May), the Royal Society for Public Health Food Special Interest Group targeting environmental health officers (July – attracting over 600 attendees), CFA members (July), the BRC Microbiology Working Group (August), Christeys webinar (September), FSA senior policy staff (September) and FSA Northern Ireland lead EHOs training (October).

Building on this, 2026 engagements have included presentations to the FSA Food Industry Liaison Group, BRCS Connect Europe and the Food and Drink Federation MIC in February and the Scottish Food Enforcement Officers Association

(which has made Karin an honorary member). As well as a further session for the Royal Society for Public Health and presenting at the Hospitals Food Safety Day event in June, presentations and engagements, including CFA member training, continue throughout the year, with more planned.

The change to Criterion 1.2b does not require businesses to start again. Where HACCP foundations are sound and shelf life data well evidenced, businesses are well placed for July even though the current legislation applicable to Great Britain is not changing, but may apply in GB if an SPS agreement is reached with the EU (Turn to page 2 to see our *Listeria* guidance media coverage).

Listeria guidance media coverage



The *Listeria* guidance has attracted strong coverage across specialist trade and professional media since its launch in January, reaching practitioners across food manufacturing, retail, enforcement and food science. Here is a selection:

Food Safety Magazine (January 2026) covered the publication in full, noting that it had been promoted by the FSA as a resource for industry, and placing CFA's guidance alongside the European Commission's own updated guidance on shelf life studies published around the same time. [Link here.](#)

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (February 2026) published a guest blog by CFA's Karin Goodburn writing directly for an enforcement audience – setting out how the guidance supports environmental health professionals to assess shelf life justifications, challenge weak claims in a structured way, and improve consistency of interpretation across local authorities. [Link here.](#)

The Microbiologist (Applied Microbiology International) covered the publication as a news item and followed up with an opinion piece – '*Listeria*: The Inconvenient Truth That Shaped Our Industry' – drawing on the themes of Karin's July 2025 widely attended Royal Society for Public Health webinar. [Link here.](#)

IFST Magazine is set to publish a feature in its June 2026 issue.

Sewage sludge: strengthening the rules

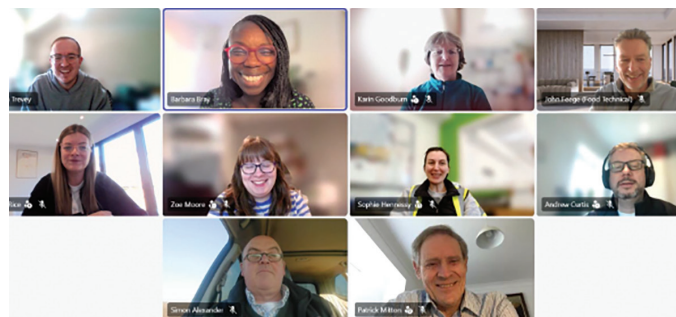
CFA has submitted a response to the Government's consultation on sewage sludge regulations, ahead of the March 2026 deadline.

Dr Rachel Hackett led CFA's engagement on the consultation, which proposed three options: consolidating regulations under Environmental Permitting Regulations; retaining the current structure but reviewing its content; or continuing with guidance and good practice only.

CFA's position is clear. The industry has followed the ADAS Safe Sludge Matrix – developed in the late 1990s with CFA and retailers – for over 25 years, preventing human sewage sludge from being applied to RTE crops. The Matrix has been included in every edition of CFA's Microbiological Guidance for Growers and is universally supported by UK retailers. It has, however, always relied on commercial commitment rather than legal force.

The case for legislative underpinning is well established. Sludge treatment historically achieves only a 2-log reduction in pathogens and does not address heavy metals or, increasingly, PFAS and microplastics – making it unsuitable for food production. Growers outside formal assurance schemes can introduce risk for the wider supply chain, and past incidents have demonstrated that poor overseas practice can result in UK products being rated high risk by authorities, despite no domestic usage – although no legal prohibition exists. CFA's view is that strengthening UK law by incorporating the Safe Sludge Matrix would protect responsible growers, reduce reputational risk across the supply chain and provide the legal certainty that 25 years of good practice deserves.

Red Tractor TAC: Fresh produce safety update



Following last issue's report on CFA joining Red Tractor's Fresh Produce Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), work is progressing well. The TAC – expertly chaired by Barbara Bray MBE – is meeting regularly as part of Red Tractor's full Standards review, with members bringing specialist technical knowledge and practical on-farm experience to bear on every Standard and audit point. CFA's Karin Goodburn sits on both the TAC and its High Risk Crops Working Group, aiming to ensure that the key requirements of CFA's Microbiological Guidance for Produce Suppliers to Chilled Food Manufacturers (MGG4) continue to inform the development of Red Tractor's fresh produce Standards – not only for high-risk crops.

New CFA member **KETTLE produce Ltd**

Welcome to our new member **Kettle Produce Ltd**, a market leader for the provision of fresh and prepared vegetables. The roots of Kettle Produce go way back to 1976 when two farming families in Fife started growing vegetables in partnership. In 1986, Kettle Produce Limited was incorporated. The company produces around 2,800 hectares of vegetable and salad crops across Scotland and has several strategic supply partnerships with major growers across Europe and the rest of the world totalling over 5,000 hectares of crops. It produces a range of prepared and washed vegetables including brassicas, roots, and salad.

Generic *E. coli* online database launched

CFA's new online database enabling members to submit their generic *E. coli* data went live this month. Currently available to members only, the database will build on CFA's existing dataset of more than 82,000 datapoints relating to irrigation water and fresh produce sampling – both pre- and post-wash. Watch this space for non-member access opportunities.

CFA website: growing reach

The CFA website (www.chilledfood.org) recorded 49,829 page views, 23,316 sessions and 17,227 users in 2025 – reflecting growing demand for CFA's technical content, guidance documents and legislative information from industry, enforcement and beyond.

SPS agreement negotiations: update

Following last issue's report on the UK-EU High Level Summit announcement, CFA continues to engage closely with Government on preparations for a potential SPS Agreement between the UK and the EU with the aim of easing post-Brexit trade restrictions.



Karin Goodburn established and chairs the SPS Certification Working Group (www.chilledfood.org/brexit), which comprises some 30 trade and professional organisations and meets weekly with senior officials across relevant departments and agencies. A summary of legislative divergences requiring attention in the streamlining of trade has been shared with Government officials and with the Lords EU Affairs and Commons EFRA Committees.

Concerns focus on the lack of clarity of precisely what legislation will be within the scope of the Agreement, without which planning for change is severely hindered, Government's policy of seeking Dynamic Alignment (DA) and impacts of EU/UK regulatory divergence since the end of the Transition Period. DA means adoption of EU legislation passed since the end of the Transition Period, and on an ongoing basis, yet without full representation in its development. Divergence from EU legislation has occurred either due to EU or UK laws being changed since Brexit.

In the meantime CFA continues to compile APHA data on the cost of Export Health Certificate completion for certain exports to the EU post-Brexit remains around £3.5m per month – more than £280m since the end of the Transition Period. This is equivalent to the profit from over £14 billion in food sales, and a continued reminder of the commercial stakes involved in getting these negotiations right.

BRCGS Issue 10: CFA at the table

BRCGS certification has long been a membership requirement for CFA – and the Standard's origins are closely linked to CFA's own history, with the original accreditation scheme arising from the first editions of CFA's chilled food production Guidelines in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

CFA's Karin Goodburn has been involved in BRCGS working groups from Issue 4 through to Issue 9 and has now been appointed to the English language Issue 10 Technical Working Group – following a competitive selection process attracting more than 500 applications from around the world for the English- and Mandarin-speaking working groups. The group will meet twelve times over twelve months to develop the new Standard. Karin's participation provides a valuable opportunity to help shape Issue 10, with a particular focus on the risk assessment of foods produced for vulnerable groups such as hospital catering – an area where CFA has longstanding concern expertise and a direct interest in ensuring the Standard reflects current best practice.

Members' views on the Standard are welcome. If you have comments or observations you would like Karin to take into the working group, please get in touch.



CFA and IFST: Special Interest Group involvement

CFA continues to support the work of the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) through its Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

Karin Goodburn MBE Hon FIFST is a member of the Food Safety SIG and the Consultations Triage Group. The [Food Safety SIG](#) engages on hot topics, contributes to relevant publications and organises webinars and events. Dr Rachel Hackett FIFST is a member of the newly formed [Food Sustainability SIG](#), established to translate issues and share developments relating to sustainability across the food sector.

CFA joins UK Packaging Pact as founding signatory

CFA has signed up as a founding signatory to the UK Packaging Pact, joining 55 organisations ahead of the Pact's launch in April 2026. The UK Packaging Pact is the successor to the UK Plastics Pact – a world-first initiative that has since inspired a global network of Pacts operating across every continent. Building on seven years of collaboration and measurable impact, the new voluntary agreement extends the focus beyond plastics to drive system-wide change across all packaging materials, with four goals covering optimising packaging, scaling reuse and refill, unblocking barriers to circularity, and harmonising data. The ambition is to transform the UK packaging sector by 2035.

CFA's founding signatory status builds on its existing commitments as a UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap Early Adopter and its Chilled Sector Sustainability Aims – and on its previous membership of the UK Plastics Pact.



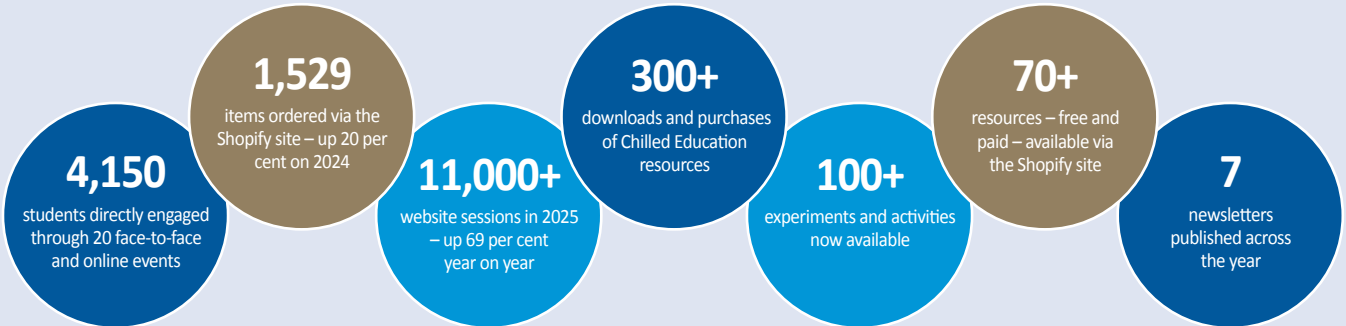
Supporting the circular economy: ENABLER project

CFA has provided a letter of support for ENABLER, a new research consortium led by the universities of Cambridge, Loughborough and Newcastle, applying for funding under the EPSRC NetworkPlus Reimagining Circularity programme. ENABLER's mission is to create a circular data ecosystem that enables trackable, comparable and actionable insights for circular practices – addressing the fragmented and inconsistent data landscape that currently limits progress toward a circular economy. The project brings together academia, industry and policy communities to co-create robust data, metrics and frameworks, with artificial intelligence at its core.

CFA's support reflects the alignment between ENABLER's objectives and CFA members' sustainability commitments – particularly around food waste reduction, data interoperability and evidence-based decision-making across the supply chain. No financial contribution is required; CFA's involvement will comprise in-kind support including staff time for events and sharing of knowledge.

Chilled Education: 2025 in numbers

Chilled Education's reach continued to grow in 2025, with activity spanning school visits, online sessions, resource downloads and event attendance.



CED Resources, experiments and more – on Shopify

There are now more than 70 resources available on the Chilled Education Shopify site, including past newsletters, experiments, lesson plans and career materials – with the number continuing to grow. Over 100 experiments and activities are available in total, covering everything from store cupboard science to food safety and microbiology.

Visit: <https://chilledfoodassociation.myshopify.com>



Charlotte clocks up 200 STEM hours

Ced's outreach calendar continues to grow, and Charlotte Patrick has now amassed more than 200 hours of STEM Ambassador activity – spreading the word about Chilled Education and careers in chilled food production to students, teachers and event audiences across the country. We work closely with our members, helping our member organisations do outreach too.



New for 2026: updated CED themed resource calendar

Planning lessons and science clubs just got easier. The Chilled Education team has compiled an updated calendar of themed days, weeks and activities with a food and food science flavour, designed to support teachers throughout the academic year.

The free downloadable spreadsheet includes useful links to CED resources alongside external sources of further information. It covers everything from International Pizza Day (9 February) and World Hand Hygiene Day (5 May) to National Food Science Week in June, through to Halloween, Bonfire Night and Christmas – with six additional days and themes added for 2026.

Download the calendar free from the CED Shopify site [here](#).

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