

## FSA East Midlands Update – August 2008

### FSA East Midlands Contacts – Deputy Appointed.

Rob Howard is the Food Standards Agency's Regional Co-ordinator in the East Midlands. Following PK's departure in December 07, the Deputy post has been vacant, but we are delighted to announce that Maria Nightingale has just been appointed as Deputy Regional Coordinator and will start employment with us at the beginning October 08. Marcia is a senior environmental health officer with high level experience in both food and health and safety and will add invaluable knowledge and skills to the regional team.



Please get in touch If you have any particular local or regional issues that you would like to discuss. We can also help to signpost you to key people at the FSA.

Rob can be contacted on 0115 9714756  
or by email: [rob.howard@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rob.howard@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Evaluation of FSA Regional Teams

An independent evaluation of the work of the regional teams was carried out by the University of Birmingham between October 2007 and March 2008. Future roll out plans will be considered as part of a cost-benefit review of the current and alternative approaches to local and regional delivery, with a report back to the Board in early 2009.

Based on the responses from over 140 organisations, the results show clear evidence of a more developed and positive FSA partnership with key food stakeholders and delivery agents in English Regions where an Agency Regional Team (RT) was in place. Top line findings show that in regions where an Agency RT was in place, there was:

- Better partnership working - a higher proportion of respondents from the RT areas felt they had a partnership with the FSA (69% compared to 41% in non RT areas). In RT areas, the three most commonly used descriptors of their relationship with the FSA were respectively, 'developing', 'collaborative' and 'reliable'. In non RT areas they were 'remote', 'developing', and 'one sided'.
- Greater knowledge of key Agency priorities – 64% of respondents from RT areas felt they had a good or excellent knowledge of Agency salt reduction priorities and targets compared to 42% in non RT areas.
- Increased understanding and awareness of Agency priorities and resources - Respondents from areas with an RPU rate more highly the level of accessibility of the FSA (60% compared to 26%).
- Greater FSA contribution to local decision making – 72% of respondents from RT areas felt that the FSA contributed to their decision making compared to 49% in non RT areas.
- Increased local delivery initiatives of FSA priorities – more than twice the proportion of respondents in RT areas had developed a new initiative in one of the three Agency priorities in the previous twelve months compared to non RT areas (37% compared to 17%).

Overall, of the 19 questions asked, all of which explored characteristics common to successful partnerships, 14 received a more positive response from the RT areas, 5 were about the same, and none were more positive from the non- RT areas.

See the July 2008 Board paper and the University of Birmingham's full evaluation report at the links below.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/regionalunitreport.pdf>

### **Food Safety Fridge Magnets available**

With support from the Regional Public Health Directorate (DH) and following work undertaken by a group of Masters in Public Health Students at the University of Nottingham, the FSA East Midlands Team have produced four fridge magnets to promote food safety messages in the home. Based on the four 'C's, and tying in with the Germ Watch campaign, the magnets have four themes: 'Chilling', 'Stop germs spreading', 'Cleaning' and 'Cooking'. They combine simple clear messages with eye catching designs, and are available free of charge. Order forms will be placed on the emphasis website at the beginning September. In the meantime, the designs can be seen on the emphasis website [www.emphasisnetwork.org.uk](http://www.emphasisnetwork.org.uk)

### **Agency publishes annual report for 2007/08**

The Food Standards Agency's annual report for 2007/08 has been published. Commending the 2007/08 report, Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton said: 'While driving forward initiatives that improve food safety and make healthier eating easier for all, we remain alert to the need to balance public protection and consumers' other food-related interests with the conditions that allow businesses to innovate, compete and flourish.

'Our judgements will continue to be based on evidence that is rigorous, transparent and independent, because we believe our success lies in continuing to use the best available scientific evidence and advice when working with the many valued organisations that show an active interest in food issues.'

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/annual0708>

### **Food Champion Awards**



Rushcliffe Borough Council received their Regional Food Champion Award for improving community diet and nutrition at the Food Standards Agency's Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons on 10<sup>th</sup> June. Westminster City Council and Bristol City Council received national awards. All award winners have demonstrated excellence and innovation in delivering positive outcomes for their communities and Rushcliffe and the other winners will be working with the Agency and other organisations in the coming year to champion their approach, and learning to encourage and share good practice.

Details of all the winning initiatives can be found in last month's issue of FSA News and at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jun/champions>.

### **FSA publishes listeria factsheet**

The Agency has published a factsheet that details key control measures that can be taken to minimise the risk of developing an illness from listeria (listeriosis). The guidance has particular relevance to those preparing and supplying chilled ready-to-eat foods for vulnerable groups. Although listeria isn't common, it can affect vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and people with reduced immunity, particularly those over the age of 60. People with weakened immunity could include those who have had transplants, are taking drugs that weaken their immune system, or who have cancers that affect their immune system, such as leukaemia or lymphoma. Listeria might be present in chilled ready-to-eat foods at low levels. However, poor refrigeration and failure to follow shelf-life labeling can result in the bacteria multiplying to unsafe levels.



The Agency's factsheet details some of the key steps to minimise the risks. These include keeping these foods properly refrigerated and following 'use by' instructions on the label. <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/listeriosisfacts>

### **More catering companies commit to healthier food**

More of the UK's workplace caterers have made commitments to provide healthier food, lower in salt, saturated fat and sugar. These agreements, which add to undertakings made by some of the biggest contract caterers and suppliers earlier this year, will result in a positive impact on more than one and a half million meals served in workplaces every day. Food eaten in the workplace increasingly makes up an important part of our daily diet. The Agency is therefore working with a range of catering companies to improve the nutritional content of food eaten out of the home and to encourage companies to provide clear and easy to understand nutritional information.



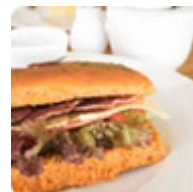
The Agency has, with the help of the British Hospitality Association, received commitments from: Accent Catering, Artizian, Autograph, Charlton House, ISS Eaton and ISS Mediclean. These companies will make changes in line with the Agency's existing framework, which include activities around procurement, menu planning, kitchen practice and customer information.

These developments will result in healthier food and more information for a further 160,000 meals served, by these six companies, in the workplace every day. This means a total of 1.6 million healthier meals. These are positive steps in the right direction and the Agency welcomes the work that is being carried out.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/catcom2>

### **The role of portion sizes in our diet**

The Agency published the findings of a workshop and a report on 19<sup>th</sup> June, which consider how changes in portion sizes of everyday foods have affected people's energy intake, weight gain and diet. The report concluded that the sizes of some fast foods and ready meals have increased in the UK during the past 15 years. However, there is also a wider choice of portion sizes available.



The expert workshop, chaired by Dr Susan Jebb, head of nutrition and health research at the Medical Research Council, explored the relationship between portion size, energy intake and weight gain. An independent report reviewing the research and information available on portion size had been commissioned to support the workshop.

More information and the report can be found at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jun/portionsize>

### **Salt levels continue to fall**



The FSA today has published new evidence, which shows the UK's average daily salt consumption has fallen from 9.5g to 8.6g since 2000. Although the recent figures show an encouraging decline in salt levels, more challenging targets are needed to meet the Government's target of 6g a day.

To help reduce salt levels, the Agency has launched a public consultation on proposals that will make its voluntary 2010 salt reduction targets, for 85 categories of food, stricter, and set more challenging 2012 targets, for 80 categories of food.

Eating too much salt is a significant risk factor in developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure can triple the risk of heart disease and stroke. Reducing the daily UK salt intake to 6g could prevent an average of 20,200 premature deaths a year.

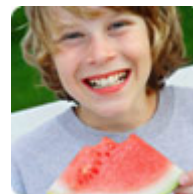
FSA Chief Executive Tim Smith said: 'The Food Standards Agency is encouraged that action to reduce the average amount of salt we are eating on a daily basis is clearly having a positive impact. We recognise that the great steps taken by many manufacturers and retailers have contributed to this success. But while the results of the urinary analysis are positive, we are aware there is still plenty to do.'

The Agency is also working with the catering sector, to improve the nutritional content of food eaten out of the home. With the average person eating one in every six meals out of the home each week, it is likely that reductions in salt in the catering sector will have an impact on daily salt intakes, helping to bring us closer to the 6g target.

The consultation will close on 31 October 2008.

### **Taking forward the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice**

The Agency and the Department of Health (DH) have jointly written to food industry leaders and other interested parties setting out plans to assist in delivering the Healthy Food Code of Good Practice.



The Healthy Food Code of Good Practice summarises the challenge to all sectors of the food industry to promote healthy eating.

Early this year (23 January 2008), the Government published Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives – a cross-Government strategy for England. This integrated programme of initiatives aims to reverse the rising tide of obesity and overweight through supporting people to have a healthy diet and an active lifestyle.

The strategy sets out what the Government will do and its expectations of others. Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives calls on all sections of society to make changes to help people make healthier choices.

The Healthy Food Code of Good Practice is contained within Promoting healthier food choices, one of the five key strands to the Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives strategy.

The code sets out seven areas where the Government expects companies in every food sector to take action to demonstrate their commitment to promote healthy eating. These can be summarised as:

- front-of-pack labelling
- smaller portion sizes for energy-dense and foods high in salt
- promotion of food to children
- reductions in consumption and the levels of saturated fat and sugar, particularly sugary drinks
- increasing consumption of healthier foods
- single set of key healthy eating messages
- nutritional information on food eaten out of the home.

The letter, sent 15 July 2008 to food manufacturers, retailers, health professionals, consumer groups, food service and catering groups, sets out the plans and is attached below.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/healthyfoodcode>

In the East Midlands, the FSA team are working with the Regional Public Health group (DH) and a wide range of stakeholders to develop a regional action plan for the delivery of Healthy Weight Healthy Lives, which will include the promotion of front of pack traffic light labelling with food manufacturers across the east midlands.

### **Attitude to health affects eating habits**



The Agency has carried out qualitative research to find out more about how people's eating habits are determined by their attitudes towards food and health, rather than by other demographic characteristics, such as age and gender.

Four distinct population groups were identified for the research: health conscious pragmatists, convenience driven health rejecters, concerned health advocates and traditional cooking enthusiasts.

The aim was to find out how people eat, what they buy and why they make certain food choices, to help the Agency shape its work on healthier eating. The research was carried out as part of the most recent wave of the Agency's Consumer Attitudes Survey.

The research found that:

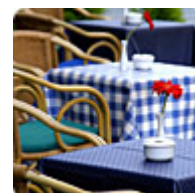
- Health conscious pragmatists represent 22% of the UK adult population. This liberal group is characterised by a belief that although healthy eating is important, convenience foods are not necessarily a bad thing. Health Conscious Pragmatists tend to embrace modern cuisines and are willing to experiment and try new foods.
- Convenience driven health rejecters, representing 29% of the population, are likely to rank convenience above health when choosing what to eat. Their relatively short-term outlook in life means they often look to food for immediate gratification and stimulation, and enjoy eating out regularly.
- Concerned health advocates, who rank healthy eating the most highly of all the groups, represent 25% of the UK adult population. The concerned health advocates know what a healthy balanced diet looks like and appreciate being given information about food.
- Traditional cooking enthusiasts comprising 24% of the population, are enthusiastic cooks and tend to disapprove of convenience food. Traditional cooking enthusiasts are disciplined and conventional. Food is extremely important to them, and they are passionate about making 'proper meals' the 'proper way'.

The seventh annual wave of the Consumer Attitudes Survey was conducted between August and October 2006. This additional analysis is based on the Consumer Attitudes Survey data as well as subsequent exploratory research, conducted in July 2007.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/attitudes1507>

### **Consumers give their views on eating out**

The Agency published a survey on 22<sup>nd</sup> June of more than 2,000 people across the UK that provides a snapshot of what consumers want when they eat out. The questions will help the Agency to develop more in-depth research to inform future activity in this area and were posed as part of an omnibus survey.



The findings show that 85% of people agreed with the statement that restaurants, pubs and cafes have a responsibility to make it clear what is in the food they serve. In addition, when asked where respondents would expect to see nutritional information for it to be most useful, 81% of people said they would like to see it at the point when they order food, such as on the menu in a restaurant, or visible when they are buying a sandwich or a muffin in a coffee shop or cafe. In contrast, only 2% of respondents said they would find it useful on company websites. Overall 63% of people said they would like information about what is in their food when they eat out – 41% wanted information and food to be made healthier by catering establishments, while 22% wanted food to remain the same but wanted nutrition information about it.

The Agency is working to encourage as many catering companies as possible to provide healthier meals, and is in discussion with a range of quick service and family dining restaurants, cafes, sandwich shops and pub chains so that this part of the industry participates in the Agency's salt and saturated fat activity. The diversity in the catering sector means that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate and a practical approach is being developed that is suitable for a variety of businesses.

Work is also planned with businesses and other stakeholders to develop recommendations on provision of nutrition information. These recommendations will be based on consumer research and may be different to multiple traffic light and Guideline Daily Amount approaches that have worked well in the retail environment. More information is at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jun/eatout>.

### Agency welcomes Cabinet Office report



The Agency today welcomes the report from the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit on a new food policy framework for the UK.

The report, Food Matters – Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century, looks at how different elements of the food system can be better integrated and its impact economically, socially and environmentally. It recognises that central government needs to work with the public, businesses from all parts of the food chain, other stakeholders, and other tiers of government, to put a new food policy framework in place.

To achieve this, the Cabinet Office will set up a Food Strategy Task Force, which will include the FSA. The Agency will lead on a number of key initiatives, including:

- developing a 'whole food chain approach' strategy to prevent food safety incidents
- helping people to make healthier choices when eating out
- developing a web-based one-stop-shop for consumer information and advice on nutrition, food and sustainability, and food safety

FSA Chief Executive Tim Smith said: 'The Agency is very pleased to welcome the Cabinet Office report, especially as its key objectives reflect the Agency's commitment to food safety and helping people choose a healthier diet. Much of this work is already under way and we look forward to working as part of the task force to further develop the Cabinet Office's vision.'

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jul/cabreport>

### The 'Eatwell Plate' tray – Getting the message across



Schools and other catering settings, such as prisons, hospitals and leisure centres, keen to promote the importance of eating a healthy balanced diet can now serve up the idea visually on a tray – thanks to the FSA's Regional Unit. The tray, which is imprinted with the Agency's eatwell plate, makes healthy eating easier to understand by showing the types and proportions of foods each of us should be eating if we aim to eat healthily. The tray came about following conversations between the Agency's Coordinator in the South West with local health professionals looking for innovative ways to influence consumer choice.

Schools are one of the key targets for the trays and the EM team will be contacting schools across the region over the next 12 months and also aims to speak to local universities,



colleges, hospitals and prisons. The eatwell trays are available to all catering providers and 3663 is retailing them at about £3 each. Trays are scratch resistant, dishwasher safe and available in 15 different sizes. To purchase the trays, contact Mike Allen at 3663, tel: 0870 3663 960; email: [MikeAllen@3663.co.uk](mailto:MikeAllen@3663.co.uk). More on the eatwell plate is at: [www.food.gov.uk/eatwellplate](http://www.food.gov.uk/eatwellplate)

### **Publications**

Many of the Agency's publications are available online and some recent publications and resources are highlighted below. To order paper copies of these or any other publications, contact Food Standards Agency Publications:

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minicom: 0845 606 0678  
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