

## FSA East Midlands Update – February 2008

### FSA East Midlands Contacts

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### First steps to reduce saturated fats

Tuesday 5 February 2008



The Agency has announced the first steps of its activity to help people in the UK reduce the amount of saturated fat they eat. Eating a diet high in saturated fat and calories can contribute to developing a range of serious diet-related illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers. In the UK, intakes of saturated fat are around 20% higher than official Government recommendations.

It is estimated that by reducing population intakes of saturated fat from 13.3% to below 11% of food energy, to meet Government recommendations, could help to prevent up to 3,500 deaths a year.

This new programme of activity outlines the steps that can be taken to tackle the amount of saturated fat and added sugar to foods, while also taking account of the more complex issues around reformulation of products. A key part in helping to reduce saturated fat intakes will be in developing and building on positive and collaborative partnerships with industry, along with improving consumer awareness.

This programme outlines future work in the following areas:

1. building on partnerships with the food industry to:
  - encourage further voluntary reformulation of specific food groups to reduce the amount of saturated fat and added sugar they contain
  - increase the ranges of healthier options and step up the promotion of healthier products to consumers
  - make smaller portion sizes more readily available
  - publish food industry commitments to reformulate
2. increasing consumer awareness activity to raise the profile of saturated fat as part of our overall efforts to encourage people to choose a healthy diet
3. holding an independent academic workshop to examine evidence on portion sizes, chaired by Dr Susan Jebb – Head of Nutrition and Health Research at the Medical Research Council

Rosemary Hignett, Head of Nutrition at the Food Standards Agency, said: 'Reducing our intakes of saturated fat is a major challenge but would have clear important health benefits.'

'We aim to work with industry on reducing saturated fat and added sugar levels in foods, reducing portion sizes and providing clear information to consumers, including honest nutrition information on labels.'

The Agency's activity on reducing saturated fat will complement its ongoing work to reduce salt and trans fatty acids in UK diets, as well as its work with caterers to help people make healthier choices when eating out. More work on these activities can be found at the links below.

### **Agency welcomes 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives' strategy.**



The Food Standards Agency has welcomed the publication of the Department of Health's 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives' strategy on 23<sup>rd</sup> January.

Chair of the FSA, Deirdre Hutton, said 'Improving the UK diet is highlighted as a major theme in today's strategy to tackle obesity and the Agency has a key role to play in this area. Since the publication of the Government's Choosing Health White Paper in 2004, we have been working closely with the food industry, other Government departments, public health professionals and consumers on a range of health and nutrition initiatives to make it easier for everyone to choose healthier foods. We have made some good progress – particularly in terms of reformulation to reduce salt content in food and with encouraging food businesses to use clear front-of-pack nutritional labelling on their products, which are key strands in the obesity strategy. We look forward to seeing the outcome of the independent front-of-pack labelling evaluation, which will be starting shortly. This will give us a definitive answer as to what type of labelling approach best helps shoppers to make healthier choices.' Read more at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jan/obese>.

### **Workplace caterers commit to healthier food**

The Agency published the first stages of its activity with workplace caterers on 17<sup>th</sup> January to give people across the UK improved access to healthier meals while they are at work.



About three million meals are eaten at work every day, two million of which are prepared by contract caterers. It is important that people are given the opportunity to choose food that is lower in salt, fat and sugar, enabling them to take positive steps towards a healthier, balanced diet. The Agency has been working in partnership with major caterers to help them develop individual commitments to provide healthier food for their customers at work. The voluntary commitments made by these businesses have focused on the types of products and ingredients businesses buy, how dishes are prepared in the kitchen, the menu choices available and nutritional information provided to customers in work canteens.

The Agency intends to work with the full range of catering businesses to contribute to this programme. The businesses involved will report back to the Agency on their progress on a six-monthly basis, allowing the Agency to monitor the progress of this work. Further information is available at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jan/commitment>, with more details following as the programme develops.

### **Guidance on allergies and unpackaged food published**



On 16<sup>th</sup> January the Agency published new guidance to help food businesses assist customers who need to avoid certain ingredients because of an allergy.

The new guidance is targeted at businesses selling food that is not packaged, such as restaurants, cafés, deli counters, sandwich bars and bakeries. It is part of the Agency's ongoing work to help these businesses to improve the information they make available to customers who have food allergies or intolerance.

A booklet and poster accompany the guidance and are being promoted via trade organisations representing retailers, caterers and catering suppliers in the UK and through local authority enforcement officers. These give advice on which ingredients can cause problems and how to address customers' questions; go to <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2008/jan/guidall> to read more.

### **Cabinet Office food report published**

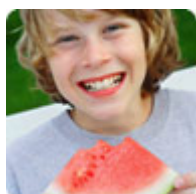
The publication on 3<sup>rd</sup> January of the Cabinet Office Report "Food: an analysis of the issues" was welcomed by the Agency. Working with Defra, the Department of Health, the Food Standards Agency and other departments, the report examines current and emerging trends in the production and consumption of food, the key drivers of those trends and the implications for the wider economy, society and the environment.



The report also looks at the opportunities and challenges facing the food system, including issues such as diet's contribution to public health, food safety, changing consumer tastes and preferences, and environmental sustainability. The full report can be found at:

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work\\_areas/food\\_policy.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/food_policy.aspx)

### **Shaping the eating habits of the next generation**



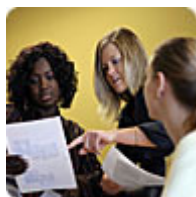
On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007 the Agency published a core competencies framework of core skills and knowledge for children and young people, which sets out the essential building blocks in relation to healthy eating, cooking and food safety. The framework is intended to help schools and community-based organisations provide children

and young people with the foundation to make healthy food choices now and into adulthood. Within the themes of diet and health, consumer awareness, cooking (food preparation and handling), and food safety, the framework applies to young people aged between 5 and 16+.

The food competences support wider Government work aimed at improving the health of young people and will contribute towards helping schools develop a 'whole school approach' to diet and health. Because they are progressive and cumulative from one age stage to the next, the framework will help children to develop a consistent set of food skills and knowledge. And, importantly, the competences apply to all learning experiences, both within and outside the school setting, and can be met at home or through other activities.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/dec/competency> has more details.

### **Incident workshop places available**



Friday 1 February 2008 Two workshops on incident prevention and response, organised by the Food Standards Agency for food manufacturers, are due to take place this month in Nottingham.

The objective of the workshops, set up in cooperation with local enforcement authorities, is to provide technical managers from local food manufacturers with information on incident prevention, management and response directly from policy makers at the Agency.

The first event is targeted at large manufacturers and will focus on the Agency's risk assessment, classification and management processes, whereas the second, aimed at small and medium manufacturers, will concentrate on the identification, reporting and management of incidents.

They will take place at 3.00pm, on 21 and 28 February, at the Government Office for East Midlands, and Food and Drink Forum offices, respectively.

Both events are free and a buffet supper will be provided. Spaces are limited to one person per company and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. To book, please email Solomon Okoruwa at [solomon.okoruwa@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:solomon.okoruwa@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk) with your contact details and which of the two workshops you wish to attend.

### **Local Area Agreements**

Access to safe and healthy food is key to reducing health inequalities and improving the well-being of local communities. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) provide an important framework for local authorities and their partners to work together on food initiatives, recognising the critical role local authorities have in improving people's access to healthy, safe food.



Following a successful East Midlands initiative the Agency has worked with the local authorities national co-ordinating body LACORS to produce a national guidance document about LAAs and food and health. The guidance was published on 7<sup>th</sup>

December 2007 and can be found at  
<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/laafoodguidance.pdf>.

### Upcoming Closing Dates



#### ***Grants for hygiene and healthy eating initiatives: Closing date 29 February 2008.***

The Food Standards Agency has launched the 2008/09 grant scheme for Local Authorities for food hygiene and healthy eating initiatives. Applications are open to local authorities, trading standards regional groups, and food liaison groups in the UK.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available to Local Authorities for local projects on food hygiene, healthy eating or a combination of both. This scheme forms part of the Agency's work to promote the safe handling of food in the home, by working with schools and providing support for local food safety initiatives.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/laresource/lahngrants/lagrants0809> gives further details.

#### ***Grants to support additional sampling and surveillance of imported food and feed: Closing date 18 February 2008***

The Food Standards Agency has been working with Local Authorities throughout the UK to improve the controls over imported foods entering the country. The Agency is now inviting Local Authorities to bid for grants for 2008/09 to take imported food samples in addition to those taken as part of their routine enforcement work.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/enfe08001.pdf> has more details.



### Call for nutrition research

The Food Standards Agency is looking for applications to carry out work in three of its nutrition research programmes. The three nutrition programmes commissioning work are:

- diet and cardiovascular health
- nutrition status and function research
- dietary surveys and nutrients in food

The closing date for applications is Friday **14<sup>th</sup> March**. Please look at the link below for more information on the research required and how to apply.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/researchfunding/rrd/adhoccalls/currentheadhoc/>

## 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:

tel: 0845 606 0667  
minicom: 0845 606 0678  
fax: 020 8867 3225  
email: [foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk](mailto:foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk)



**FSA News** - The latest issue of FSA News is available online. It contains news of Agency activities, information on savings made to food businesses through Agency cost-cutting initiatives, and a review of 2007 by Agency Chair Deirdre Hutton. It also contains updates on activities in Scotland and Wales and the English regions, details of the latest companies and organisations supporting the

Agency's approach to front-of-pack labelling, and recent consultations, guidance and regulations. Read the full version at

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsanews73.pdf>.

"Food: Using traffic lights to make healthier choices" is a handy little booklet published in November 2007. It includes a detachable, credit card sized guide to traffic light labelling to help consumers compare products at-a-glance whilst shopping. It can be ordered through the publications line above, or downloaded online at:



using traffic lights  
to make healthier choices

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/foodtrafficlight1107.pdf>.