

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY: RESPONSE TO FOI REQUEST

Date of release: 28 September 2015

Request:

For all reactive or "if asked" press statements prepared by your press office for possible issue to the media between March 16th 2015 and July 16th 2015

Response:

Cadmium in crab (01/04/15)

“There is no need for people to limit the amount of white crab meat that they eat. Levels of cadmium in the muscle meat of crab legs and claws (white meat) are low. The EU has set a maximum level of 0.5mg/kg cadmium in white crab meat. Cadmium concentrations in brown crab meat vary widely, so the advice provided by NHS Choices is that regular fish-eaters should avoid eating brown crab meat too often. “The FSA is continuing to work with the crab industry to look at ways of reducing cadmium levels in brown crab meat through different processing methods.”

Withdrawal of approval of S Bagshaw & Sons (02/04/15)

“The FSA has withdrawn the approval of S Bagshaw & Sons, which means the business can no longer operate as a slaughterhouse. This decision was taken because the business was unable to provide the FSA with adequate guarantees that it would address the serious deficiencies concerning animal welfare and food safety. “The FSA’s investigation, in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council, on the video footage which showed potential breaches of animal welfare requirements, is continuing.”

DNP (21/04/15)

“DNP has not been banned outright, as the substance has legitimate uses in other areas. Specifically, it is used in biochemical research and as a synthetic intermediate in manufacturing chemicals.

“The FSA is leading on work in the UK in partnership with Department of Health, Public Health England, MHRA, Home Office, Defra, local authorities, website domain name registrars and the police.”

Juncker review on GM food and feed (22/04/15)

“These are new proposals and EU discussions are unlikely to begin for some time - our position will therefore need to be determined by the next Government.”

On- farm Salmonella Enteritidis outbreaks in England and Wales – UPDATE (24/04/15)

“The investigation around salmonella found in chicken flocks in England and Wales is continuing. The FSA has instigated a withdrawal of chicken from one farm as a precaution. Any risk of becoming ill from chicken that has entered the food chain is very low as thorough cooking will kill the bacteria. As with all raw poultry, the FSA advises handling carefully to avoid cross-contamination.”

DNP (27/04/15)

“The FSA’s Food Crime Unit (FCU) is working with local partners overseas, including international law enforcement organisations, to address the online availability of DNP. Of the thirteen websites identified by the FCU, two of the domain names have been suspended and five further websites are subject to the ongoing attention of the relevant authorities. A further site has delisted DNP from their product offering. Many of the websites offering DNP for sale are hosted overseas so closing them down can be particularly challenging. Despite this, the FSA is actively looking at a range of options to see what can be done to prevent further online sales of DNP.

“We would encourage anyone with concerns about particular websites offering DNP for human consumption to report this to the Food Standards Agency’s Food Crime Unit by emailing foodfraud@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or to their local police force.”

Breast milk ice cream (27/04/15)

“Sales of breast milk in a food product could be permitted but the business would be required to prove the milk has been collected and handled hygienically and the product is free from harmful viruses and bacteria.”

***Salmonella enteritidis* outbreak (01/05/15)**

- The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been notified by Defra, Welsh Government and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (AHPA) about an ongoing investigation into 14 broiler flocks that have been confirmed positive for *Salmonella Enteritidis*, a type of salmonella which has the potential to cause illness in humans.
- Controls are in place in the food chain to protect consumers, including testing of poultry meat. Fresh poultry meat from the infected flocks may only be placed on the market if the tests performed at the point of slaughter are negative for the presence of salmonella, or if meat that has tested positive receives further treatment that will kill the bacteria, for example heating.
- Consumers can also protect themselves from the risk of illness by ensuring poultry meat is handled carefully to avoid cross-contamination and cooked thoroughly to kill potentially harmful bacteria like Salmonella. Further information on the safe handling and cooking of food, can be found on NHS Choices at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/homehygiene/Pages/Foodhygiene.aspx>

Cumin/mahaleb statement (01/05/15)

“We are aware of the concerns around potential cross-reactivity of mahaleb with analytical methods detecting almond in cumin and it is an issue we have been exploring in detail with the Laboratory of the Government Chemist (LGC).

“Throughout this incident we have used both protein and DNA testing methods to detect peanut and almond in spices and have based all of our actions on the best available science.

“The majority of recalls in the UK have been for undeclared almond in paprika products and there is currently no evidence of cross-reactivity from mahaleb in paprika. The one cumin product recalled is currently being analysed by LGC.

“All recalls in the UK linked to this incident still stand as the evidence presently available to the FSA suggests the affected products remain a potential health risk to people with an allergy to almond.”

Farmbox ruling (26/05/15)

“Describing something as lamb when it is in fact cheaper goats meat is deception. Given that this is a criminal breach of the rules, which are there to protect consumers, we are pleased with the judge’s decision yesterday. We are disappointed that the representatives for Farmbox Meats have chosen to avoid addressing these deceptive actions in their comments following the judge’s ruling.”

EFSA opinion on acrylamide (03/06/15)

“EFSA’s opinion supports the FSA’s advice on acrylamide. We do not advise people to stop eating any specific foods, but instead follow Department of Health advice from the NHS Choices website on eating a healthy, balanced diet. We also recommend that when making chips at home, or roasting potatoes, they are cooked to a light golden colour. Bread should be toasted to the lightest colour acceptable. However, manufacturers’ instructions for frying or oven-heating foods, such as chips, should be followed carefully.”

Maggi Noodles (04/06/15)

“The FSA is aware of the recent incident in India involving Maggi Noodles. We are currently working with Nestle and the European Commission to investigate a report of higher than expected levels of Lead and undeclared MSG in Maggi Noodles. Nestle UK have informed the FSA that they currently only import one flavour of ‘Maggi 2 Minute Noodles’ (masala flavour) from India. The batch of noodles originally tested by the authorities in India was not sold in the UK. Other flavour Maggi noodles are not imported from India but from other Nestle factories in other countries.”

Suspected BSE case in Republic of Ireland (11/06/15)

“The FSA is aware of the suspected BSE case in the Republic in Ireland. The case was identified through a test carried out on an animal which died on farm. This animal was not presented for slaughter and did not enter the food chain. There are already strict controls in place to protect consumers from the risk of BSE, including removal of the parts of cattle most likely to carry BSE and controls on animal feed. However, if this case is confirmed we will work with authorities in ROI to identify any implications for the UK food chain.”

New UNISON report on meat inspectors (15/06/15)

“The European Commission is considering future changes to modernise controls in place for meat. Discussions are at an early stage, but the Food Standards Agency will play a full part in the negotiations at a European level. Through inspections, verification and audit, our officials play an important role in making sure that food business operators are producing meat that is safe to eat. We consider that independent official controls are important for ensuring meat safety and maintaining consumer confidence. However, we do see opportunity to further strengthen controls. We will make sure, through our negotiations, that any changes make meat safer for consumers.”

Miracle Mineral Solution (17/06/15)

"Miracle Mineral Solution can cause serious damage to health and in some cases even death. Anyone who has bought these products is advised to throw them away. If they have been taken and the person feels unwell, they should consult their doctor. "We are working closely with local areas to make sure parents are aware of the risks of these supplements.”

MRSA in meat (18/06/15)

“There are no known cases of people contracting LA MRSA from eating meat in the UK. Even on the continent, where LA MRSA is much more prevalent, there is no clear evidence of food being linked to infection in people. In previous research LA MRSA has been found in meat on sale in the UK and we are working with experts from across Government to understand better the potential risk to public health. We have consulted the ACMSF working group on antimicrobial resistance about this issue and they concluded that, based on current evidence, the risk of contracting MRSA through consumption of foodstuffs is very low. This will be kept under review. In the meantime the FSA advice remains the same: foodstuffs should be stored appropriately, handled hygienically and meat should be cooked thoroughly.”

New study on lab rat diets, pesticides, GMOs, and rat health (18/06/15)

“It is well known and inevitable that the feed given to laboratory animals can contain trace amounts of contaminants. As analytical techniques improve so it becomes more likely that these will be detected. Well conducted studies take these background levels into account and this does not invalidate the results.”

Maggi Noodles (01/07/15)

“The FSA can confirm that results from testing samples of Maggi Noodles in the UK have all found that levels of lead in the products are well within EU permissible levels and would not be a concern to consumers.”

Royal Society for Public Health research into allergy information in restaurants (10/07/15)

“It is the responsibility of food businesses to provide accurate allergen ingredients information, as this is potentially lifesaving to those with a food allergy. However, in the past we have seen that there may be language barriers associated with takeaways in particular not being able to give accurate allergen information. In order to support these businesses, the FSA has translated the allergen information into different languages including Chinese, Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi to ensure businesses whose first language is not English can understand the new legislation.”

GM food and feed in the EU (14/07/15)

A government spokesperson said:

“The UK firmly believes that GM regulation should be science-based. The process for approving GM food and feed in the EU requires a rigorous independent safety assessment before being allowed on the market.”

“We are concerned about the implications of this proposal for our principle of science-based decision making. We are discussing these concerns with the Commission and Member States.”