

July 2007



# Domestic Food Forecast

NZFSA's newsletter for Local Government



## Hazard Information Database

Lessons learned from implementing Food Safety Programmes and Risk Management Programmes show that one of their most technically demanding parts is the HACCP component – specifically identifying hazards that occur in New Zealand and ways to keep them under control.

This proves demanding both for operators developing their programme, and for evaluators, external verifiers and regulators who need to confirm that the identified hazards and their control measures are appropriate to the food business.

To assist these groups, NZFSA is developing a searchable web-based tool (with the working name 'hazard information database') to help identify relevant biological, chemical and physical hazards that can occur during food processing, preparation and handling. It will provide information on the source of the hazards and offer guidance on ways to control them. It's impossible to develop a tool to cover every situation, but this comprehensive resource should help in most food operations.

The information in the database will be sourced from microbiological limits contained in legislation, previously developed codes of practice and other reference texts etc.

Having the information in an easily accessible and understandable format will help operators identify appropriate food safety hazards. It will provide a one-stop-shop of essential reference information which should reduce the amount of time spent on developing or checking Food Control Plans.

The development of the hazard information database will facilitate and require input from all parties and once in place will be regularly updated.

NZFSA expects to begin developing the database soon and hopes to have a prototype version ready to trial later in the year. Industry groups will have input into the database development via working groups which will be established to develop specific food sector off-the-peg Food Control Plans or other industry implementation tools such as national programmes.

## Editorial

*Welcome to this edition of Domestic Food Forecast which aims to keep you up to date with the implementation of the new food regulatory system. In this issue we look at the Compliance and operational response project which will develop a systems audit and compliance and enforcement programme. We get updates on the development of the new Food Bill, the Food Control Plan trial and receive some feedback from Linda Kenny, EHO.*

*Keep the feedback coming into to: [philippa.ross-james@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:philippa.ross-james@nzfsa.govt.nz)*



## Food Service off-the-peg Food Control Plan Trial

A major trial of a prototype off-the-peg Food Control Plan (OTP-FCP) for the Food Service sector is underway with input from the Hospitality Association of New Zealand (HANZ) and the Restaurant Association of New Zealand (RANZ). The trial involves about 80 food service establishments, including restaurants, cafes and bars.

The participating businesses are implementing and running the OTP-FCP for a three-month period. Pre- and post-trial assessments undertaken mostly by local Health Protection Officers will evaluate the suitability of the OTP-FCP and the impact it has on the practices of participating food workers.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from 14 Territorial Authorities and one contracted service provider identified participants for the trial. Once the pre-trial assessments have been done, the EHOs have the task of introducing the OTP-FCP to the business operators and making themselves available to answer queries.

EHOs will keep a diary of their interactions with the participating operators. This will help track issues raised and time spent helping operators get to grips with the OTP-FCP. This vital information will be used to help evaluate the FCP and gain a better understanding of the level of support businesses need to understand and implement the template.

The findings of the trial will help NZFSA further refine the food service FCP which will be one of the first to be implemented when the new Food Bill is in place.

Contact Mike Orchard for more information.



## Updates

**Domestic Food Review** – The summary of submissions from the ninth DFR consultation paper – *Transition Policy and Related Implementation* – is now available on our website. The Policy Statement that addresses comments made by submitters is on track for publication by the end of July 2007.

We continue work on drafting the new Food Bill which is expected to make most existing food-related by-laws obsolete. We are exploring what this might mean in practice and have therefore recently written to TAs asking for a copy of food related by-laws. Any assistance you can give to getting a response back to us quickly is appreciated!

We are still looking to have the Bill progressed through Parliament this year but passage of the Bill is now more likely to take place in 2008. If that happens, the implementation date would be later in 2008 with the first affected sectors (food service) having their Food Control Plans (FCPs) registered in 2009.

### New food rules brochure –

We still have plenty of these brochures available. They were written to alert food business operators about the new Food Bill and how it will affect them. We have also had the brochure translated into simplified Chinese and Korean. So far about 15 TAs have requested brochures to either send out with their regular mail-outs or to deliver when they're visiting premises.

Call our 0800 number, or email me at: [Philippa.ross-james@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:Philippa.ross-james@nzfsa.govt.nz) if you'd like some.



**NZFSA's conference 2007** – *Food into the future* – will be held at the Duxton Hotel in Wellington on 26 & 27 September this year. International speakers will share their experiences on aspects of the modern food industry and NZFSA representatives will give delegates updates on our major initiatives. A series of workshops will give delegates the opportunity to find out about issues in greater detail. Check out our website for registration details.



# Compliance and Operational Response – we need your input

DFR Project 8, *Compliance and Operational Response* was set up to establish a consistent and comprehensive systems audit, compliance and enforcement programme for the domestic food regulatory programme.

Project co-managers Susanna Barris and Sally Johnston report that one of the first priorities is to work with DFR Project 6 (*Standards and Technical Programmes*) to develop a standard for verification activities. Once this standard has been finalised, work will start on writing guidance material to describe:

- how non-compliances will be classified
- sanctions and how they will be applied
- procedures for escalating response
- a mechanism for calibration/ensuring consistency.

The project includes familiarising TAs with the guidance material and hopefully a trial with a TA (or cluster of).

DFR8 is primarily responsible for developing the tools that will be used to encourage good food safety management (eg, a national grading scheme and incentive schemes) and sanctions (eg, apologies, notices). An initial priority in developing tools for applying sanctions is to have a common understanding and a consistent approach for applying them. To do this, NZFSA needs to understand how TAs judge categories of non-compliance. This is where you can help – by letting Sally know the following:

1. In what kinds of situations/circumstances would you expect to be able to close down a food business (either temporarily or permanently)?
2. What sorts of findings in a food business audit or investigation would you classify as:
  - a major issue/non-compliance?
  - a minor issue/non-compliance?
  - a recommendation for improvement (may be very minor non-compliance, or no non-compliance but could be borderline)?

3. In the examples you have given/classified, which of the following tool(s) would you consider most appropriate to encourage improving food safety and suitability or compliance?

Possible tools include:

- a) Infringement notices – will provide immediate action and act as a deterrent. They will need to be used judiciously and applied consistently and equitably. NZFSA intends to develop tight criteria to guide their use.
- b) Improvement notices – will provide businesses with an opportunity to improve their standards before any subsequent sanction or prosecution.
- c) Prohibition notices – officers may have powers to immediately close premises, or prohibit the use of a particular piece of plant or equipment, where there is a food safety risk to the public.
- d) Public apologies – will require an operator or person to publish a statement of apology, may be used for particular non-compliances.
- e) Public notification – this may be related to a grading scheme, to allow publishing of food business grades, but may also allow public notification of any sanctions applied to a food business.
- f) Compliance orders – issued by a District Court.
- g) Prosecution – with an additional ability for the Courts, on conviction of a person, to prohibit that person from engaging in food business activities for a period of time.

Sally would appreciate your feedback on the above questions. She is looking for specific, rather than generic statements; ie, 'cooking time/temperatures not recorded for whole chickens in the two weeks prior to audit/investigation', rather than 'incomplete records', or 'observation/evidence of food worker using same chopping board for raw meat and RTE salad preparation' rather than 'poor hygiene practices'.

Please email Sally at [sally.johnston@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:sally.johnston@nzfsa.govt.nz) by 31 July with your input.



## Feedback corner

A while ago I received this email from Linda Kenny, EHO at Kapiti Coast District Council. We're pleased to hear that the growing body of technical information on our website is useful, but take the point from Linda that we need to let people know it's there. So, consider yourselves reminded!

You'll find fact sheets on a range of food related issues at: [www.nzfsa.govt.nz/publications/publications](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/publications/publications)

You can also sign up for emails which let you know when the website has been updated.

Linda's email:

20 April 2007

Hi Philippa

*You haven't heard from me for a while, but I was thinking last night that I should send you a note regarding the good work that has been appearing on your website.*

*I am now making it a regular activity that I check the NZFSA website to see if there is anything I can use. It has been really good seeing the infectious disease information, especially on the norovirus. Hutt Valley Health DHB require that their TAs do some infectious disease investigations. But finding approved information to give to the people is difficult, so finding the information has been a breath of fresh air.*

*The other information related to food safety is good too and congratulations to the team for putting it on the website. My original view of NZFSA is being confirmed and it is pleasing to see food safety information that is current.*

*Only complaint, and we are all guilty of it, is to promote what your goals are regarding your website to let other agencies regularly check the site. I have found that the bigger councils seem to have more contact with your officers and attend meetings. While smaller councils in the rural areas have to actively seek information, sometimes successfully, sometimes not.*

Regards,

Linda

## TA steering group update

The steering group continues to meet and provide valuable input into the development of the Food Bill and supporting systems. If you want to contact any of the TA members to have them bring your thoughts to the meeting, here are their contact details:

<b>Chris Dee</b>	Auckland City Environments	(09) 379 2020
<b>Susan Edwards</b>	Local Government New Zealand	(04) 924 1200
<b>Bob Hutchinson</b>	Wellington City Council	(04) 499 4444
<b>Ros MacGill</b>	Dunedin City Council	(03) 477 4000
<b>David Vince</b>	Timaru District Council	(03) 687 7200
<b>Mike Webster</b>	Napier City Council	(06) 835 7579

## NZFSA staff updates

We are sad to report that Alistair Thomson left last month. Alistair is off to follow his passion of 'mucking about with boats' (he's gone to work for Maritime New Zealand).

### NZFSA contacts:

**Chris Hewins**, Programme Manager (Retail Sales)  
04 894 2567, 029 894 2567, [chris.hewins@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:chris.hewins@nzfsa.govt.nz)

**Mike Orchard**, Programme Manager (Food Service)  
04 894 2687, 029 894 2687, [mike.orchard@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:mike.orchard@nzfsa.govt.nz)

## Programme Manager (Local Government)

NZFSA has created an exciting new position to help develop its work programme with TAs. The position, a two-year fixed term role based in Wellington, will help NZFSA progress its aim of having an excellent working relationship with local government. The JD will be available soon.

For more information contact [glen.neal@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:glen.neal@nzfsa.govt.nz)



[www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz)

New Zealand Food Safety Authority  
PO Box 2835, Wellington, New Zealand  
0800 NZFSA1 (0800 693 721)