

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) are aware that batches of soyabean lecithin imported to the UK have been found to contain undeclared peanut protein. We have received several Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) alerts concerning affected products supplied to the UK by manufacturers in India.

This could pose a significant food safety risk as Peanut allergy is one of the most common forms of IgE-mediated reactions to food in the UK

Soyabean lecithin is widely used in food production and the FSA in conjunction with FSS is currently carrying out investigations to determine the scale of this incident and understand the impact on the UK food supply chain and consumers.

At this time, contaminated soyabean lecithin is known to have been used in numerous products in the UK. The levels of peanut protein within products containing contaminated soyabean lecithin vary, depending upon the initial level of contamination and onward processing within the supply chain. For example, there are instances where the contamination has occurred in chocolate, which is then used as an ingredient in other products.

Food businesses are responsible for establishing whether any of their food products are affected and, where this is the case, taking steps to ensure consumers are protected and the food they sell is safe.

Businesses should complete traceability exercises to identify products (or ingredients used in products) containing soyabean lecithin that have come from the manufacturers in India, where we know the contamination occurred.

Where products are identified, product-specific risk assessments should be carried out to determine whether they could contain soyabean lecithin that has been contaminated with peanut protein.

Product labelling should be checked to determine whether it is sufficient to manage the potential risks of peanut contamination, for example peanut is an ingredient in the product and therefore already in the ingredients list on the label.

Where potentially contaminated products are identified, and product labelling is not considered sufficient to manage the risk, food businesses should establish risk management interventions on a case-by-case basis, based on a risk assessment taking into account individual circumstances. Product testing to determine levels of any peanut protein present may be necessary to inform the risk assessment.

If a food business identifies any product containing soyabean lecithin that has been contaminated with peanut and product labelling does not manage the risk to consumers, the product should be withdrawn, and a recall should be issued.

Products still within the control of the food business or supply chain should be relabelled to ensure the risk of peanut contamination is sufficiently communicated to consumers before being placed on the market.

Food businesses should also ensure that any future supply of soyabean lecithin does not contain undeclared peanut protein before further processing/production takes place.

Due to the uncertainty and variability of the levels of contamination in affected lecithin batches, and the wide range of products that may contain the contaminated soyabean lecithin, it is not possible for the FSA or FSS to recommend a safe level of peanut protein in affected products or provide risk management advice. Risk management action must be determined by product specific risk assessments.

Businesses affected by this issue are required to inform their local authority (LA).

We ask that businesses respond promptly to any notifications or instructions from suppliers or LAs to withdraw/recall products from the market and, when asked, to provide other information in relation to the incident.