

To :

Heads of Environmental Health.

Lead Food Officers.

21/8/2015

FSS-ENF-15-009

Dear Colleagues

Quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs) in food

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Category:

- Hygiene

Action requested: to note a possible compromise to the microbiological safety of food.

Please bring this letter to the attention of all relevant officers in your Authority.

- **Issue**

Forthcoming changes to statutory Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for two commonly-used biocides may lead to an increased risk of microbiological contamination as food businesses make changes to their food safety management systems to avoid non-compliance.

- **Background/context**

- Two types of QAC, dodecyltrimethylammonium chloride (DDAC) and benzalkonium chloride (BAC) are commonly used as disinfectants and sanitisers in food processing facilities because of their biocidal properties. These are also listed as Plant Protection Products and therefore fall within the scope of EC Regulation 396/2005, whatever their actual function in a specific food process.

- Residues of QACs were previously detected in a broad range of foods, notably prepared fruit and vegetables, above the default MRL of 0.01 mg/kg set out in Regulation 396/2005. In the absence of a concern for health, a temporary guideline level for QACs of 0.5 mg/kg was agreed by the Commission in 2012.
- This guideline level has now been replaced by a new MRL of 0.1 mg/kg through Commission Regulation 1119/2014. The new MRL applies from 12 August 2015 to all food produced after that date.
- HSE has written to relevant stakeholders to advise them of the legal situation and planned enforcement activity. A copy of the letter is attached with this email.

Please note that responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of the new QAC MRLs rests solely with HSE and it is not necessary for Local Authorities to take any action in this respect.

Yours faithfully



Bryan Campbell

Senior Enforcement Manager

[Enc. Letter from HSE]