

Lead Food officers

REHIS

SFELC

23 December 2016

Your ref: FSS/ENF/16/020

Dear Colleagues

**Food Standards Scotland (FSS) / Food Standards Agency (FSA) review of food recall arrangements in the UK food retail sector and forthcoming changes to how FSS/FSA Food Alerts are communicated**

**Introduction:**

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and Food Standards Agency (FSA) have instigated a review of food recall arrangements in the food retail sector. Food businesses operators are obliged to effectively remove products from the market where they have reason to believe that the food safety requirements of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 have not been met, inform the competent authorities and ensure where necessary that consumers are appropriately informed.

FSS and FSA wish to understand more about food recall arrangements within the food retail sector; how competent authorities are engaged in the process and to understand consumer awareness, and behaviours when food is recalled. The review aims to identify what currently works well and where improvements could be made to better protect / inform the consumer.

The project is being taken forward in a collaborative manner. An external stakeholder reference group has been established to advise FSS/FSA on the review and any recommendations that will follow. Membership includes representatives from local authorities, the food industry and consumer representatives. Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee will represent Scottish Local Authorities (LA's). Full list of membership of the external stakeholder reference group can be found in Appendix 1.

**Review of food recall arrangements within the UK food retail sector**

The review is currently at an evidence gathering stage, aiming to provide a baseline in understanding the current arrangements in place for food recalls across the food retail sector, how competent authorities are engaged and an understanding of consumer awareness of and behaviours to food recalls.

To inform this phase of the work, FSS/FSA have commissioned an external researcher – Kantar Public. Kantar Public would like to approach a number of LA's to feed into the work. Information provided by LA's will remain confidential and information provided will not be directly attributable to any Local Authority.

In addition to the work being taken forward by Kantar Public, FSS and FSA plan to review a number of live case studies chosen from food incidents where a recall takes place and local authorities may be approached to take part in this work.

FSS and FSA would greatly appreciate your co-operation in these matters. If you are approached to take part in this work and want more information on the review please contact: Ryan Bruce, email: [ryan.bruce@fss.scot](mailto:ryan.bruce@fss.scot) tel no: 01224 285138.

### **Changes to how food incident alerts are issued**

FSS and FSA have also been looking at internal processes and procedures associated with issuing notices (Product Recall Information Notices (PRINs), Allergy Alerts (AAs) and Food Alerts for Action (FAFAs)).

This work aims to improve the efficiency of our internal processes and communications with LA's. The process has taken account of ad-hoc feedback received by LAs across the UK over the last year and also recommendations from the local authority audit of incidents and alerts carried out in December 2015 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>. The following changes will be made in the way notices and alerts are issued from 1st January 2017.

#### ***Food alerts for information:***

- PRINs and AAs will be referenced in the following formats:
  - FSS-PRIN-01-2017 (for PRINs in Scotland)
  - FSA-PRIN-01-2017 (for PRINs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
  
  - FSS-AA-01-2017 (for allergy alerts in Scotland)
  - FSA-AA-01-2017 (for allergy alerts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
  
- FSS will have a single referencing system specific to Scotland and FSA will have their own.
  
- PRINs and AAs will be circulated across the UK as follows:
  - FSS PRINs and AAs, will be circulated to all LAs in Scotland. Where product is not believed to have been distributed outside Scotland, such alerts will be circulated by FSA for reference to LAs across the rest of the UK by way of web link to the FSS website.
  - FSA PRINs and AAs, will be circulated to LAs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as normal. Where product is not believed to have been distributed to Scotland, such alerts will be circulated for reference to LAs in Scotland by way of web link to the FSA website for their information. Where product has been distributed to Scotland then FSS will issue the alert as normal.

#### ***Food Alerts for action:***

- FAFAs will be referenced in the following formats:
  - FSS-FAFA-01-2017 (for PRINs in Scotland)
  - FSA-FAFA-01-2017 (for PRINs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

FAFAs will always include the following:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/focus-audit-incident.pdf>

Section	Detail
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The reason for the FAFA, including the public health risks associated with the consumption of the product(s)</li> <li>- The level of urgency of the issue and an appropriate timescale for action</li> <li>- If the business is known to sell the products online</li> <li>- An Indication of information known about distribution</li> </ul>
Actions to be taken by enforcement authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An appropriate timescale for action</li> <li>- Clear advice as to what action enforcement officers are to take with respect to any product found, with references to relevant legislation</li> </ul>

### Local authority roles and responsibilities during incidents

Whilst emphasising that primary responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of food recalls rests with food business operators, I would take this opportunity to remind LAs of their roles and responsibilities in relation to food incidents and food recalls under Regulation 178/2002.

- Under Article 17, food businesses are legally required to inform their LA (and FSS) if there is reason to believe that food is not compliant with food safety requirements. In accordance with the Food Law Codes of Practice, LAs are also required to report any serious localised food hazards and non-localised food hazards to FSS. Information should be reported using the incident report form available on the FSS website at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/food-incident-report-form>. The information can also be reported online.
- Article 10 places a requirement on public authorities to take appropriate steps to inform the general public of risks to food, identify those foods affected and identify any measures which should be taken to reduce or eliminate that risk. To this end FSS/FSA would be grateful if LAs could share information on recalls through their social media channels, (for example on Twitter and Facebook).

Further information can also be found on the FSS website and in the Food Law Codes of Practice and Practice Guidance: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/food-law-code-practice-2015>

Yours sincerely



Ryan Bruce  
Incidents Manager  
Food Standards Scotland

## Appendix 1 – Membership of the External Stakeholder Reference Group

Name	Organisation
Jason Feeney	Food Standards Agency
Richard Hoskin	Food Standards Agency
Kathryn Baker	Food Standards Agency
David Lowe	Food Standards Agency
Chris Simpson	Food Standards Agency
Ryan Bruce	Food Standards Scotland
Sue Davis	Which?
Lindsey McManus	Allergy UK
Moira Austin	Anaphylaxis Campaign
Kathryn Miller	Coeliac UK
Kaarin Goodburn	Chilled Food Association
Elizabeth Andoh-Kesson	British Retail Consortium
Julie Byers	Association of Convenience Stores
Kerina Cheesman	Food and Drink Federation
Martin Forsyth	British Frozen Food Federation
Sian Thomas	Fresh Produce Consortium
Clare Cheney	Provision Trade Federation
James Bielby	Federation of Wholesaler Distributors
Andrew Collinson	Wycombe District Council
Sue Powell	Oxfordshire County Council
Karen O'Conner	Bracknell Council
Earl Legister	Southwark Council
Andrew Morrison	Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee