

RESPOC TRADING STANDARDS REVIEW

ILLEGALLY IMPORTED FOOD - WHOLE SALE AND RETAIL

INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 The Food Health and Safety Team are situated within the Consumer Protection Service. To deliver efficient services maintain competencies and encourage recruitment and retention of staff statutory food service is delivered alongside other statutory functions such as health and safety infectious disease control and smoke free enforcement.

Following a restructuring within Consumer Protection including appointment of a permanent team leader the team was realigned into three areas South Area, North Area, and West Area (locality working area map attached as **Appendix 3**) This promotes consistency and delivers opportunities for improved working relationships with local business, improved local intelligence and better enforcement.

Team Leader – Oliver Darius
Area Principal North – Greg Thomson
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The team consists of 8.59 Full Time Equivalent staff that are suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Health Practitioners. General qualification and experience requirements are set out within the Food Standards Agency food Law code of Practice.

The approach toward regulating imported food was set out in the report to the RESPOC meeting report on 18 November 2009. It is a requirement that all food from countries outside the EU must comply with UK Law in relation to both food safety and food standards.

CURRENT PROCESSES

2.0 The Role of the Food Standards Agency (FSA)

The FSA are able to provide specialist advice on matters of national importance beyond the confines of a local authority and the regions. A combination of local intelligence from all the local enforcing authorities combined provides a national picture to which the agency can respond and prioritise its funding.

Of a more general nature the FSA is able to provide advice on personal imports, guidance and regulatory advice on imported foods, including advice on product and supplier checks.

The FSA also work alongside LACORS to deliver operational guidance to enforcement authorities on things such as Food labelling including the use of terms e.g. Fresh Pure and natural as well as further expert advice on nutrition and health claims.

Grant Funding

- 2.1 Additional funding could be sought through the FSA's grant schemes which supports and encourages local authorities to develop and implement local food hygiene initiatives. Such initiatives would be over and above the normal routine statutory work carried out. Successful bids may also be used to enhance such work by targeting resources in priority areas.

Over the last 7 years the Food Standards Agency has been working with enforcement authorities with its aim to improve controls over imported food and feedstuffs on the market in the UK. Funding is primarily geared to support existing sampling programmes.

The FSA stipulates national priorities, which were discussed at the North West Sector Food Liaison Group meeting in January 2010. Local Authorities represented in the group include: Hillingdon, Ealing, Harrow, Brent, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Barnet, Kensington and Chelsea and Haringey.

With sampling budgets under pressure it has been proposed that a joint bid be made by the West Sector Food Liaison Group, for funding to carry out sampling and surveillance of imported food.

Sampling and surveillance of such food would focus on third countries only. The Liaison Group was unanimous in its support for the chosen food safety risk and proposed that a bid be made along these lines.

Mycotoxins an emerging or current food safety risk

- 2.2 Mycotoxins are a group of toxins formed by certain moulds, which may grow on some foods, particularly in tropical and sub-tropical countries.

A well-recognized type of mycotoxin is aflatoxin. Experts advise it is essential to keep aflatoxin exposure from food sources as low as possible by reducing exposure from the sources that are major contributors to people's total exposure.

The full list of emerging food safety risks listed by the FSA is provided in

the Food Standards Agency Imported Food/Feed Sampling and Surveillance 2010/11 Programme (attached as **Appendix 4** on page 8)

The preferred sampling chosen by the North West Sector Food Liaison Group is as follows:

1. Aflatoxins and ochratoxins in spices and other products from India.
2. Aflatoxins in pistachios almonds and hazelnuts, brazil nuts.

CONSIDERATION FOR A WAY FORWARD

3.0 The Committee may help to improve arrangements for combating illegally imported foods by:

1. Agreeing that Hillingdon Council participate in the proposed bids and resulting survey work.
2. Supporting existing budgets available to sample food products as part of the Food Health and Safety Team's routine sampling programme.
3. Supporting appropriate follow-up action being taken in accordance with the service endorsement policy.

London Food Hygiene Scores on the Doors

3.1 Scores on the Doors scheme was piloted by a group of London Local Authorities including Hillingdon as part of a FSA pilot. The scheme, which was launched in 2007, encourages and recognises the many food businesses that achieve full legal compliance. It also allows the public to find out about food hygiene standards within businesses and make informed decisions about where they eat in London

As part of the scheme, businesses are given a window sticker and certificate showing how many stars have been achieved. Display of these is voluntary.

Ratings are awarded after once structural conditions of the premises are checked, as well as the practices, procedures, and confidence in the management to handle food safely.


Star ratings (and scores) apply to the time of the last inspection **only**, so they are simply a snapshot in time and may not represent current conditions.


The London scheme retains a consistent rating of food businesses across London using a consistency framework rolled out to all the


APPENDIX 2C


participating authorities. This was based upon the Food Law Code of Practice

Inspected premises are awarded one of the following star ratings

 **Excellent:** Very high standards of food safety management. Fully compliant with food safety legislation.

 **Very good:** Good food safety management. High standard of compliance with food safety legislation.

 **Good:** Good level of legal compliance. Some more effort might be required.

 **Broadly compliant:** Broadly compliant with food safety legislation. More effort required to meet all legal requirements.

 **Poor:** Poor level of compliance with food safety legislation – much more effort required.

Very poor: A general failure to comply with legal requirements. Little or no appreciation of food safety. Major effort required

Since the start of the scheme some limited publicity has been achieved through the Local newspaper as well as advertising on JC Decaux Bill boards. Funding for publicity is however limited.

The scheme has been accepted by small businesses, and has often acted as an incentive for them to improve. Star ratings are can be accessed via the following websites

www.yourlondon.gov.uk
www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk