

Appendix A: Combatting Food Fraud and ensuring authenticity

In April 2013, in the wake of the horsemeat scandal and associated food fraud issues, the Council agreed to give Trading Standards an additional £50,000 to use to ensure food sold in Buckinghamshire to consumers was genuine. We have used intelligence and information available to us to target areas where we thought issues were most likely.

This is a summary of our work carried out with the additional funding.

Fish Species

Historically cheaper white fish has been substituted for the more expensive Cod.

19 fish samples from Fish & Chip Shops / Restaurants actually found to be the fish they were described as.

Durum Wheat

A bad harvest led to suspicions of substitution with common wheat. Durum Wheat Pasta should contain no more than 3% common wheat.

Only 1 in 13 samples taken was found to have more than 3% common wheat. A national wholesaler supplied Durum Wheat Pasta with 6% common wheat to a Buckinghamshire Retailer. Trading Standards are investigating the wholesalers.

Basmati Rice

Basmati sells for 2 to 3 times the price of ordinary long grain rice.

15 samples of Basmati Rice were found to be satisfactory.

Olive Oil

A bad harvest led to suspicions of substitution with other oils.

13 samples from a range of retail outlets found no substitution, but a number of labelling issues have been taken up with the importers.

Meat Species

26 different meat takeaway products were sampled.

1 sample had undeclared BEEF in a Lamb Doner Kebab;



2 samples had undeclared LAMB in Burgers;

9 samples had undeclared CHICKEN in Lamb Doner Kebabs.

Initial investigations suggest wholesalers sell correctly labelled products, but the takeaway outlets may be ignorant of how to describe these at point of sale and are misleading customers.

Aflatoxin Contamination (Poisons of Fungal Origin)

15 samples were taken looking for the toxins which indicate fungal growth in the product prior to import. These toxins are highly undesirable and can cause liver damage.

2 samples were unsatisfactory due to the presence of Aflatoxins

1 sample was unfit for human consumption and upon further investigation by this service a product recall was instigated; a revisit is planned to ensure future compliance.

1 sample is being investigated by Trading Standards where the importer is based.

5 samples had minor labelling problems.

Soft Drinks Survey

We took part in a national survey looking for the presence of Benzoic Acid and Southampton Colours (linked to hyperactivity in children). The results generated media interest:-

3 satisfactory samples;

2 samples with excess Benzoic Acid and labelling issues;

5 samples with labelling issues.

Fruit Juice from Concentrate

A complaint was received that the majority of importers of concentrated fruit juices were adding more water than was taken away when reconstituting. The results from 115 samples of a wide range of juices at first seemed to substantiate this claim. However on further investigation it was found that allowance needed to be made for the presence of Citric Acid in some of the juices which would skew the results.

Polish Meat Products



A small sample of 5 meat products originating from Poland were sampled. All were found to have labelling issues and these are being dealt with.

Water content of Frozen Chicken – 5 samples taken; 4 satisfactory, 1 pending result

Ground nut powders at importers

In recent years we have seen incidents where adulteration of almond powders with cheaper peanut powder has resulted in incorrect allergen information being provided and has resulted in reports of severe allergic reactions following consumption or in some cases death.

6 samples taken all were found to be satisfactory for allergenic ingredients but 4 had other labelling issues. As well as testing their ground nut powder, we have also made our largest wholesaler of this sort of product aware of the issue.

Ethnic takeaway meals

26 samples have been taken from ethnic restaurants checking for allergenic ingredients and for meat substitution. Officers indicated that they were allergic to peanuts and one other allergenic ingredient. We have had 21 of the results back so far and 3 have been found to be unsatisfactory for the presence of allergenic ingredients of soya and egg. None have had peanuts in them so far.

We will be continuing to do further work this year relating to allergens: ensuring the disclosure of allergenic ingredients; and also ensuring sufficient descriptions are applied to products at the small catering establishments. A legislation change at the end of the year will give us more powers to tackle problems without resulting in prosecution as we will be able to issue notices prohibiting the sale and supply of products that are not compliant with the legislation. We will endeavour to do this work with our colleagues in Environmental Health.

Children's Ready Meals Survey – 20 samples taken, all results pending

This is an overview if you would like more details please contact Trading Standards