

**UNDER EMBARGO until 02/03/2017 at 11.00 CET
NOT FOR FURTHER DISTRIBUTION**

Parma, 2 March 2017

Food safety: simpler rules proposed for small retailers

EFSA has proposed a simplified approach to food safety management in small retail businesses such as grocery shops, butchers, and bakeries. The approach includes guidelines on how to identify the most relevant biological, chemical and physical hazards at each stage of the food production process, the activities or practices that make hazards more likely to occur and appropriate control measures.

A combination of managerial, organisational and technical hurdles means that many small food retailers have difficulty complying with the requirements of existing food safety management systems (FSMS). In particular, applying often complex hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) plans can be beyond the capacity of establishments that may employ only a handful of staff.

To help overcome this problem, EFSA has developed simple FSMS for five types of small food business – a butcher's shop, a grocery, a bakery, a fishmonger and an ice cream shop – that are easy to understand and implement.

The new approach uses flow diagrams to summarise the stages of production, an accompanying questionnaire, and simple tables to take retailers through the food safety management process from hazard identification to control measures.

Marta Hugas, head of EFSA's Biological Hazards and Contaminants unit, said: "Some aspects of current food hygiene regulations can be challenging for small businesses, particularly where resources are tight or expertise is lacking.

"This simpler approach, which the European Commission asked us to develop, would make it easier for such operators to identify hazards and take action to counter them. It's a practical response to a known problem that could benefit consumers and food businesses alike."

The streamlined system means, for example, that retailers are not required to have detailed knowledge of specific hazards. They need only to be aware that biological, chemical and physical hazards or allergens may be present and that a failure to undertake key control activities – such as correct chilled storage or separation of raw from cooked products – could increase exposure of consumers to a hazard.

The classical approach of ranking and prioritising hazards, which is usually required before decisions on control measures can be taken, has been removed.

Experts from EFSA's Panel on Biological Hazards, who developed the Scientific Opinion, recommend that butcher, grocery, bakery, fish and ice cream shops apply the simplified

approach. They add that it would also overcome many of the issues encountered by other small food businesses when attempting to implement effective food safety management systems and should therefore be considered for wider application within the food industry.

Media enquiries please contact:

EFSA Media Relations Office
Tel.: +39 0521 036 149
E-mail: Press@efsa.europa.eu