

## ANGUS COUNCIL

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE – 19 FEBRUARY 2002

## STRATEGY FOR WIDER IMPLEMENTATION OF HACCP

## REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

**ABSTRACT**

The Strategy described by the Food Standards Agency details a range of specific initiatives to expand the implementation of HACCP in food businesses.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report and express their support for the implementation of the strategy.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a target of ensuring that 30% of food business are operating Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) schemes by April 2004. There has been some work towards meeting this target largely due to the HACCP requirement in some of the food legislation requiring approval of certain processors and Butchers' licensing.

A questionnaire was sent to local authorities in September 2001 in an effort to establish the number of food businesses operating HACCP schemes and undocumented risk based schemes in the management of the business. The information on HACCP implementation is limited as it is not legally required by Local Authorities to collect such data.

However, according to the FSA only 50% of Local Authorities replied to the questionnaire. This Council did reply to this questionnaire and have we re-configured the software used within the Environmental and Consumer Protection Service to enable our staff to record this information.

**3. RESEARCH INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HACCP**

Recent research suggests that the main barriers to HACCP implementation are:

- Perceived complexity and bureaucracy particularly for small businesses.
- Lack of knowledge on the application of HACCP and training in the principles of HACCP.
- Poor communication and lack of simple, authoritative information on HACCP.
- Enforcement difficulties such as a lack of a specific requirement for documentation in catering and retail premises (except for butchers).

**4. THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY'S STRATEGY**

The strategy aims to address the barriers clearly demonstrated by the research. The key elements of this strategy will be as follows:

- a sustained campaign to raise awareness and understanding of HACCP particularly with catering and food retailing businesses. It is hoped to link this with the Agency's 2002 Food Hygiene Campaign (see Report No 10/02).
- The development of better Agency guidance and support mechanisms to encourage and assist businesses to put in place effective food safety management systems. The guidance will be practical in essence and will place less emphasis on the HACCP acronym and on the Scheme's jargon. The Agency is considering the establishment of a HACCP advisory centre.
- The Agency hopes through the strategy, to maximise the role of local authorities in assisting businesses to apply centrally developed guidance. Local Authorities will therefore be provided with enhanced guidance and further training to help their staff assess the effectiveness of planned and existing HACCP based control schemes.
- The research clearly demonstrated a lack of knowledge in how to manage a risk based management scheme such as HACCP generally in food businesses. To meet this need the Agency plans to initiate a training intervention with the help of other Government bodies to increase training to food handlers and their managers. The Agency intends to monitor the impact of this training on hygiene practices.

- Particular emphasis will be placed on the catering and fresh meat sector of the food industry. The work in catering will be linked to the Food Hygiene Campaign.
- The Agency intends to establish effective management arrangements to co-ordinate and drive HACCP implementation including the gathering and collation of data by Local Authorities on the implementation of HACCP systems within the food premises inspected by their staff.

## **5. LICENSING OF FOOD PREMISES**

In devising this Strategy the FSA evaluated the Licensing of Food Premises to ensure compliance with legislation and that HACCP is implemented to manage food handling activities. The Licensing approach to enforcement is advocated by the Consumer Association in a letter and briefing note sent to the Chief Executive in January 2002.

However, both the FSA and the Consumer Association recognise the substantial impact that this approach to enforcement would have on the food safety resources provided by local authorities. Whilst the FSA excluded licensing from the Strategy for this reason the approach as an enforcement initiative should be supported by the Council and the Consumer Association should be commended for advocating the licensing of food premises.

The Council's support however, should be for an incremental approach to licensing food businesses commencing with new businesses then targeting established businesses on the basis for their food safety risk assessment.

Finally, the Council's support should only be given to the licensing approach if adequate funding is provided to Local Authorities to implement the regime.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

This Strategy is ambitious in its objectives but necessary if food poisoning is to be controlled. The Council have already agreed to support the 2002 Food Hygiene Campaign and should therefore welcome and support the aspects of this Strategy which link into the Campaign.

The Agency's proposal within the Strategy to provide generic HACCP guidance for the various sectors of the food industry should also be supported. Also its intention to limit the amount of jargon used in the guidance material.

Finally, the strategy should be supported for the pivotal role defined in it for Local Authorities and for the proposal of enhanced guidance and the provision of training opportunities for food safety staff.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The costs of implementing this HACCP part of the Strategy in Angus will be accommodated within the Food Safety Enforcement Budget. If the Licensing of Food Premises is to become a statutory duty there will be additional resource implications which will require to be quantified and met by support from the Scottish Executive.

## **8. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Human Rights implications associated with this report.

## **9. CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Law and Administration have been consulted on the contents of this report.

**S R Heggie**  
**Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection**

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.