

Report on	Response to the Food Standards Agency's consultation on the Review of the Guidance on vacuum packed chilled food
Date of Meeting	10 th November 2020
Reporting Officer	Fiona McClements

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform Council about the Food Standards Agency's consultation on the review of the guidance on the safety and shelf-life of vacuum and modified atmosphere packed chilled food with respect to non-proteolytic <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> – chilled fresh beef, lamb and pork.
2.0	Background
2.1	This consultation concerns a review of best practice guidance on the safety and shelf-life of vacuum packed (VP) and modified atmosphere packed (MAP) chilled foods with respect to non-proteolytic <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> .
2.2	This consultation is considered to be of interest to Local Authorities, Meat Trade Associations, meat manufacturers and food businesses with an interest in vacuum and modified atmosphere packed chilled fresh meat.
2.3	The Food Standards Agency/Food Safety Scotland best practice ' <i>guidance on the safety and shelf-life of vacuum and modified atmosphere packed chilled foods with respect to non-proteolytic Clostridium botulinum</i> ' was issued in 2008 and was last updated in 2017. The update of the guidance in 2017 made explicit that the guidance applies to VP/MAP chilled fresh meat. The guidance recommends that a maximum shelf-life of 10 days is applied for VP/MAP chilled fresh foods in the temperature range from 3°C to 8°C, where other controls are not applied in relation to the risk of <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> .
2.4	The FSA is also reviewing the guidance in line with accessibility requirements, and in relation to Brexit to ensure that the guidance is fit for when the UK exits the Transition Period on 31 st December 2020.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Food Standards Agency (FSA) are seeking comments from stakeholders to inform a review of the FSA/FSS guidance on the safety and shelf-life of vacuum and modified atmosphere packed chilled foods with respect to non-proteolytic <i>Clostridium botulinum</i>'. Specifically, in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation point A: To review the recommended 10-day shelf-life in relation to VP/MAP chilled fresh beef, lamb and pork in the temperature range from 3°C to 8°C as provided for in this guidance. • Consultation point B: To make certain amendments to the guidance as recommended in January 2020 by the ACMSF subgroup on <i>C. botulinum</i>. • Consultation point C: To remove any references in the guidance related to the European Union which will no longer be relevant at the end of the Transition Period. • Consultation point D: To improve the accessibility of the guidance for users in line with accessibility requirements for public bodies. <p>The link to the consultation is below :</p> <p>https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/consultations/guidance-on-the-safety-and-shelf-life-of-vacuum-and-modified-atmosphere-packed-chilled-foods-with-respect-to-non-proteolytic</p>
3.2	<p>The Food Hygiene subgroup of the Northern Ireland Food Managers Group, which sits under Environmental Health Northern Ireland (EHNI), has prepared a response for this Food Standards Agency's Consultation. This consultation response has been considered and amended to include comments from the Environmental Health department of MUDC.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that Council considers the content of the attached proposed response to this consultation and, if in agreement, responds to the Food Standards Agency in accordance with the completed consultation template. The closing date of the consultation is 11 th November 2020, therefore a request is made that a response is forwarded in advance of the deadline in “draft” form and then confirmed following ratification at full Council.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Proposed Mid Ulster District Council response to the Food Standards Agency’s Review of the Guidance on the safety and shelf-life of vacuum and modified atmosphere packed chilled food with respect to non-proteolytic <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> – chilled fresh beef, lamb and pork.
6.2	Appendix 2 – The Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food’s (ACMSF) report on the ‘Subgroup on non-proteolytic <i>Clostridium botulinum</i> and vacuum and modified atmosphere packaged foods’.