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RESEARCH TENDER CALL



TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 04-2023

Project Title: “The application and management of food allergen information for non-prepacked foods by the Catering & Hospitality sector on the island of Ireland”

1. Objective/Knowledge Gap


It is now almost ten years since [Regulation \(EU\) No 1169/2011](#) on the provision of food information to consumers (the ‘Food Information to Consumers Regulation or ‘FIC’) came into force¹.

safefood, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland (FSA in NI) (hereafter collectively referred to as the ‘partners’), wish to learn more about the extent to which aspects of the FIC pertaining to the provision of information on ‘substances or products causing allergies or intolerances’ on non-prepacked foods (excluding Pre-packed for Direct Sale (PPDS) foods in Northern Ireland) are being applied across the Catering and Hospitality (C&H), (hereafter referred to as catering businesses) sector in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The focus of this research will be catering businesses that sell non-prepacked food to the public. The aim of the research will be to determine (a) if specific types of catering businesses (e.g., restaurants, takeaways, hotels, cafes, mobile food units, etc.) are experiencing difficulties in the provision of allergen information, and (b) to understand how the partners can enable these businesses meet their legislative requirements under the FIC. This will help them to protect the health of their food hypersensitive customers (those with food allergy, food intolerance or coeliac disease), and by extension help protect their businesses as well.

This information will allow the FSAI and FSA in NI identify any indicators that would point to areas within the C&H sector that would benefit most from additional support in order to increase understanding and further safeguard vulnerable consumers. It will allow **safefood** to carry out a more in-depth analysis of catering businesses that may have difficulties in meeting their obligations

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, amending Regulations (EC) No 1924/2006 and (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Commission Directive 87/250/EEC, Council Directive 90/496/EEC, Commission Directive 1999/10/EC, Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Commission Directives 2002/67/EC and 2008/5/EC and Commission Regulation (EC) No 608/2004. L304/18, Official Journal of the European Union, 22.11.2011.

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with regard to the provision of allergen information and allergen control. It is envisaged that this will inform approaches to redress these difficulties and the most appropriate mechanisms for doing so. The project consists of two phases, both of which will be carried out in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

1.1 Phase 1 Objectives:

This phase has two fundamental objectives:

- a) To determine the level of implementation of food allergen information requirements under the FIC for non-prepacked foods in various types of catering businesses.
- b) To identify any indicators (including type of cuisine, method of service delivery, size of the business, urban/rural location, type of catering business, etc.) that could be used to target those catering businesses with additional support and information.

1.2 Phase 2 Objectives:


Following a full analysis of the data collected and collated in Phase 1, Phase 2 of the project will focus on those catering businesses that experience difficulties in providing food allergen information and allergen management in general. Phase 2 will employ an appropriate methodology to facilitate a deep dive interaction with these businesses to determine the reasons for these difficulties.

Phase 2 will identify:

- a) The challenges these catering businesses have in implementing allergen information on non-prepacked food under the FIC.
- b) How and why these challenges differ between different types of catering businesses.
- c) What interventions (training, resources, etc.) could help these businesses overcome these challenges (in this regard, consideration should be given to acceptability, practicability, effectiveness, affordability, spill-over effects, and equity (APEASE criteria)).
- d) The most appropriate communication methods/channels to ensure the effectiveness of these interventions.

2. Background

The Food Information to Consumers (FIC) came into force in October 2014 in Ireland and the UK (and throughout the EU). The Regulation introduced the requirement for the 14 regulated food allergens (“substances or products causing allergies or intolerances”) to be declared if used as ingredients in non-prepacked foods, whereas previously this had applied only to prepacked foods. It was left up to the individual EU Member States to decide how such a declaration would be provided within their own jurisdictions. In Ireland, requires that at a minimum, these declarations are available in writing and available to customers without

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the need for staff assistance².

In Northern Ireland, under the [\(Article 5\) Food Information Regulations \(2014\) Northern Ireland](#), allergen information for non-prepacked food can be communicated through a variety of means to suit the business format of the food business which can include in writing or verbally³. The requirement is to provide information about the use of allergenic ingredients in a food. The provision does not require a food business to provide a full ingredients list (note: this does not apply to PPDS foods). Where a food business chooses for this information to not be provided upfront in a written format (for example allergen information on the menu), the food business must use clear signposting to direct the customer to where this information can be found such as asking members of staff. In such situations there must be a statement that can be found for example on food menus, chalkboards, food order tickets, food labels.

A 2016 audit of food businesses in Ireland, including hotels, restaurants, cafés, takeaways and public houses, with respect to their compliance with legal requirements for the provision of written allergen information, showed a low level of compliance⁴. That was two years after the FIC came into force in 2014. Now, almost ten years later, it is timely to determine if further progress has been made in the C&H sector with regard to the provision of food allergen information.

3. Approach

This research will survey a broad range of catering businesses where non-prepacked food is sold.

3.1 Phase 1

The Phase 1 survey will investigate catering businesses in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The survey should identify if certain types of catering businesses experience difficulties in providing food allergen information on non-prepacked food. The survey will identify the type of catering business affected, if there is an urban-rural or regional distinction, differences between ethnic and non-ethnic catering businesses, any influence by the method of selling food, and any other distinctions.


Type of catering business to be surveyed:

A representative range of catering business types from both Ireland and Northern Ireland will be surveyed. The number of each type of catering business surveyed will be sufficient to provide a statistically valid analysis for each jurisdiction separately using the same

² Statutory Instruments. S.I. No. 489 of 2014 on Health (Provision of Food Allergen Information to Consumers in respect of Non-prepacked Food). Regulations 2014. Iris Oifigiúil, 31st of October 2014. <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/si/489/made/en/pdf>

³ The Food Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014. Article 5: Foods that are not prepacked etc. containing an allergenic substance or product etc.

⁴ Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Audit Report: Targeted Audit of Allergen Information on Non-Prepacked Food. May 2017.

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selection criteria in each jurisdiction. Applicants will provide a detailed breakdown of the type and number of catering businesses that they consider will need to be surveyed.

Phase 1 methodology

The survey methodology used in Phase 1 must be anonymous and proofed against triggering any potential for bias on the part of the catering businesses being surveyed. For example, this could be based on the ‘mystery shopper’ or similar validated methodology. Any methodology must be cognisant of the different methods of food ordering and delivery that catering businesses engage in. The prospective applicant will need to address any ethical considerations and permissions relevant to their proposed surveying methodology. The format and content of the survey will be agreed between the successful contractor and the partners. This includes:

- a) The content of field survey questionnaires/proformas
- b) The number and type of establishments to be surveyed (taking into account methods of food ordering) and also adequate representation from Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- c) The survey timelines
- d) Sundry costs associated with carrying out the survey.
- e) The surveying procedure

3.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 of the research will depend on the outputs from Phase 1. Provision will be made for an in-depth deep dive interaction with individual catering businesses from both Ireland and Northern Ireland. This will home in on those catering businesses identified in Phase 1 that have been shown to have difficulties implementing the FIC allergen information requirements, and with food allergen control in general. The methodology used will be agreed between the successful contractor and the partners.


Phase 2 methodology

An appropriate methodology will be used to facilitate a deep dive interaction with a representation of the catering businesses identified in Phase 1 for further investigation. Applicants must justify the methodology/methodologies they propose to use in this phase of the research.

4. Technical Specification

4.1 Scope of the research

The scope of the research will be catering businesses that sell non-prepacked food (excluding PPDS foods) to the public in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The research will investigate the provision of food allergen information by these catering businesses and identify if any experience difficulties in this regard. It will clarify any challenges and barriers that give rise to these difficulties and identify interventions to help these businesses meet

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their allergen labelling and information obligations, as well as the most appropriate communication methods/channels for doing so.

4.2 Literature review

- a) The successful contractor will provide a review that will investigate the scientific, open and grey literature for any information on the food allergen information elements of the FIC since it came into force in October 2014, including any challenges experienced in these and other jurisdictions, particularly with regard to its implementation in the C&H sector.
- b) The literature review will also provide a full description of the methodologies to be used in the research.

4.3 Qualitative and quantitative research

The format, content and methodology of the survey that will be carried out in both Ireland and Northern Ireland will be agreed between the successful contractor and the partners. The survey will use an appropriate methodology to avoid bias and record both quantitative and qualitative data. Phase 2 of the research will use an appropriate methodology to interact with a representation of the catering businesses identified in Phase 1 for further investigation. This deep dive will clarify the challenges and barriers that catering businesses may experience when it comes to implementing the allergen information requirements of the FIC and protecting their food hypersensitive customers.


4.4 Analysis and interpretation

This research will include a field survey (Phase 1) followed by an in-depth deep dive interaction with catering businesses (Phase 2). A full analysis and interpretation of the data and report of the field survey will be delivered on completion of the survey including the identification of those types of catering businesses where implementation of the FIC and allergen management is more likely to be challenging.

A full analysis, interpretation and conclusion of the findings from Phase 2 will be provided including full details of the methodology used and the individual catering business responses.

4.5 Data Handling and Reporting

- a) On completion of the Phase 1 field survey, the successful contractor will submit a written report to **safefood** inclusive of all collated data and a full data analysis.
- b) Similarly, on completion of Phase 2, the successful contractor will submit a final report of both phases to **safefood** inclusive of all collated data and a full analysis of the outputs.
- c) All forms, documentation and electronic files must be retained by the contractor until further notice for **safefood** in case of issues arising after the completion of the research.

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4.6 Quality Assurance

- a) To ensure transparency and reproducibility, all data sources used in the research must be specified, and all data used must be explicitly specified and justified.
- b) The partners will liaise with the successful contractor during the course of the research to assess progress.

5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

- a) A full description of the proposed methodologies to meet the objectives of the research.
- b) Report on the Phase 1 field survey inclusive of all collated data and a full data analysis.
- c) A full analysis of the outputs and all collated data from Phase 2.
- d) Identification of the types of catering businesses that are likely to require additional guidance and support to implement the allergen information requirements of the FIC and allergen management in general.
- e) Recommendations for interventions to assist these catering businesses in meeting their legislative obligations with regard to allergen information and management, and optimal communications methods/channels for doing so.
- f) A final written comprehensive report to **safefood** upon completion of the entire project, encompassing all of the aforementioned elements.

6. Evaluation of Tenders

Tender bids will be evaluated according to the quality of proposals and applicants using the following criteria:

6.1 Quality of the proposal


- Anticipated deliverables;
- Research method and facilities;
- Value for money (including cost associated with each phase for each jurisdiction);
- Potential for application;
- Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

6.2 Quality of Applicants:

- Experience in this type of research;
- Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.

7. Duration of Project

The entire project will not exceed 18 months. Applicants must include proposed timelines for both phases of the research in their submission.

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8. Tender Application Forms and Guidelines

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from www.safefood.net/research-tender-2023. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.net, quoting the project reference number 04-2023. Alternatively, please contact **safefood** as follows:

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 Research Coordinator
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 7 Eastgate Avenue
 Little Island
 Co. Cork
 T45 RX01

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The closing date for receipt of applications by **safefood** is no later than **4pm on Friday 6th October 2023**.