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RESEARCH TENDER CALL



TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 03-2023


Project Title: "Ensuring food allergen understanding and labelling compliance for non-prepacked foods in the Catering & Hospitality sector"

1. Objective/Knowledge Gap

It is now just under ten years since the coming into force of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (the 'Food Information to Consumers or 'FIC')¹. **safefood**, the Food Safety Promotion Board, together with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland, (FSANI) would like to ascertain what specific types of catering outlet continue to have difficulties with the implementation of the FIC legislation. The common goal for all three agencies is how we can assist these businesses in protecting the health of their food hypersensitive customers (and by extension their businesses as well) and meet their legislative requirements.

We wish to ascertain if non-compliances are spread equally throughout the Catering & Hospitality (C&H) sector or are localised to specific types of food businesses. This project will investigate the adequacy of the allergen ingredient information, and staff competency and awareness of the issue in catering businesses such as restaurants, takeaways, hotels, cafes, etc. in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

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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This information will allow **safefood** to target specific sections of the C&H sector using focus group methodology to ascertain what barriers to compliance/skills development persist, despite the collective efforts of the three agencies to facilitate uptake of the FIC. This will clarify which interventions (training, existing/new resources, communication channels, etc.) are most appropriate to assist these businesses in meeting their allergen control obligations and protect their food hypersensitive customers.

The FSAI and FSANI wish to ascertain the levels of compliance with the FIC Regulation by the various types of food businesses that sell non-prepacked foods in the C&H sector (e.g. restaurant, takeaway, hotel, retail outlets, etc.) and whether there are indicators (including rural versus urban, ethnic, etc.) that could be used to identify the areas of the C&H sector that would benefit most from enhanced information and/or inspection regimes in order to raise compliance levels and further safeguard vulnerable consumers.

The project consists of two phases, both of which will be carried out in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Phase 1 objectives:

- a) The determination of the level of compliance with current food allergen labelling/information legislation in various types of food businesses that sell non-prepacked foods (e.g., restaurant, takeaway, hotel, retail outlets, etc.).
- b) An investigation into staff competency and awareness of food allergen-related issues, including their ability to control allergen cross contamination and address the needs of their food hypersensitive customers.
- c) The clarification of any indicators (including rural v urban, ethnic, business type, etc.) that could be used to identify those areas of the C&H sector that would benefit most from enhanced information and/or inspection regimes in order to raise compliance levels.

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Phase 2 objectives:

Once the Phase 1 field survey results have been analysed, Phase 2 of the project will allow a deeper dive to determine the reasons for non-compliance and possible tailoring of information and communication channels that will be required to assist these cohorts comply with the legislation.

This will be achieved through targeted focus groups to ascertain what barriers to compliance persist. This will clarify which interventions (training, existing/new resources, etc.) are most appropriate to assist these businesses meet their allergen control obligations. It is envisaged that up to eight focus groups will be required at various locations across the island of Ireland.


2. Background

The Food Information to Consumers (FIC) Regulation (EC 1169/2011) came into force in October 2014 in Ireland and the UK (and throughout the EU). The Regulation introduced the requirement for any of 14 regulated food allergens 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, these declarations are provided in writing while in Northern Ireland, the information can be given verbally (but backed up with written records).

Considerable progress has been made in the C&H sector with food allergen controls, but this was by no means an easy task for caterers to accomplish, given the nature of the industry and the associated logistics of food preparation and management. Evidence from a pre-pandemic **safefood** survey of caterers found the majority taking steps to implement the new rules even though roughly half of the respondents still found allergen management difficult. No doubt the pandemic has impacted on the robustness of allergen management.

3. Approach

The field research will survey a broad range of catering establishments where food is sold loose to the public.

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3.1 PHASE 1


For Phase 1, the type, distribution (urban or rural), and total number of different establishments to be surveyed are outlined in Table 1:-

Table 1: Type, location and number of catering establishments to be surveyed in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Catering establishment	Food type	Total surveys per jurisdiction
Franchise takeaways	Snack-type	15 urban ² + 15 rural
Independent takeaway – Western food (e.g., Fish & Chip outlets with and without dine in facilities)	Takeaway main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Ethnic Restaurants with a takeaway element – Indian	Takeaway main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Ethnic Restaurants with a takeaway element – Chinese	Takeaway main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Ethnic Restaurants with a takeaway element – Other Asian	Takeaway main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Ethnic Restaurants – Other	Takeaway main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Hotel restaurants and bars	Restaurant main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Pubs serving food	Carvery-style main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Non-chain independent restaurants (e.g., family restaurants)	Restaurant main course	15 urban + 15 rural
Independent cafés that close before 6pm	Snack	15 urban + 15 rural
Franchise coffee shops that close in before 6pm (including in-store cafés)	Snack	15 urban + 15 rural
Market stalls – mobile and stationary	Snack	15 urban + 15 rural
Mobile food units (e.g., Food trucks)	Snack	15 urban + 15 rural

The survey methodology used in Phase 1 must be proofed against triggering any bias on the part of the establishments being surveyed. Therefore, the methodology must be

² 'Urban' defined according to the Central Statistics Office as a population centre with a total population of 1,500 or more.

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based on the 'mystery shopper' or similar method. The prospective applicant will need to ensure that all ethical considerations and permissions have already been acquired.

safefood will not engage in any process that needs to secure ethical or other approvals prior to any field work.

It is expected that the survey methodology will need to factor in the purchase of food in order to ensure authenticity and avoid bias.

The format and contents of the field survey (phase 1) will be agreed between the successful contractor and **safefood**, FSAI and FSANI. This includes:


- a) The content of the field survey questionnaire/proforma
- b) The establishments to be surveyed
- c) The field survey timelines
- d) Sundry costs associated with carrying out the field survey (e.g., meal costs)
- e) The surveying procedure

Phase 1 will clarify which sections of the C&H sector continue to experience difficulties in controlling food allergens, including the kind of catering establishments affected, if there is an urban-rural or regional distinction, differences between ethnic and non-ethnic establishments, etc.

3.2 PHASE 2

Phase 2 of the research will depend on the outputs from Phase 1. Provision will be made for up to eight focus groups to be held across the island of Ireland. These will home in on types of catering businesses where a problem with the implementation of the FIC and generally with food allergen control has been identified. The final number or focus groups, their location and the target groups will be agreed with the successful contractor and **safefood**. The elements of each focus group will include:

- a) 6-7 participants in each group

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- b) Approx. 75 minutes duration
- c) The option for external live viewing
- d) A focus group moderator (to be provided by the successful contractor)
- e) A full report of the outputs from the focus groups
- f) Suitable venues for the focus groups (to be provided by the successful contractor)
- g) Inducements for participation in the focus groups (to be agreed in advance with **safefood**)

4. Technical Specification

(a) Scope of the research


The scope of the research will encompass catering outlets in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland where food is sold loose to the public. The research will investigate the robustness of food allergen information and labelling within these food businesses vis-à-vis their obligations under the FIC. It will also investigate difficulties and barriers to compliance and identify the channels and resource formats that should be exploited to assist caterers who have difficulties meeting their allergen labelling and information obligations.

(b) Literature review

The successful contractor will provide a full description of the methodology used in this research.

(c) Qualitative and quantitative research

The type, general location and number of catering establishments to be surveyed in each jurisdiction in Phase 1 of the research are outlined in Table 1. The actual establishments to be surveyed will be agreed between the successful contractor and **safefood**/FSAI/FSANI. The survey will use the 'mystery shopper' or similar methodology to avoid bias. Phase 2 of the research will consist of up to eight focus

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groups that will provide a deep dive to clarify the difficulties and barriers that businesses in the C&H sector may have when it comes to implementing the FIC and caring for their food hypersensitive customers. The location and targets for these focus groups will be determined from the outputs from Phase 1.

(d) Analysis

This research will include a field survey (Phase 1) and focus groups (Phase 2). A full analysis of the data and report of the field survey will be delivered on completion of the survey including the identification of those businesses/business types where implementation of the FIC and allergen management is problematic.


A full analysis of the deliberations from the focus groups (Phase 2) will be provided including full details of each focus group and the responses.

(e) Data Handling and Reporting

1. On completion of the Phase 1 fieldwork, the successful contractor will submit a written report to **safefood** inclusive of all collated data and a full data analysis.
2. Similarly, on completion of the Phase 2 focus groups, the successful contractor will submit a written report to **safefood** inclusive of all collated data and a full analysis of the outputs.
3. Upon completion of the entire project, the successful contractor will submit a final written report to **safefood** based on the supplied template.
4. 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.

(f) Quality Assurance

1. 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.
2. **safefood**/FSAI/FSANI will liaise with the contractor(s) during the course of the research to assess how the work is being carried out.

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5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

- a) A full description of the methodology used in the research.
- b) Report on the Phase 1 fieldwork inclusive of all collated data and a full data analysis
- c) Report on the Phase 2 focus groups inclusive of all collated data and a full analysis of the outputs.
- d) Identification of areas of the C&H sector that are having difficulties in implementing the FIC and allergen management.
- e) Recommendations for optimal communications channels and opportunities to assist these areas of the C&H sector in meeting their legislative obligations.
- f) Analysis of the datasets, collation of results and drafting of reports after Phases 1 and 2 to be submitted to **safefood** within the overall 12-month project timeframe.
- g) A final written report to **safefood** upon completion of the entire project.

6. Evaluation of Tenders


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

Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables;
- ✓ Research method and facilities;
- ✓ Value for money;
- ✓ Potential for application;
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

Quality of Applicants:

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

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8. ***Duration of Project***

Estimated duration of the project: Total of 15 months. A detailed timescale of research should be submitted by the applicant.

9. ***Tender Application Forms and Guidelines***

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from <https://www.safefood.net/research-tender-2023>. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.net, quoting the project reference number **03-2023**. Alternatively, please contact **safefood** as per the details below.

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The closing date for receipt of applications by **safefood** is no later than **4pm on Thursday 27th April 2023**