

Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 29 June 2010

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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2 Questions to the First Minister

To ask the First Minister

Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central): Will the First Minister provide a list of the recommendations of the Pennington Inquiry and provide details of which Minister is taking forward responsibility for the implementation of each recommendation. (WAQ56134)

Answer issued on 29 June 2010

The recommendations of the Pennington Inquiry are:

1. All food businesses must ensure that their systems and procedures are capable of preventing the contamination or cross-contamination of food with E.coli O157.
2. Food businesses must get to grips with food safety management based very clearly on the seven key HACCP principles, ensuring it is a core part of the way they run their business.
3. Additional resources should be made available to ensure that all food businesses in Wales understand and use the HACCP approach and have in place an effective, documented, food safety management system which is embedded in working culture and practice.
4. The principles underpinning the Butchers' Licensing Scheme, which was introduced in response to the 1996 E.coli O157 outbreak, should guide food hygiene measures in businesses processing raw meat and unwrapped ready-to-eat foods.
5. The Food Standards Agency should review its current guidance and should be proactive in generating new guidance where needs are identified.
6. The Food Standards Agency should remove the confusion that exists among food business operators about what solution(s) should be used to prevent cross-contamination from surfaces and equipment.
7. Regulatory and enforcement bodies should keep the choice of "light touch" enforcement for individual food businesses under constant review.
8. The inspection of HACCP plans must be audit-based.
9. Training provision should be developed to ensure that all officers in Wales who check HACCP and HACCP-based plans, including those responsible for overseeing the work of those officers, have the necessary knowledge and skills.
10. Environmental Health Officers should obtain a copy of a business's HACCP/food safety management plan at each inspection, which should be held on the business's inspection file.
11. A system of logging issues, concerns or potential problems, whether by "red flagging" specific documents or by file notes, should be standard practice.
12. Decisions about confidence in a business's management of food safety should be evidence-based.
13. All inspections, primary and secondary, must be unannounced unless, exceptionally, there are specific and justifiable circumstances or reasons why a pre-arranged visit is necessary.
14. Discussion with employees must be a standard part of food hygiene inspection visits.

15. The Food Standards Agency should develop, as part of its Audit Scheme or as an adjunct to it, a means of assessing how food hygiene inspections are undertaken by local authorities, including the assessment of HACCP and HACCP-based plans.
16. Businesses contracting for the supply of high-risk foods, such as raw and cooked meats, to public sector organisations must be subject to independent food hygiene audits.
17. All health and care organisations should have an effective means of contacting key personnel during and outside normal working hours and for disseminating important information.
18. Every local authority should have a programme of audits to ensure that all schools have adequate toilet and hand washing facilities.
19. All local authorities in Wales should review their policies, procedures and systems against issues raised by this report.
20. The National Assembly for Wales should consider my recommendations and monitor and report progress on implementation.
21. A substantial review of food hygiene enforcement in Wales should take place approximately five years after the publication of this report.
22. Good practice advice and guidance issued by public bodies should be subject to follow-up and/or more detailed evaluation.
23. Variable Number Tandem Repeat (VNTR) should be validated as a standard method for the typing of E.coli O157.
24. The feasibility of identifying “supershedder” cattle on farms should be explored as a potential means of reducing the likelihood of spreading E.coli O157 to other cattle.

Only recommendations and 3, 16, 18 and 20 require action by the Assembly. I am taking these forward.