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Quantitative allergen risk assessment

Against a backdrop of allergen labelling regulations that differ widely around the world, the issue of allergen management continues to present a big challenge for food producers. There is still a lot of uncertainty in the industry about how best to manage allergens as evidenced by the fact that allergen-related issues still account for approximately 50% of all recalls in the US and UK. Undeclared allergens are increasingly becoming an issue in other EU member states as seen in the dramatic increase in RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Foods and Feeds) notifications sent out in 2009/13. In order to protect allergic consumers from exposure to undeclared allergens, many food manufacturers have implemented allergen control programmes founded on risk assessment (using HACCP principles) and utilising prerequisite programmes. As there is currently no internationally agreed regulatory guidance with respect to the management of allergen cross-contamination or acceptable population based safe levels, this has led to an inconsistency in risk assessment, mitigation and management system. The speaker will cover the evolution of allergen risk assessment from a pure 'hazard' to a risk based 'approach' and describe new methodology which utilises data from the latest scientific studies.

Biography

Simon Flanagan is a Biochemist by training who more latterly specialised in Immunology. He has spent the last 29 years working within the food industry in roles spanning various sectors and functions (R&D, Quality and Analytical). It was whilst working for a large European infant foods manufacturer that he first became involved in the analysis and management of food allergens in the factory. He currently works for Reading Scientific Services Ltd. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Mondelez International-formally Kraft Foods) where he heads up their Food Safety Consultancy Group. He is a specialist in food allergens and provides technical consultancy and training to numerous blue chip manufacturers and retailers. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Food Science & Technology and active member of a number of professional bodies and industry groups (FDF, Food & Drink Europe, ILSI Europe, EFSA, MoniQAetc). He has also published several papers on the analytical measurement of food allergens and allergen risk assessment and has recently edited a reference book for Woodhead Publishing on allergen management published in Oct 2014 (Handbook of Food Allergen Detection and Control).

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