



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Value Wales

Buying Safe Food for the Public Plate

www.cymru.gov.uk

A New Approach to Food
Procurement for Wales



More information on food procurement can be found on the Value Wales Procurement Route Planner on www.buy4wales.co.uk/prp

Alternatively contact Value Wales by email at VWPolicy@wales.gsi.gov.uk



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Contents

Section	Page
Foreword	2
Endorsements	4
Food Safety in the Public Sector	5
Public Sector's Approach to Buying Safe Food	6
Food Suppliers' Approach to Supplying Safe Food	7
Acknowledgements	8

Foreword

The public sector in Wales spends some £67m on food each year, 22% of which is spent within Wales. Local authorities make up over half of this spend, followed by the NHS, Higher Education, Further Education and Ministry of Defence.

Much has already been done across Wales to try and improve the way food procurement is carried out whilst balancing the many different objectives and policy needs around value for money, sustainability, nutrition and health. The 'Food for Thought' guidance published in 2004, encouraged organisations to re-think the way they buy food to ensure the widest possible benefits are achieved.

Appetite for Life, launched in 2006, heralded a drive to improve the nutritional standards of food and drink provided in schools in Wales. More recently, the new 'Healthy Eating in Schools' Measure provides a policy on nutrition which ensures that healthy eating is promoted and supported in all schools, setting out the necessary commitments to achieve that. The Local Sourcing of Food and Drink Action Plan has also been launched which aims to support Welsh companies in accessing local markets and to make it easier for consumers to buy food and drink from Wales.

Food safety and hygiene practices of organisations and businesses supplying the public are of critical importance. Procurement of food needs to be carried out to the highest standard and best practice adopted to ensure that safety is a core requirement.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the importance of the provision of safe food and wants to ensure that this is reflected in procurement practices across the public sector. To drive this, the Welsh Assembly Government's Value Wales division has developed a new Food Procurement Management System which sits on the new Food Procurement Route Planner on the Buy4Wales web site along with food procurement training.

Over-arching all this work is the new 'Buying Safe Food for the Public Plate: A New Approach to Food Procurement for Wales' which lays out what is expected of organisations and food suppliers to ensure food procurement is carried out to a high standard and with due diligence. This has resulted in a comprehensive best practice 'framework' of guidance which is available across the public sector in Wales.

This has been achieved through successful engagement with the wider public sector, including the Value Wales Food Group - which provided valuable input into this work - along with the appropriate regulatory bodies. In addition, the Welsh Local Government Association is working with Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) to support improvements in communication between local authority Environmental Health Services & procurement services and to share the best practice being developed in Wales more widely across the UK.

This Approach aims to bring all this good work together and for the first time, sets out our collective aspirations on how food procurement should be carried out and what we expect from our suppliers. Our aim is to encourage public sector organisations

and food suppliers alike to ensure that both the purchase and supply of food is carried out to the highest standards and in line with best practice, to ensure that safe food is served up on the public plate.

I am delighted that this Approach is endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Food Standards Agency and the Welsh Local Government Association and I commend it to you.



Jane Hutt
Minister for Business and Budget
January 2010

Endorsements

"I welcome and value the work undertaken by Value Wales and the Food Group in producing this best practice Approach and am pleased that it has been endorsed by the Food Standards Agency and the Welsh Local Government Association.

It is an important step forward in ensuring that organisations and food businesses contracting for the supply of high risk foods in the public sector in Wales do so safely.

This work also represents significant progress in addressing some of the areas highlighted in the Pennington Inquiry following the E.coli outbreak in Wales."

*Tony Jewell
Chief Medical Officer,
Welsh Assembly Government*

"The Food Standards Agency recognises and supports the work that Value Wales has done in embodying food safety as an essential and integral element to this Approach to Food Procurement. Public bodies, acting as food business operators, who adopt this Approach in their procurement of food will be taking key steps to ensure the safety of food from the time they receive it until the point of consumption.

It is paramount that consumers should be confident about the safety of food provided by the public sector and this is particularly important when vulnerable groups such as children, the sick and the elderly are involved. The Agency is assured that those procuring food in accordance with this approach will be giving food safety the prominence that is required."

*Steve Wearne
Director, Food Standards
Agency Wales.*

"I welcome the production of this best practice "framework" for the procurement of food in Wales. The safety of food in the NHS is of paramount importance as many of the recipients are in vulnerable groups. Procurement is a fundamental aspect of food safety and I encourage the NHS to utilise this guidance."

*Paul Williams
Director General,
Health & Social Services /
Chief Executive, NHS Wales*

"Given the key roles that local government undertake and maintain in the procurement and delivery of food to key community groups and local government's responsibilities as a Food Safety Regulator, we welcome and support this practical guidance which seeks to promote and embed a best practice approach in the purchase and supply of safe food."

*Councillor Russell Roberts,
WLGA Spokesperson
for Improvement and
Public Services*

*Councillor Keith Evans,
WLGA Spokesperson
for Regulatory Services
and Consumer Affairs*

Food Safety in the Public Sector

Public Sector Organisations

Food safety in the public sector is of paramount importance as the majority of the recipients are among the most vulnerable groups, covering our schools, hospitals and social services. It is therefore vital that food procurement is carried out diligently and effectively to minimise any food safety risks. Food businesses, including public sector organisations supplying food, have an obligation to complete effective due diligence by ensuring the quality and compliance of their suppliers. Whilst the public sector has a duty to make the best use of public funds and ensure value for money, that does not mean lowest price and certainly where food is concerned, food safety and quality should be the over-riding factors.

It should be noted however that the role of procurement only plays a small part in ensuring safe food is bought and served up - there is also a responsibility on other areas such as catering outlets / kitchens, local authority health departments, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Food Standards Agency to ensure food legislation is complied with and the necessary food hygiene and safety measures are followed.

Food Suppliers

Food businesses are legally responsible for producing safe food. Since 2006 they have been required by law to have

documented food safety management procedures, based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) principles. These procedures should prevent, reduce or eliminate food safety hazards during the supply, preparation, packaging, storage and distribution of food. It is the role of Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Food Safety officers in local authorities to carry out official controls - including audits - of a wide range and variety of businesses in the food industry, including public services. The Food Standards Agency has produced "Safer Food Better Business" to help food businesses develop such a safety management system.

Food Legislation

The Food Standards Agency works closely with local authority food law enforcement officers to make sure that food law is applied throughout the food chain. The Food Safety Act 1990 provides the framework for all food legislation in the United Kingdom and in January 2006, new EU food hygiene regulations came into force. These regulations were aimed at modernising, consolidating and simplifying EU food hygiene legislation along with setting the controls which apply throughout the food chain and provide public health protection. In December 2006, the Food Standards Agency produced a Regulatory Framework for decision making within the Agency setting out their core values.

Public Sector's Approach

Our approach to buying safe food for the public sector in Wales is based on the following principles

Understanding the importance of buying safe food through:-

- Ensuring food safety is a fundamental and over-riding requirement in our contracts.
- Doing all we can to ensure a robust due diligence defence is in place for our organisations.
- Ensuring robust supplier selection procedures are in place for food contracts.
- Ensuring we are pro-active in managing our food supply chain.
- Ensuring all our food suppliers of high risk products - including ready to eat items - undergo independent third party unannounced food hygiene audits.
- Sharing information with other organisations and expecting the same of our suppliers, including results of audits conducted by local authorities and third party independent auditors, thereby improving communication.
- Utilising the Food Procurement Management System in the new Food Procurement Route Planner (PRP).
- Carrying out risk assessments on high risk foods and ensure measures are put in place to mitigate any risks.
- Ensuring a robust Complaints Management System and Escalation Procedures are in place.
- Ensuring effective Crisis Management Procedures are in place.
- Ensuring staff involved in food procurement and kitchen hygiene are competent and sufficiently trained in food safety matters.
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in food procurement and catering are clearly identified along with lines of accountability.
- Proactively requesting and reviewing inspection, regulatory and audit reports.
- Working closely with the appropriate regulatory bodies during the tendering process and afterwards and ensuring we refer all food safety related concerns to them.
- Ensuring effective contract management procedures are in place including regular supplier review meetings and visits.
- Develop and improve upon our systems should a weakness be identified.
- Ensuring high levels of food hygiene, safety and welfare within our kitchen and catering units by complying with Food Hygiene Regulations and Standards.
- Having documented HACCP plans in place which are core to the business.
- Ensuring all appropriate staff follow the Complaints Management and Escalation Procedures.
- Following the 'Food Hygiene and Safety Checklist' on the Food PRP and/or our own Quality Manual to ensure we have effective systems in place covering food hygiene and safety from delivery to us through to point of consumption.

Food Suppliers' Approach

Our requirement for the supply of safe food to the public sector in Wales is based on the following principles

Our suppliers must understand the importance of supplying safe food to public sector organisations in Wales and to support this:-

- Ensure a robust documented food safety management system, based on HACCP principles, is embedded at the core of the business and used as a fundamental way of operating.
- Liaise and co-operate with regulatory and enforcement bodies.
- Carry out risk assessments on high risk foods and ensure measures are put in place to mitigate any risks.
- Ensure robust due diligence procedures are in place.
- Ensure robust procedures are in place to enable full traceability through the supply chain.
- Co-operate and work with public sector organisations to provide accurate information and undergo independent third party unannounced food hygiene audits as well as audits undertaken by local authorities and make the reports available to food buyers.
- Attend regular supplier review meetings as requested.
- Comply with appropriate food safety legislation.
- Ensure staff undergo appropriate and adequate food hygiene training.
- If we supply meat or meat products, doing all we can to prevent cross-contamination and ensuring the physical separation of raw and cooked meat.

Acknowledgements

Value Wales is pleased to acknowledge that it has drawn upon other publications listed below, to supplement its own research to produce this Approach to Food Procurement (any omissions are a genuine oversight):-

Best Practice in Sustainable Public Sector Food Procurement (UK Food Links / Defra, 2006)

Food: An Analysis of the Issues (Cabinet Office, 2008)

Food and Drink in Yorkshire and the Humber: Regional Supply Chains Mapping Study (ADAS / Yorkshire Forward, 2005)

Food for Thought, Public Sector Procurement Guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004)

How to Increase Opportunities for Small and Local Producers when Aggregating Food Procurement: Guidance for Buyers and Specifiers (Defra, 2005)

Local Sourcing of Food and Drink Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009)

Opening Doors SME-Friendly Procurement Charter (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004)

Public Sector Food Survey (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007)

Smarter Food Procurement in the Public Sector (NAO, 2006)

Sustainable Food in Care Catering (Sustain / NACC, 2006)

The Food Hygiene Regulations (Wales) 2006

The Food Safety Act, 1990

The Public Inquiry into the E.coli Outbreak in South Wales (Professor Hugh Pennington, 2009)