

# Insights

Issue 3: May 2022

## Delivering a sustainable supply chain

Welcome to the third edition of LGC ASSURE Insights, a free digital newsletter to support your food safety management journey. If you didn't manage to catch the first two editions that gave a deep dive into *Listeria monocytogenes* and allergens, respectively then why not sign up to get future copies? [click here](#)

In this edition I want to focus on sustainability but, recognising the enormity of this, I hope to provide an overview for those new to this topic and then delve into elements of reporting and governance. But, before diving into sustainability, here's a customary overview of some interesting current affairs including a few issues and incidents happening across the world.

### A novel approach to Novel Food approval

Novel food has been the focus of attention in recent weeks due to the unauthorised sale of a large number of cannabidiol (CBD) food products in the England and Wales over a number of years. CBD was reclassified as a novel food by the European Commission in January 2019 but, despite this, many thousands of products have been placed on the market without approval. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has given permission for specified products to remain on sale whilst their novel food approval is being retrospectively progressed but products from companies that have not submitted evidence dossiers or have entered the market without approval since a cut-off date of 13 February

2020 have been excluded from such approval and must be removed from sale. Sites manufacturing CBD products can be certificated against GFSI-recognised food safety schemes and qualifying criteria has been published by BRCGS. CBD containing food products must not contain any components of a controlled drug which essentially means they must contain no more than 1mg per container of the combination of psychoactive elements commonly referred to as THF. In addition, advice on the maximum recommended intake of CBD has been issued and it is essential that businesses producing such products verify the stated levels on pack using suitably accredited methods backed up with reliable proficiency testing materials. Regulations on novel foods varies considerably across different countries and a paper published in 2020 gives an excellent overview of the global legislation on this topic.



### Food recall highlights of the month

Allergen recalls dominate this month, so no change there, and whilst milk was the most common allergen, there was an unusual product identified in one alert, namely honey. Other products where milk was implicated included a collection of vegan

LGC ASSURE Insights is different from other news sources as it combines otherwise unpublished food safety management data held across the LGC ASSURE Network of companies with real-time events to provide an unparalleled view of current and emerging issues and trends. And, of course, it is free.

foods including [vegan chocolate coated honeycomb](#), [vegan chocolate truffles](#), [vegan chocolate products](#) and [vegan coconut milk plus organic salted popcorn](#), [chocolate cake](#), [plant based \(coconut and rice\) milk](#) and [houmous](#). Other allergens included sulphur dioxide in [beer](#), egg in [Manchego cheese](#), pecan nuts in a [ginger cake](#), peanuts in [ice cream](#) and a [protein bar](#), cashews and hazelnuts in [chocolate coated almonds](#), hazelnuts in [chocolate spread](#), wheat in a [grain bowl](#), and a variety of allergens in a ready to eat [chicken meal kit](#) and [salad](#). Microbiological contamination prompted recalls due to Salmonella in over 100 products containing cooked meat from a single UK manufacturer, in confectionery products sold in a number of countries including the [USA](#), [UK](#), [Australia](#), [Canada](#) and [Israel](#), in [baby spinach](#) and [organic poppy seeds](#), plus *E. coli* O26 and O103 in ground beef products ([1](#), [2](#)) and *Listeria monocytogenes* in [French beans](#), pickled curry cauliflower in a [red lentil dal](#) and the recurring contamination of [Enoki mushrooms](#). Undercooked [ready to eat chicken](#) resulted in one recall and foreign object contamination of foods was the cause of several recalls including hard plastic in [chicken bakes](#), [chicken pies](#), [fresh lamb mince](#), metal in [cup soups](#) and [brownies](#) and sharp bones in [fish fillets](#). Perhaps the most unusual recall this month was the chemical contamination of [fortune cookies](#) with naphthalene.

### The main event: Sustainability

So this leads me to the main feature of this edition which is a focus on sustainability. The motivation to live sustainable lives is not a modern phenomenon, but one that has been shared throughout [history](#). However, it is probably fair to say that it is only in recent decades that the global community has come to recognise the need for urgent change, driven by compelling evidence of the impact of our civilization on the planet and its resources. If you need a compelling story about sustainability, and in particular, the effect of food choices on our planet then watch this short video from [Sir David Attenborough](#).

Sustainability in modern times has come to be defined by the [Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future](#), often referred to as the Brundtland Report, who wrote in 1987; “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

People can often take a polarised view when considering sustainability from a singular perspective; examples include fish, climate, water, waste, welfare, etc. However, these days it is recognised that most of these elements are intrinsically linked and hence sustainability should be considered in the context of what is referred to as the “triple bottom line” or the “three Es”, namely Environment, Economy and Equity. For a great overview of these elements have a glance at this three-minute video from UCLA on “[What is Sustainability](#)”. It is now much more common to hear the term “Sustainable Development” rather than sustainability as this recognises the interdependencies between each of the three Es. This leads me to what has been the most important singular initiative in this area and that is the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), launched in 2015 with the aim of setting ambitious objectives and targets to end extreme poverty and hunger, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change by 2030.



It is not my intention to delve too far into the detail of the Sustainable Development Goals in this newsletter but as you will see from the links I have provided, there is plenty of material out there if you are interested in doing this. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) recently published a [case study](#) on how food safety certification programmes, such as those operated by BRCGS, can support meeting the targets set out in the SDGs. And of course, whilst the SDGs do encompass all of the singular elements of sustainability, they do so by taking a holistic approach. So, it is not a contradiction to say that whilst each sustainability goal may need to be progressed in its own right, it must do so within the context of the entire framework and with a clear

understanding of the interdependencies. Taking a footballing analogy, a goalkeeper can make some great saves, a defender can clear a ball off the goal line and a striker can score a goal but they can still lose the match. It is not possible to even scratch the surface of the myriad of examples of innovative work on sustainable development as virtually every government, [major business](#) and other operators have examples of how they are rising to this challenge. So whether it is developing [higher quality, safer, transparent and more sustainable seafood products](#), taking a [more responsible approach to the use of pesticides](#), introducing reliable systems to assure the use of [sustainable palm oil](#) or [developing practical ways to reduce waste and use materials more sustainably](#), all of these initiatives now consider the broader context set by the SDGs.

Businesses and aligned organisations have risen to the challenge of sustainable development and this led to the proliferation of corporate responsibility or sustainability reports that are now commonplace on any responsible business's website. Early reporting was conducted voluntarily and whilst this was unquestionably undertaken with the right core motives i.e. to communicate business goals, commitment and progression of sustainability programmes, the consistency and validity of self-generated, unaudited reports were questioned. Consequently, Regulators have responded by developing legislation and/or defined rules for reporting ([EU](#), [UK](#)) that focusses on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG). ESG reporting by businesses is frequently focused on their directly owned operations and primary (first tier) suppliers. As a slight aside, and in the context of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, first tier suppliers are referred to as "[Scope 1](#)", "[Scope 2](#)" emissions relate to energy supplies purchased by the business and "[Scope 3](#)" emissions relate to emissions from all other sources including upstream i.e. suppliers and downstream i.e. customers.

Returning to ESG reporting, whilst much reporting has been focused on their own operations and first tier suppliers, it is becoming an increasing requirement to include all parts of their supply chains and customers in such reporting and there are now many tools available to support managing the complexity of [defining, gathering and reporting](#) on ESG. Importantly, such tools, including the recently launched online platform [ESG LEAD](#) a collaboration between [BRCGS](#) and [Ecodesk](#), provide not only a mechanism to define, gather and report ESG data

but supports learning and development (for free) which is essential to enable a business to strive to continuously improve in sustainable development. Platforms like [ESG LEAD](#) and [B Corporation](#) also help improvement by providing benchmarking so a business can see how they compare to their peers. Of course, as [ESG LEAD](#) becomes established, it will provide an opportunity to share some of the data and learnings through [LGC ASSURE Insights](#) so watch out for this in a future edition.



More details on the importance of ESG reporting in an organisation can be found in an excellent [white paper](#) recently issued by [LGC ASSURE](#). In addition to having tools available to support in this area it is also important to ensure individuals who are responsible for sustainable development and ESG reporting in organisations are sufficiently trained and there are many external training courses, including those leading to formal qualifications available on the market.

In finishing my brief exploration of sustainability, and thinking about the first two editions of [LGC ASSURE Insights](#) that focused on food safety, I should highlight that food safety can play an integral role in sustainable development, by reducing waste through better management of microorganisms in foods, more targeted use of chemicals such as

pesticides or improved sanitation and water safety to name but a few examples. The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) ran a consultation on this topic and will report on its findings on Global Food Safety Day (7 June 2022). In addition, a number of thought provoking areas where the food safety community could support sustainable development have been proposed in an recent foresight report from the FAO, [Thinking About the Future of Food Safety](#). As highlighted with ESG reporting, third party assurance can play an important role in validating a systematic approach to sustainable development within a business and also in demonstrating commitment and competence to the outside world. Similarly, food safety certification to GFSI-recognised programmes has been used to support the delivery of the SDGs (Goal 17 Partnerships) by [driving strong global partnerships and collaboration](#). Independent recognition of voluntary third party assurance schemes is important in providing confidence to users, regulators and stakeholders that minimum, comparable standards are met whether such schemes relate to [food safety management](#), [social compliance](#) or emerging areas like ESG.

I hope that this has given you some useful insight into the area of sustainable development and look out for the next edition of LGC ASSURE Insights on the topic of authenticity and adulteration.



Alec Kyriakides  
Editor LGC ASSURE Insights and  
independent food safety consultant

### RASFF data for April in numbers

382 Notifications

**339** on food products and 24 on food contact material

**29%** notifications due to pesticide residues

**19%** notifications due to pathogenic micro-organisms

**23%** due to aflatoxin B1 or total aflatoxin

(Information from Safefood 360 Risk)

### ESG LEAD

ESG LEAD is a new platform developed in collaboration with Ecodesk designed specifically for the food and drink sector to support a business in understanding, improving and reporting their ESG impact through their supply chain. It contains 47 best practices that are free to access and tailored for BRCGS certificated sites. They have been designed for non-ESG specialists in the sector and provide guidance on what good practice looks like. More details and insight will be shared with LGC ASSURE Insight readers in future editions but click on the image below to download the ESG LEAD free brochure.

**ESGLEAD**  
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### Cannabidiol proficiency testing

In order to assist laboratories when developing a method for cannabidiol (CBD) or to help ensure the methods available produce reliable and accurate results, LGC AXIO offer a proficiency testing (PT) sample in the [Pharmassure PT scheme](#).

In a recent PT round using a broad spectrum tincture with medium chain triglyceride (MCT) carrier oil, manufactured to contain a CBD concentration of 5% there was good agreement with the median of the participant's results (5.06% w/v). As shown in figure 1, the majority of participants in the PT round, received a satisfactory z-score (green). Proficiency testing materials are required, and regular participation is very important to assist controlling of the quality and safety of products accessible on the market.

LAB ID	METHOD	RESULT (%w/v)	z score
PH0005	HPLC	5.05	-0.09*
PH0072	HPLC	5.13	1.26*
PH0248	HPLC	5.31	4.27*
PH0404	HPLC	5.12	1.08*
PH0513	HPLC	5.03	-0.42*
PH0736	HPLC	5.09	0.63*
PH1015	Other	7.98	49.01*
PH1021	HPLC	5.06	0.00*
PH1233	HPLC	4.99	-1.10*
PH1264	HPLC	5.02	-0.59*
PH1378	HPLC	5.02	-0.59*
PH1396	HPLC	5.10	0.79*

Figure 1: Cannabidiol in supplements

# Newsworthy

ESG reporting  
B-corporation

## Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability

IPCC assessment report, 2022

## Climate change 2022: Mitigation of climate change

IPCC report, 2022

## Climate change: Unpacking the burden on food safety in 2020

FAO publication, 2020

## Report calls for biotech support to address food security

Farmers Weekly, 7 May 2022

## How food choices can help the planet

University of Sydney, 9 May 2022

## Eating one-fifth less beef could halve deforestation

Nature 4 May 2022

## Denmark to become first country to develop climate label for food

Hunter College NY, Policy Food Centre, 3 May 2022

## How does 'sustainability' differ for a brand, distributor and retailer? Flora Southey

Food Navigator 17 May 2022

## Ukraine raises food safety and fraud concerns at Codex meeting

Food Safety News, 25 May 2022

## 7 leaders at Davos 2022 on securing sustainable, resilient supply chains, despite global shocks

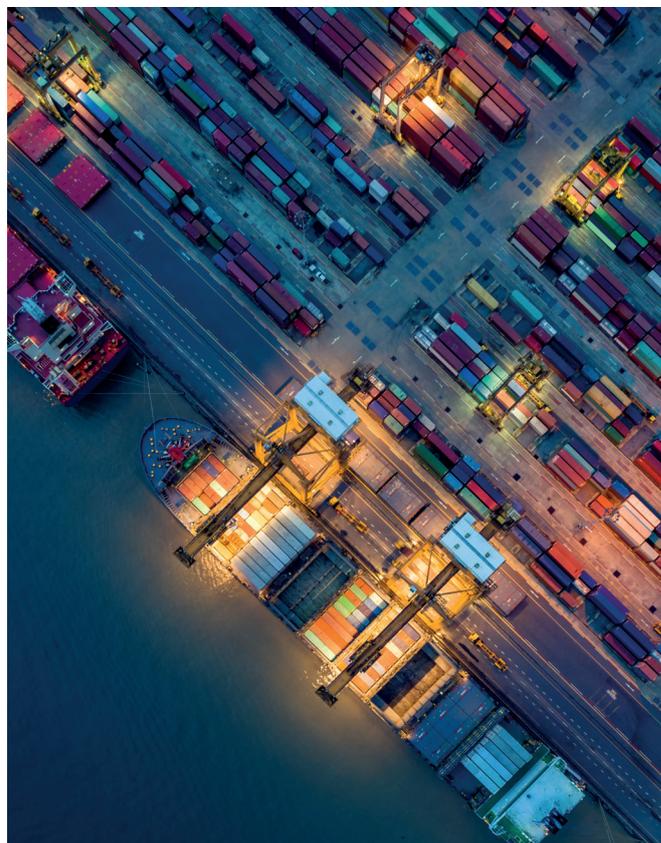
World Economic Forum, 19 May 2022

## More than 3,000 potentially harmful chemicals found in food packaging

The Guardian (UK), 22 May 2022

## Waste and recycling: Commission seeks views on revision of the Waste Framework Directive

European Commission Directorate-General for Environment, 24 May 2022



LGC ASSURE offers a connected suite of solutions that intelligently analyse the safety, quality and authenticity of your goods and services, alongside evolving value drivers such as health, environmental, human welfare and ethical impact.

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**LGC ASSURE**  
Queens Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 0LY  
[contactus@lgcassure.com](mailto:contactus@lgcassure.com)  
[www.lgcassure.com](http://www.lgcassure.com)