

With bird flu impacting production of British eggs in the latter part of 2021 and first quarter of 2022, demand for eggs is high, which may lead to a further increase in imports. Extra vigilance is required when purchasing eggs or when enforcing egg safety.

Fortunately, the Lion scheme represents more than 90 percent of UK production, but owing to its scale, people believe that all eggs meet Lion standards. However, that is untrue and a cause for concern, especially if a venue is serving young children, pregnant women or elderly individuals.

Such has been its success that the Lion has been the catalyst for a change in UK policy, as until relatively recently all eggs were considered to have the potential hazard of *Salmonella*.

As the Advisory Committee for the Microbiological Safety of Foods (ACMSF)¹ stated:

"...There has been a major reduction in the microbiological risk from *Salmonella* in UK hen shell eggs since the 2001 ACMSF report. This is especially the case for those eggs produced under the Lion Code quality assurance scheme, which comprises a suite of measures including vaccination for *Salmonella Enteritidis* and *Typhimurium*, a cool chain from farm to retail outlets, enhanced testing for *Salmonella*, improved hygiene, effective rodent control, independent auditing, date stamping on each individual egg and traceability."

Subsequently, in 2017, new advice about egg handling and hygiene practices was sent to local authorities by the FSA.² The advice stated that for vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, infants and elderly individuals, Lion eggs could be used in lightly cooked or even raw dishes as the risk was so low. However, the report did say that care still needed to be taken in catering settings to ensure that eggs did not become contaminated. Particular care was advised in relation to pooled eggs which are subsequently stored and are at a higher risk of cross contamination.

Many businesses now stipulate in their food safety management system (FSMS) that they only use Lion eggs because that is one less hazard being brought into the kitchen. Eggs can be contaminated with *Salmonella*, and the risk may increase with eggs from other countries, for example Poland³ and Spain.⁴ Contaminated eggs can spread *Salmonella* via contaminated hands, surfaces and other foods in a busy kitchen. »



Where did the eggs in your quiche come from and to what safety standards were they produced?

EXPERT VIEW



Franzisca Gartenmann
Growth Manager,
NEMIS Technologies AG

Environmental monitoring is an investment

Withdrawals and market recalls can not only have dire – and even life-threatening – consequences for individuals, but they can also be detrimental to a business. Franzisca Gartenmann explains how EMPs can help.

Outbreaks and product recalls from *Salmonella* to *E.coli* have appeared in countless food safety magazines and within mass media headlines in the last few weeks. Although such events only occur occasionally, no country is spared. Indeed, not even the most prominent players in the food industry are immune to safety and quality challenges.

In addition to the impact foodborne illness has on those it befalls and on our healthcare systems, unreported contamination of food products also heavily influences business. This impact can manifest in a variety of ways, including product withdrawals, food destruction, waste and investigative efforts, as well as loss of consumer trust.

Microbiological contamination

can occur at any step of the value chain but is often due to pathogenic microorganisms in the production environment. Monitoring raw ingredients and how they are transformed in the production environment is critical to maintaining food safety and quality. While there are regulations and guidelines outlining the intensity and scope of end product testing, there is no standard method in terms of design and application of environmental monitoring programmes (EMPs), and the implicit regulatory requirements are poorly understood. Practical implementation is very much left to local interpretations in the factories.

Nonetheless, EMPs offer a proactive approach and provide

early warnings. End product testing alone is rarely sufficient as negative results do not equate to absence or acceptable hygiene standards in the production environment. Therefore, an efficient EMP with repeated, frequent environmental sampling and a controlled and validated process will be more trustworthy than end product testing alone.

Costs associated with such a preventative approach may be perceived as a drain on the company's finances initially. However, given that any deviation from quality and safety requirements in terms of non-conformance directly subtracts from a company's bottom line, appropriate corrective actions taken sooner rather than later can help decrease expenditures.



For further information, visit:
www.nemistech.com