

News story: Food safety, everyone's business

Today, 7 June, is the first World Food Safety Day, a day agreed by the United Nations General Assembly, and during which all stakeholders are invited to raise global awareness about food safety in general and to highlight that everyone involved in food systems has a part to play.

Everyone has the right to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. Still today, almost one in ten people in the world fall ill after eating contaminated food.

Food safety has been the business of the Government Chemist role since it was first appointed in 1875 to protect the public from fraud, malpractice and harm. In those early days the work of the laboratory was focused on the detection of adulterants in milk, butter, flour, beer and many other every-day food items.

To this day, the Government Chemist continues to work on resolving scientific disputes in the food and feed sectors, giving advice to regulators and industry, and carrying out research. Our statutory focus is as an independent referee affording regulators and businesses alike the right of technical appeal in the official food and feed control system. These are some examples of the work of the Government Chemist in ensuring food is safe to eat:

- Providing practical knowledge for assessing confectionery items known as jelly mini-cups, which can potentially cause choking. The Government Chemist organised a [well attended workshop](#) that helped clarify concepts such as 'borderline compliant' and enhanced significantly the consistency with which this choking hazard will be regulated in the future.
- The Government Chemist team contributes regularly to the development of [national and international standards](#) which aim to combat food fraud and enhance food safety. Recently the team participated on a [European initiative](#) aimed at making communications regarding food fraud more precise and clear.
- Food allergy is an increasing problem for those affected, their families or carers, the food industry and for regulators. The food supply chain is highly vulnerable to fraud involving food allergens, risking fatalities and diminishing life quality. The Government Chemist has a [long standing interest in food allergy](#) stemming from acknowledged difficulties in allergen analysis. The team focuses in the standardisation of allergen measurements, the resolution of analytical disputes about allergen measurement and the [management of food allergens](#) in the food supply chain.

The Government Chemist team's aim is to continue contributing to making the world safer by ensuring food safety. For more information about the work that we do contact: