

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FOOD SAMPLING POLICY

1. This policy sets out the general principles and arrangements by which microbiological food sampling is carried out in order to gather information about the microbiological quality and possible presence of harmful micro-organisms in particular foods which are produced and/or used locally.
2. Food sampling for microbiological examination makes an important contribution to the protection of public health and food law enforcement. Samples will normally be submitted to the Health Protection Agency (HPA) that is United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited. However, from time to time, other arrangements may need to be made for food to go other UKAS accredited food examiners.
3. In procuring samples, it is acknowledged that Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) or 'hazard analysis' has an important role to play in ensuring that food is handled in a way to reduce the risk of microbiological contamination and that 'end product' testing provides a means of verification. In many cases, sampling takes place for surveillance purposes and as a way of providing confidence that food safety procedures are adequate.
4. The main aims and objectives of food sampling are to:
 - a) Examine high risk foods that pose a hazard to the consumer because they may contain significant levels of pathogenic bacteria;
 - b) Evaluate temperature control, food handling and processing practices at food premises in relation to hazard analysis, including evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of cleaning and disinfection;
 - c) Help determine whether advice or enforcement action would be appropriate where it is suspected that poor practices and procedures exist;
 - d) Evaluate the effectiveness of stock rotation and control, and to assess the microbiological quality of food manufactured, distributed or retailed in the local area.
 - e) Identify contraventions of food safety legislation;
 - f) Act as a mechanism to improve hygiene standards through giving advice and guidance in feedback following sampling.
5. In deciding whether to sample a particular food, consideration will be given to any further processing of that food by caterers or consumers that will reduce or eliminate micro-organisms prior to consumption. Where possible, samples will be procured from a range of food

premises in order to gain an accurate picture of microbiological standards achieved within the Council's area.

6. The actual number of samples submitted for examination may differ from year to year, but the Council will endeavour to submit its full quota of samples to the HPA in accordance with an annually agreed sampling programme.
7. The Council will participate in the following types of sampling:
 - a) General and ad hoc local sampling for the following reasons:
 - general food surveillance to assess local food handling practices, local events and initiatives concerning issues particularly relevant within the authority's boundary;
 - in response to food contamination and food poisoning incidents;
 - in response to complaints;
 - in connection with home or originating authority responsibilities;
 - local projects e.g. those instigated by the local HPA;
 - as part of a food hygiene inspection to help assess hygiene standards and procedures.
 - b) National sampling surveys i.e. participation in EU coordinated control programmes, LACORS/HPA voluntary coordinated programmes, county or regional sampling programmes where specific foods are targeted.
 - c) Food sampling defined by statute e.g. dairy products and shellfish
8. Under normal circumstances, samples will be procured by taking a sufficient amount of the sample for examination. In these instances the sampling officer will declare themselves to the proprietor or their representative. Where the quantity or frequency of sampling is likely to give rise to significant financial consequences, the officer will consider making a nominal payment if the samples are not purchased. There may be occasions when for legal reasons payment in full will be made for the sample. In any event, the officer should offer to give the owner a receipt for, or sign a record of all samples that they have not purchased.
9. When a food sample has been examined and the sampling officer has evidence that an alleged offence has been committed under the Food safety Act 1990, they shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable notify the manufacturer of the food in accordance with requirements of the relevant codes of practice issued under the Act.