From Susan Jebb
FSA Chair

5 March 2024

Dear Member of Parliament

Vegan food and allergens campaign 2024

I wrote to you last year about the vital work that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is doing to protect people with food hypersensitivity and wanted to follow this up with some information about our new 'vegan food and allergens campaign' which launches today.

The campaign aims to support people with allergies and intolerances to fish, eggs, milk, molluscs and crustaceans, as well as those that care for someone with these allergies. This may include many of your constituents, or indeed you.

FSA research has highlighted that many people with an allergy or intolerance to products of animal origin believe that the term 'vegan' means it's safe for them to eat. The research also reported that many people weren't aware that there is a risk of cross-contamination in vegan food, as with any food, and that they should check for a precautionary allergen label. Finally, the research highlighted a lack of understanding amongst respondents about the difference between the terms 'free-from', 'vegan' and 'plant-based'.

Via our campaign, we are encouraging people with allergens, or who buy for someone who has, to always check for a precautionary allergen statement such as 'may contain', on food and drink labelled vegan to decide on whether it's safe to eat. The campaign explains why there is a risk of cross-contamination with these allergens in vegan and plant-based foods, and why these products are different to those labelled as 'free from'.

We are also working with a number of allergy charities and partners who will share campaign messages and assets with their members and communities. We would be delighted if you were able to support us through your own social media channels.

Food hypersensitivity affects more than two million people in the UK. In the most serious cases food-induced anaphylaxis causes up to ten deaths each year in the UK, with the greatest fatality rates seen in young people aged between 16 and 25 years. Everyone deserves food they can trust and for people with a potentially life-threatening reaction to certain foods, that trust is even more important.

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In December, the FSA Board agreed that they would like to see written allergen information be mandated in the non-prepacked sector. We have written to Ministers, but in the meantime the FSA will be developing strong guidance for food businesses on how to provide written allergen information to help make it easier for people with a food allergy, intolerance and coeliac disease to protect themselves when eating out.

We are also continuing work to ensure precautionary allergen labelling (PAL), also known as 'may contain' labelling, is communicated more clearly and consistently. We have recently produced updated best-practice guidance for food businesses and are gathering UK stakeholder views to feed into our work to agree global standards for PAL.

If you would like to discuss our new campaign or the FSA's work on food hypersensitivity, please contact me at the above address.

Kind regards,



Professor Susan Jebb OBE, PhD, FRCP (Hon), FMedSci

FSA Chair

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