Instructions from the Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira concerning how to fill out the recall notification for food/food contact materials

If a food business operator considers or has reason to believe that a food which it has imported, produced, processed, manufactured or distributed is not in compliance with the food safety requirements, it shall immediately initiate procedures to recall the food in question from the market. If the food has left the immediate control of that initial food business operator, the operator shall inform the competent authorities of the recall. This guideline provides food business operators with instructions on how to fill out the recall notification [form Evira 17053 (367241)]. The numbered section headings refer to the corresponding sections in the notification form.

1. Notification details

Tick Food if the notification pertains to defective food or if the reason of the recall is a labelling or packaging error, i.e. the product and the packaging are not consistent with one another. Material intended to come into contact with food refers to items such as cutlery, servers, cups or food packages from which undesirable substances dissolve or otherwise migrate to food. The notification shall be submitted and recall action taken without delay as soon as the defect has been detected.

The recall notification shall be submitted both to the local food control authority of the municipality concerned and to the Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira (e-mail takaisinvedot@evira.fi). The contact details of your local food control authority can be found on the Evira website at http://www.evira.fi/portal/en/food/feedback_on_food/. If the product being recalled has only been sold or kept on sale within a single municipality, the recall is to be conducted as directed by the respective local control authority. The notification must nevertheless be filed with Evira as well.

Meat establishments operating in conjunction with slaughterhouses shall file the recall notification with Evira's inspection veterinarian responsible for controlling the establishment instead of the local control authority. Reindeer slaughterhouses and the establishments operating in conjunction with them shall file the notification with the Regional State Administrative Agency for Northern Finland.

2. Details of the company responsible for the recall

The party responsible for the recall is the operator who has imported, produced, processed, manufactured or distributed the food or placed it on the market (EC Regulation No. 178/2002, Article 19, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3). All the operators involved in the matter shall collaborate with the competent authorities on action taken to avoid or reduce risks posed by the food / contact material (paragraph 4).

3. Product details

Trade name means the name under which the product is sold, such as Mylläri Matikainen's rye bites. Examples of names of food include yoghurt, rye bread and precooked meatball. The batch code shall be indicated if used. The identification mark means the alphanumeric code shown of the packaging enclosed by an ellipse, for example FI 1234 EY. The operator may take a photo of the product and enclose it with the notification as an e-mail attachment. The photo need not originate from ready-made marketing material.

4. Defect giving rise to recall and potential consumer complaints

The operator shall assess the risk arising from the consumption of the non-conforming product. The assessment should take due account of the precautionary principle so as to assess the risk according to the worst case scenario. It is the duty of the authority responsible for regulatory oversight in respect of the operator concerned to evaluate the sufficiency of the risk assessment and the risk control measures taken. Where necessary, the authority is also responsible for instructing the operator as to how the recall is to be conducted and for overseeing that the recall is duly accomplished.

The food defect (non-conformance) may concern all consumers (microbiological quality defects, foreign matter, non-permitted ingredients, etc.) or only certain consumers (an ingredient not stated on the packaging that only causes allergy to some consumers).

The analysis results potentially enclosed with the notification mean the analysis report provided by the laboratory that analysed the sample, as well as other available research.

5. Details of the sale and circulation of the defective product

The purpose of this section is to provide a worst-case scenario assessment of the situation, such as: What is the earliest date when the defective batch may have been placed on the market? What is the largest possible amount of the defective product available on the market when the defect was detected? The quantities must be stated in a readily understandable format, such as kg, pcs, L, etc. The operator is requested to detail as precisely as possible the retail chains, distribution channels or individual stores, restaurants or mass caterers the product has been supplied to, the respective quantities where possible and, if the product has only been sold within certain municipalities, the names of these municipalities.

6. Recall action and communication

Recall action: What action has already been taken or is planned to be taken and when, and who is to take such action:

- Halting of product deliveries from the stocks
- Informing of retailers
- Recalling of the product

- Product disposal / return to the producer

Communication to consumers: If the product has already been kept on sale:

- How are the consumers informed?
- What kind of press release has been prepared? When and how widely will the release be circulated?
- Will the matter be announced in a newspaper? When and in which newspapers?
- Will there be further information about the recall posted at the points of sale or the company's website?
- Can the customers concerned be reached by e-mail, for example, based on a customer register?