



Press Release

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PERIODIC REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICES WITHIN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORATE

The Environmental Health Directorate within the Superintendence of Public Health is making every effort to keep its contact with the public through a monthly press statement. The following is a summary of actions taken during July, 2012.

SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- 512 improvement notices were issued during last month;
- 34 outlets visited in the early morning
- 1 HACCP audit performed;
- 12 undertakings were issued;
- 1715.57kg of foodstuffs were destroyed;
- 4 Legionella audits carried out;
- 13 swimming pools were audited during 6 audits;
- 3 schools inspected;
- 12 abatement notices issued;
- 40 food consignments imported were inspected;
- 4 consignments of tattoo equipment was also withheld;
- 2568 notification for importing/trading food into Malta;
- 20 Ship Sanitation certificates issued;
- 94 applications were processed;
- 812 control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- 143 illegal tobacco related adverts and 1 illegal tattoo adverts were removed;
- 756 samples were elevated and analysed;
- 12 citations issued/processed;
- 806 complaints lodged with the Health Inspectorate.

DETAILED REPORT

IMPROVEMENT NOTICES ISSUED TO FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

Five hundred and twelve improvement notices in terms of article 33 of the Food Safety Act have been issued to food business operators by the Health Inspectorate Services.

This notice is sent to all food business operators following an unannounced inspection by Environmental Health Officers within their establishment. The intention of this notice is to inform food operators about deficiencies noted in their establishments while the operator is given a specific

deadline by when the deficiencies need to be remedied. Though the seriousness of deficiencies might vary, legal action is initiated when major deficiencies are noted.

EARLY MORNING INSPECTIONS

Thirty four outlets were also visited by the Health Inspectorate early in the morning as part of a monitoring programme to ascertain hygienic delivery of food in particular dairy products and bread.

HACCP AUDITS

One HACCP audit was carried out during July. The **Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point** is a Food Safety Management System which is obligatory in all food businesses.

UNDERTAKINGS

During July, **twelve undertakings** were entered into by the Health Inspectorate, nine of which were food related and concerned hygiene of food premises, provision of washing facilities, HACCP and on improperly labelled food. Three undertakings were public health related such as pool safety and Legionella control.

Undertakings are legal agreements between the operators and the Health Authority specifying deadlines by which deficiencies in their premises should be remedied in compliance with standing legislation. Failure to abide with the agreed deadlines results in Court proceedings being initiated.

DESTRUCTION OF FOOD

During July, **1715.57kg of different foodstuffs** were destroyed by the Health Inspectorate, ranging from:

- 712.32kg fresh vegetables and 172.8kg of ready made sandwiches due to improper storage conditions during transportation;
- 686.4kg of fruit juices since it was not of the quality demanded by the purchaser;
- 82kg of various food due to labelling irregularities;
- 28.45kg of chicken parts for being exposed to risk of contamination;
- 32.6kg of frozen meats due to lack of traceability; and
- 1kg of Maltese type sausage for being produced in an unauthorised facility.

RECALLS AND OTHER MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout last month, no food products were implicated in withdrawals/warnings issued by this Directorate.

During the previous month, two media communications were issued, as follows:

1. Press Release 1611 issued on 20th July on the work performed by the Food Safety Commission (URL: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2012/07/pr1611.pdf)
2. Press Release 1655 issued on 25th July, 2012 on a statement issued by the Health Inspectorate (URL: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2012/07/pr1655eng.pdf)

LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS

Four audits at Hotels, and other similar premises to ascertain compliance with Control of Legionella Regulations, 2006 (L.N. 5 of 2006) and the Registration of Cooling Towers and

Evaporative Condensers Regulations, 2006 (L.N. 6 of 2006) were performed by the Health Inspectorate during last month.

During the same month, **thirteen swimming pools** were inspected during **six audits** carried out by the Health Inspectorate to verify compliance with Swimming Pools Regulations, 2005 (L.N. 129 of 2005). **Three** pools were registered with the Health Authority during this month. This regulation specifies that all swimming pools with the exception of those situated at a single family residence need to register with this Directorate. A list of registered pools can be found in the Directorate's website mentioned below.

INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS

During July, **three schools** were inspected to ensure compliance with general hygiene requirements. Such inspections are carried out in private, government or church owned schools and whether, primary, secondary, tertiary or language or special schools.

ABATEMENT NOTICES

Twelve abatement notices were issued during this month by the Health Inspectorate in terms of the Public Health Act in view of inspections and audits carried out in the previous days.

CONSIGNMENTS

Forty consignments of food imported/traded into Malta were also inspected during July by Environmental Health Officers attached with the Port Health Services within this Directorate.

Four consignments of tattoo equipment were also withheld by the Port Health Services.

CONSIGNMENTS DOCUMENTARY CHECKS

2,568 requests for importation/trading of foodstuffs were submitted to the Port Health Services as required by Trading Regulations of 2004 (Legal Notice 315 of 2004 which can be downloaded from <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=11120&l=1>).

All traders of food including food contact materials and food supplements are reminded to notify the Port Health Services, 48hours in advance as explained in Press Release 1531 issued on 13th August, 2011 (URL: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2011/08/pr1531.pdf).

SHIP SANITATION CERTIFICATES

During July, **twenty** Ship Sanitation Certificates were issued by the Port Health Services. Such inspections are carried out in terms of the International Health Regulations of 2005 and involves the assessment of the general hygienic conditions and control measures undertaken on ships. Such certificate needs to be renewed every 6 months at an authorised port; Malta being an authorised port.

APPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

During July, the Health Inspectorate received **94 requests to process applications** to operate food and non-food business. Prospective operators who wish to open such businesses are obliged to apply for a permit with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) and then apply for the actual licence with the competent authority such as the Trade Licensing Unit or Malta Tourism Authority. At every stage, this Directorate is consulted in order to verify suitability of proposed premises.

During the same month, Environmental Health Officers deployed with the Food Safety Unit, which is involved in the licensing of food related business carried out a total of **111 visits** and **three consultations**.

CONTROL CARDS FOR NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

During July, **812 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances** (463 females and 349 males) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **158 of these cards were new applicants**.

These cards are issued when a medical doctor deems that a person needs to be prescribed a psychotropic drug. An application form is filled in and handed over to the patient which is in turn submitted to the Drug Control Unit, Shop 12, City Gate, Valletta Tel; 21245490.

ILLEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

During July, **143 adverts** involving Tobacco products and including electronic cigarettes in breach of Tobacco (Smoking Control) Act were noticed on local sites and the respective advertisers and webmasters were instructed to remove, something which was actually complied with.

One advert of tattoo equipment was also noticed on in contravention of the Control of Tattooing Act.

SAMPLES

During July, **756 samples** were elevated by the Health Inspectorate and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for analysis and/or examination for several parameters;

- 178 food samples,
- 56 potable water samples,
- 31 swabs,
- 103 infiltration water samples,
- 13 pool water samples,
- 348 sea water samples,
- 27 other samples.

During this year, the Directorate has launched 18 microbiological sampling programmes and 37 chemical sampling programmes targeting several parameters in numerous categories of foodstuffs such as colours, aflatoxins, GMOs, radionucleides, etc.

BATHING WATER MONITORING PROGRAMME

During the month of July, **348 samples of sea water** were collected and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory to be analysed for microbiological parameters as stipulated by EU Directive 2006/7/EC. The bathing water monitoring programme is carried out in accordance with the provisions of said EU Directive. The official bathing season started on the 14th May 2012 and will last till the 21st October 2012. Sampling is carried out from 87 official bathing sites throughout the Maltese islands.

Up to the 11th week of the monitoring programme the 87 sites have been classified as follows: 85 sites as Excellent Quality, 2 sites as Good Quality, and **no** sites as Sufficient or Poor Quality.

CONTRAVENTIONS

During this month, **twelve contraventions** were issued/processed by the Health Inspectorate, **ten** of which were related to food safety issues:

- One catering establishment for keeping foodstuffs at improper storage conditions, failing to register with Food Safety Commission and lack of traceability;
- Another catering establishment for failing to keep premises in hygienic conditions and lack to comply with several hygiene requirements;
- One retailer for producing foodstuffs without necessary permits, permitting unhygienic conditions, selling foodstuffs with lased 'Use by Date', and other foodstuffs with improper labelling;
- A hawker for not wearing clean protective clothing, lack of providing washing facilities, exposing food to risk of contamination, keeping food at improper storage conditions, and for failing to attend food hygiene training;
- Another hawker for failing to provide traceability records, selling foodstuffs without proper labelling, premises not registered with Food Safety Commission,
- Three retailers and one manufacturer for not complying with undertakings that has been entered into, earlier on; and
- One retailer for not complying with conditions of licence;

Two were related to environmental health issues, as follows:

- One field owner for keeping an accumulation of refuse; and
- One resident for failing to regularise drainage system

EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS

During July, **three** emergency control orders were issued for illegal manufacture of meat products in a butcher shop, irregular activity at a processing plant, and unhygienic conditions.

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS

During July, **no** emergency prohibition orders were issued and hence no premises were closed down.

COMPLAINTS

In July, **806 complaints** were lodged with the Directorate which were categorised in one or more category, as follows:

o Food related complaints

119 complaints were related to food. The most common type of food complaints concerned risk of contamination (21 complaints), unhygienic premises (18 complaints), improper labelling (9 complaints), and improper storage of food (19 complaints).

o Other Environmental Health related complaints

Another 755 complaints were environmental health related. The most common type concerned presence of pests (217 complaints), infiltrations (134 complaints), accumulations of refuse (57 complaints), foul smells (41 complaints), keeping of animals in unhygienic conditions (39 complaints) and discharge of foul water (54 complaints)

Note: The number of complaints and the number of categories do not tally, since one complaint received may encompass one or more categories.

The Environmental Health Directorate takes this opportunity to remind the public that it can contact the Health Inspectorate Services between 7:00am and 3:00pm on telephone number 21337333, by calling personally at its offices at Continental Business Centre, Cutrico Buildings, Old Railway Track, Santa Venera or by email complaints.ph@gov.mt.

For further information, the public is also encouraged to visit the Directorate's website at URL: https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/public_health/environmental-health/department_for_env_health.aspx or on its facebook page on <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Environmental-Health-Directorate-Malta/145027878928626>