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# Press Release

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PR 1511

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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 regular press statement. The following is a summary of actions taken during **JUNE**, 2013.

### SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- **472** improvement notices were issued;
- **14** undertakings were issued;
- **21638.24kg** of foodstuffs and **3.750lts** of milk and milk products were destroyed;
- **7** Legionella audits carried out;
- **15** swimming pools were audited during **6** audits;
- **18** schools inspected;
- **6** abatement notices issued;
- **39** consignments of imported food were inspected;
- **1871** notifications of food and **2047** of food supplements for importing/trading into Malta;
- **1032** personal parcels checked of which **3** were rejected;
- **22** Ship Sanitation certificates were issued;
- **177** applications were processed;
- **1122** control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- **8** illegal tobacco related adverts and **1** illegal tattoo advert was removed;
- **456** samples were elevated and analysed;
- **2** products recalled;
- **6** citations issued/processed;
- **612** complaints were lodged with the Health Inspectorate.

### DETAILED REPORT

#### **IMPROVEMENT NOTICES ISSUED TO FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS**

**Four hundred and seventy two improvement notices** in terms of article 33 of the Food Safety Act were issued to food business operators by the Health Inspectorate Services. During this period **32 improvement notices** were also issued to open market stalls.

An improvement 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

Attachments: none

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inform food operators about deficiencies noted in their establishments while the operator is given a specific deadline in order to rectify these deficiencies. Though the seriousness of deficiencies might vary, legal action is initiated when major deficiencies are noted.

#### **UNDERTAKINGS**

**14 undertakings** were entered into by the Health Inspectorate, and concerned several food and environmental health related issues.

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**

The amount of **foodstuffs** destroyed by the Health Inspectorate was **21638.24kgs and 3.75lts of milk and milk products.**

These foodstuffs included:

- Sultanas 20.6 kg
- Baby food 0.8 kg
- Confectionery items 258.41kg
- Meat and poultry products 5716.10 kg
- Frozen vegetables 1648.35 kg
- Sauces 117.60 kg
- Delicatessen 0.460 kg
- Frozen bakery 13626.32 kg
- Yogurt drinks 249.60 kg

#### **LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS**

**Seven 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.

**Fifteen swimming pools** were inspected during **nine audits** carried out by the Health Inspectorate to verify compliance with Swimming Pools Regulations, 2005 (L.N. 129 of 2005). **10 new 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**

**18 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**

**6 abatement notices** were issued by the Health Inspectorate in terms of the Public Health Act in view of inspections and audits carried out in the previous days.

## **CONSIGNMENTS**

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

## **CONSIGNMENTS DOCUMENTARY CHECKS**

**1871 requests for importation/trading of foodstuffs** and **2047 requests for importation of food supplements** 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 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2011 (URL: [http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press\\_releases/2011/08/pr1531.pdf](http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2011/08/pr1531.pdf)).

## **PERSONAL IMPORTS**

**1032 personal consignments** were also screened by the Port Health Services, of which **3 were rejected**.

## **SHIP SANITATION CERTIFICATES**

**Twenty-two** Ship Sanitation Certificates were issued by the Port Health Services. These inspections are carried out in terms of the International Health Regulations of 2005 and involve the assessment of the general hygienic conditions and control measures undertaken on ships. A Ship Sanitation Certificate needs to be renewed every 6 months at an authorised port; Malta being an authorised port.

## **APPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS**

The Health Inspectorate received **177 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.

## **CONTROL CARDS FOR NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES**

**1122 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances** (430 males and 692 females) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **167 of these cards** were **new applications**.

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**

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

**One** advert of tattoo equipment was also noted to be in contravention of the Control of Tattooing Act.

## **SAMPLES**

**456 samples** were elevated by the Health Inspectorate and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for analysis and/or examination for several parameters.

## **RECALLS**

**Two products were recalled** as follows:

- Press Release number 1208 issued on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (URL: <https://ehealth.gov.mt/download.aspx?id=9252>)
- Press Release number 1300 issued on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2013 (URL: <https://ehealth.gov.mt/download.aspx?id=9265>)

## **CONTRAVENTIONS**

**Six contraventions** were issued / processed by the Health Inspectorate, **one** of which was related to food safety issues:

- One person for allowing food to be in a risk of contamination.

**Five** were environmental health related:

- One person responsible for a hotel for not abiding with an undertaking;
- One person for smoking in a public place and one person for allowing such smoking;
- One person for keeping of drains in a bad state of repair;
- One person for keeping internal parts of house dirty and accumulations.

## **EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS**

**Two** emergency control orders were issued against operators.

## **EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS**

During last month, the following premise was closed down by the Health Authority.

- Sofra Pizza & Grill, Msida Seafront, Msida

Remedial action was taken by the operators and hence premise was allowed to reopen 3 days later.

## **COMPLAINTS**

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

### **o Food related complaints**

**84** complaints were related to food. The most common type of food related complaints were: improper labelling (16 complaints), risk of contamination (11 complaints) and hygiene of food premises (13 complaints).

#### o **Other Environmental Health related complaints**

Another **568** complaints were environmental health related. The most common complaints were: pest infestations (138 complaints), infiltrations (123 complaints), accumulation of refuse (39 complaints) and keeping of animals in unhygienic conditions (29 complaints).

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

#### **FOCUS REPORTS**

During the last months, the Directorate started preparing informative reports on particular topics such as complaints and Legionella. These are being uploaded on our site at: [https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/public\\_health/environmental-health/publications/publications.aspx](https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/public_health/environmental-health/publications/publications.aspx)

The Environmental Health Directorate takes this opportunity to remind the public that it can contact the Health Inspectorate Services between 08:00am and 3:00pm on telephone number 21337333, by calling personally at its offices at Continental Business Centre, Old Railway Track, Santa Venera or by email [complaints.ph@gov.mt](mailto: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](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>