



**Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs**

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27th November 2018

Thank you for your letter concerning the inquest into the death of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse who died tragically of anaphylaxis after eating a baguette purchased from Pret-a-Manger at London Heathrow Airport.

First, I would like to express my most sincere condolences to the Ednan-Laperouse family. My heart goes out to her family and friends. I very much appreciate your efforts to ensure that this important investigation and inquest was conducted with rigour and independence.

I have carefully considered your report and offer the following in response to the detailed issues you have raised which are pertinent to my department.

The first matter of concern (1) you raise relates to inadequate allergen labelling on products which are, according to the relevant legislation, "pre-packed for direct sale". Current food information regulations, which date from 2014, make a distinction between pre-packed food found, for example, in a supermarket, and food pre-packed for direct sale, for example in a food-to-go outlet, where food is prepared and packed on the premises for sale. In the latter, there is currently no requirement to label an individual product with allergen information, provided that information is readily discernible, including through indications to ask a member of staff.

Taking into account matter of concern (1) raised in your Regulation 28 report, an urgent review of allergen information provision for food which is pre-packed for direct sale is under way with a view to strengthening the framework.

The provision of allergen information to the public is a hugely important issue, and it is essential that all UK consumers have complete trust in the food they are eating. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is working on this review closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). We are also working closely with the Devolved Administrations to ensure that the review is UK wide.

To date, officials from Defra and the FSA have held joint meetings with a number of key stakeholders, including key industry representatives, a range of businesses and allergy patient groups, and this dialogue will continue over the following months. Through these discussions, stakeholders have highlighted the potential of both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to strengthen the current framework on allergens, and we are developing a number of policy options based on this information with a view to formal consultation.



Our central concern is about improving consumer safety, and therefore, alongside the review, we are encouraging businesses to implement a best practice approach to allergen information provision. The FSA have also been working in collaboration with patient groups to run awareness campaigns such as #EasytoASK which works to promote best practice behaviour by consumers with allergies.

We must act quickly to ensure that we have the best possible protection for consumers in place as soon as possible. Consequently, we aim to launch our consultation on allergen information provision policy options early in the new year and any legislation that is needed will follow as soon as possible.

While the second matter of concern you raise relates to notification systems for allergen-related incidents within businesses, I wanted to take this opportunity to set out some related activity undertaken by Government. The FSA have been working with local authorities in Lancashire on a pilot scheme to improve the notification of incidents between businesses, local authorities and the NHS. Such a system would allow local authorities to work with specific Food Business Operators to help them better understand their obligations and requirements and, understand the significance of the potential health and financial consequences of non-compliance.

I am grateful for your report, welcome publication of this response, and can assure you of my commitment to take the necessary steps to ensure that the public have the allergen information that they need to inform their food choices.

Thank you again for your report.

With every good wish,



Michael Gove