

GM Food

Briefing at the UK branch of the Eurofins Scientific Group

Eurofins Scientific Limited held its first marketing event on Monday 28 June 1999. A prestigious London venue, The Institute of Directors in Pall Mall, was booked for the occasion.

The day began with a "GM Food Briefing" attended by many delegates who represented food companies, as well as personnel from local authorities (e.g., city councils). In fact, interest in the sensitive issue of genetic modification appears to be as high among regulatory bodies as among food producers.

All attendees received a delegate pack, filled with the usual survival kit including relevant scientific papers, and copies of current European and British regulations. Following a short introduction by the Chairman, **Kevan Williams**, the first presentation was made by **Emma Harrison**, Public Affairs Officer at "Consumers' Association", who described consumers' points of view on so-called "Frankenstein foods". Looking at British newspapers,

where GM products attract almost daily coverage, there is indeed little doubt that GM food is still very badly perceived by the consumers in Europe, and especially in the United Kingdom!

Next, **Stuart Musgrove**, from Somerset County Council, had the difficult task of clearing the confusion of the current, new regulations. After describing the "Novel Foods and Novel Food Ingredients Regulation 1997", his talk focused on the recent "Council Regulation (EC) N°1139/98" and on the enforcement legislation brought in by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as the "Food Labelling Amendment Regulations (1999)". Thanks to a vivacious talk and a few judicious slides, our speaker succeeded in efficiently explaining both the legislation and the local authorities' views.

Finally, **Bert Popping**, the newly-appointed Group Molecular Biologist of Eurofins Scientific, presented the latest techniques in GM food testing and discussed the

real meaning of such findings. This talk was very detailed technically, but a short video showing an actual GM food screening test allowed all participants to see all the steps of such a procedure and to have a better understanding of its potential difficulties.

A quick lunch served by the IoD concluded this first marketing event that had illustrated recent regulatory developments and presented some of the most up-to-date analytical capabilities of the Eurofins Scientific Group. We hope this seminar will be the first of a series of fruitful conferences on various topics.

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The European standards for the safety of consumer products on sale to the general public are amongst the most stringent in the world. Our New Cross laboratory in the UK has an international reputation for safety testing of toys, stationery, giftware, ceramic ware and other consumer products. As leading participants in many CEN technical committees for safety standards we are at the forefront of developments in European safety.

In the past year we became the first laboratory in the world to achieve EN45000 accreditation to the new toys safety standard EN71-1 1998 and are actively helping manufacturers, importers and retailers to ensure that their products comply with this complicated standard. Our involvement in drafting this standard has enabled us to develop authoritative interpretations of the requirements which, unusually, are often more subjective requirements than in the past.

The laboratory is notified under Directive 88/378/EEC and is now steering work within the EU to extend standards for toys to include organic contaminants such as plasticisers, colourants and their breakdown products, preservatives, monomers, solvents and flame retardants.



Toys

Eurofins Scientific take the lead in New Standards for Toys - Consumer Product Safety Testing

Developments in standards require careful attention to the science of testing and analysis. The new standards for toys will include properly reviewed and validated methods of analysis for many organic additives and contaminants and are expected to be published in the next few years. As participants in this work Eurofins Scientific will be in a position to provide the additional testing which will become necessary to ensure that toys are legal across the community. In the mean time the toy industry is preparing itself for these new standards and our advice on these new aspects is available to clients across the world.

Toys Safety in Europe

The Toys Safety Directive (88/378/EEC) was the first of the so called "new approach" Directives designed to accelerate the completion of the internal market. The Directive contains "essential requirements" to ensure the safety of toys and the detailed testing regime is described in harmonised European standards. These standards are published on completion of

many years of discussion, research and collaboration between industry, the public, enforcement bodies and testing laboratories. Standards for toys include those dealing with the mechanical and physical properties, labelling, flammability and toxic heavy elements. There are also standards covering chemistry sets, other chemical toys and electrical safety. Compliance with standards usually infers a presumption of conformity with the Directive although this may not always be the case. Eurofins Scientific UK is notified under the Directive to advise on this and to issue special certificates of conformity to the Directive itself rather than merely the standards.

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