

Count-down to the 2007 Allergen Bureau Conference and Workshops

Time is short to register for the 2007 Allergen Bureau Conference and Workshops to be held in Sydney on 19th February, however there is still a little more time to register for the Melbourne event on 28th February.

We thank our sponsors for their support:

- Arrow Scientific
- Peanut Company of Australia
- AgriQuality Australia
- BioLab Australia
- BioSys Australia
- FACT^a

We have been overwhelmed with the registration numbers after initially expecting 150 people across both functions. These numbers have already been exceeded, with 3 weeks to go before the Melbourne event.

The morning program is packed full of interesting new aspects relating to food allergens, including the revised AFGC Allergen Management and Labelling Guide that is to be published in the near future. More details about the afternoon Workshop options are provided in this issue of Allergen eNews.

Don't miss out! Register now! The full program and registration form are available on the Allergen Bureau website:

www.allergenbureau.net/downloads/news/Registration_Program_form.pdf

Remember: Allergen Bureau Members are entitled to one free registration to attend the Conference and Workshops, with all subsequent registrations at only half price!

Allergen Bureau Workshops

If you have already registered for the Allergen Bureau Conference and are wondering which Workshops to attend, the following summary may help you decide.

Workshop 1. Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling (VITAL).

The AFGC Allergen Forum Risk Assessment Team has developed a standardised risk assessment protocol designed to be utilised across the food industry to assist in allergen management and ultimately to provide consistent allergen declarations. You will get an explanation of the procedure for assessing the level of cross-contact risk in ingredients and production and to assess how this fits in with your allergen management practices, particularly labelling. Case studies will be presented to show VITAL in action. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion and your feedback will be used by the team to further refine the process.

Workshop 2. Product Information Form (PIF) & Allergen Labelling

The AFGC Allergen Forum Supplier Questionnaire Team has developed the Product Information Form (PIF) that can be used to obtain standardised product information by anyone within the food industry. The PIF is intended to replace the multiple company-specific forms that suppliers are asked to fill out, and this workshop will review feedback from several companies throughout Australasia who are already using the form.

The latest work by the AFGC Allergen Forum Labelling Team will also be presented during this workshop. This team have formalised their allergen labelling recommendations for use specifically in conjunction with the PIF and VITAL.

Workshop 3. Allergen In-house Training

Dr Lyn Davies from AgriQuality Australia and Rob Sherlock from FACT^a will provide guidance and advice for those companies looking to implement allergen training into their food safety program. Gaining buy-in at top-level management through to the production staff and even cleaners

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can be one of the biggest hurdles, and choosing the right training format for your team can also present a challenge. With a liberal number of prizes available to participants, Lyn and Rob will also be collecting information about the knowledge gaps within industry. The Allergen Bureau will use this information in its application for funding to develop specific allergen training courses later this year.

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New Members of the Allergen Bureau

The Allergen Bureau is making great progress in establishing a solid position within industry, with 28 companies now signed up as full Members. We are delighted to announce both **Sunrice** and **Sanitarium** have recently *Joined Us* to share the benefits of this valuable industry initiative.

Sunrice and **Sanitarium** join the following members of the Allergen Bureau this year:

Amcor Packaging, AgriQuality, Cadbury Schweppes, Campbell Arnott's, Cerebos, Coles Myer, Danisco, Facta (previously EML Consulting QLD), George Weston Foods Limited, Golden Circle, Goodman Fielder, Greens General Foods, Heinz, Kelloggs, Kerry Ingredients, Kraft, Masterfoods, Murray Goulburn, National Foods, Nestle, Nuts for Life, Parmalat, Peanut Company of Australia, Simplot, Uncle Tobys, and Unilever.

The Allergen Bureau is currently consulting its Members regarding our proposed new membership structure, designed to encourage a greater number of small to medium-sized companies to *Join Us*. These options are expected to be available in time for our new membership year, which begins on 1st April 2007. Please contact the Allergen Bureau for more details.

Canada Cuts Consumer Exposure to Peanut Allergens

Clinical evidence suggests the prevalence of peanut allergy is increasing in many countries.

Researchers in Canada published the results of their studies (Yu et al. 2006 *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, Vol 118 pp. 466-72) that show about 14% of Montreal children with peanut allergies were accidentally exposed to peanut each year from 2000 to 2005.

This represents a dramatic drop from the annual incidence rate of 50% reported in an American study conducted in 1989, and the 55% rate reported in a British study published in 2005.

The researchers surveyed 252 Canadian children, aged between 4 and 17 years with diagnosed peanut allergies. Thirty-five accidental exposures to peanut were reported in 29 children, translating to an annual rate of about 14%. Twenty-six of the 35 exposures were due to ingestion of peanuts, with the peanut content of the food unknown in 22 incidents. More than 80% of Montreal's schools have a ban on peanuts; one exposure was reported at a school that permitted peanuts.

The researchers concluded that while these improvements were promising, there was still room for better education of allergic children and their parents on how to avoid peanuts, as well as enforcement of more stringent food manufacturing and labelling standards.

Anyone interested in the finer details of this study is welcome to contact the Allergen Bureau.

Australian Food Safety Centre Knowledge Network - Allergens

The Australian Food Safety Centre of Excellence knowledge management demonstration project aims to develop a 'learning community' for emerging food safety hazards.

A pilot network about pathogenic *Escherichia coli* has been developed, and a similar network about allergens is currently being established.

The network will involve a team of experts in the field who will collect information about food allergens and post it on a website. Whilst linking in with the Allergen Bureau to share relevant information, the network will also provide an on-line discussion forum for interested parties.

A simple web based facility has been set up to support the learning community and this will continue to develop during the course of the project as the industry needs are assessed and identified.

Coeliac Awareness Week – 13-20th March 2007

Coeliac disease is one of the most under-diagnosed, yet most common, chronic diseases. It is thought to affect approximately 1 in 100 people in Australia, but 4 out of 5 people don't know they have it.

Coeliac disease is an auto-immune disease, which means that the body produces antibodies that attack its own tissues. In the case of Coeliac disease, this response is triggered by gluten proteins found in wheat, rye, barley and oats.

If left undiagnosed, Coeliac disease may lead to severe consequences such as bowel cancer, Type 1 diabetes and osteoporosis. Because an accurate diagnosis is essential to reduce the risk of developing such conditions, a gluten-free diet should never be started before an endoscopy and blood tests have been carried out. Excluding gluten from the diet may interfere with establishing the correct diagnosis, or possibly delay the diagnosis of another condition with similar symptoms.

Coeliac Awareness Week aims to raise awareness of the disease within the community, the food industry and amongst medical practitioners by providing information as to its seriousness as well as the importance of both a correct diagnosis and life-long dietary restrictions.

For further information about Coeliac Awareness Week, please contact Graham Price, at the Australian Coeliac Society on 02 9487 5088 or graham.price@coeliacsociety.com.au

New Allergen Bureau "postcard"

The Allergen Bureau has published a new "postcard" to assist in disseminating our message (and contact details) far and wide.

As it concisely summarises the benefits and importance of Allergen Bureau membership, we encourage our Members to contact us for a bundle of these eye-catching postcards for display in their reception areas, or to send to their suppliers. We have also used this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge our Foundation Member companies who continue to support the Allergen Bureau.

Request for resources

As the Allergen Bureau continues to develop its website, we are working to increase the number and type of resources available to the industry.

To ensure the Allergen Bureau remains a valuable asset to industry, we ask you to be our eyes and ears, to provide papers, events, reviews, website links and other useful information for us to post on the website.