

Legal Regulations of Fats and Oils in Europe

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Abstract

During the last decade there has been a significant change in the approaches of food safety. It is often said that the environment of food safety is totally different from before. This contribution will focus on some developments in this field with particular emphasis on heated fats and oils. Nutrition aspects will not be covered as they will be discussed by other speakers.

The chain approach is a first significant trend. The growing importance of quality assurance systems in addition to quality control has also to be mentioned. This is very often translated into the self-responsibility of all the stakeholders in the food chain.

Food safety management systems will be briefly reviewed in comparison with food quality management systems. Food safety management systems include monitoring systems at the population level, the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) system at the company level and the GGHP (Guides for Good Hygienic Practices) at the sector or subsector level.

Monitoring is the responsibility of the Authorities whereas the two other systems are part of the self-responsibility of companies. The HACCP system will be discussed in another paper. The GGHP system is an alternative food safety system at the level of SME's (Small and Medium Enterprises).

With respect to quality control of heated fats and oils, several member states of the EU introduced regulations in the eighties and the nineties. The status of the regulations varies from official to practical. To my knowledge there is no specific EU Reglementation.

Quality parameters in the regulations may include:

- temperature specifications,
- acid value or equivalent,
- polar compounds,
- petrolether insoluble oxidised fatty acids,
- polymerised triglycerides
- viscosity,
- smoke point.

Very often it is also specified that the oil of fat must be of acceptable sensorial quality.

There are several fast methods in use. They are particularly useful for screening purposes and for in situ control. In our experience they are very useful in a self-control system as it is possible to establish a relationship between the fast method and the "official" quality parameters. This relationship has to be established for a particular application: the frying method, the fat or oil and the fried food.