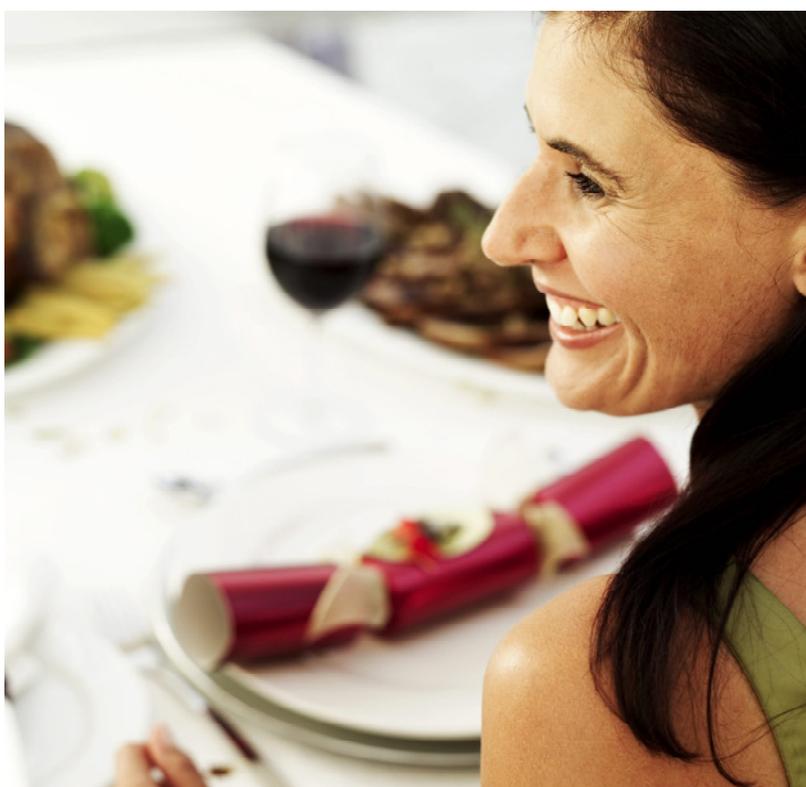




INVESTIGATION OF AWARD SYSTEM FOR FOOD BUSINESSES "Focus on Food"



Food Hygiene and Food Safety in the Baltic Region

INVESTIGATION OF AWARD SYSTEM FOR FOOD BUSINESSES

Summary

In order to raise interest and knowledge about food legislation and food hygiene, we want to show different award systems within the Baltic sea region. We aim to make knowledge about hygiene at producer level available to consumers

The consumer is given the opportunity to make active choices. Companies are encouraged to maintain a hygienic standards and regulatory compliance requirements.

In many countries where results of inspections are publishes, has gained high acceptance amongst both consumers and entrepreneurs. It has been established that focus on issues relating to food hygiene has increased. It has also in some countries been able to directly measure that the hygiene has improved.

Denmark and Belgium are some countries that have been working with "the smiley concept" for nearly 10 years and have had very good experience of the system. The system has enjoyed high acceptance amongst both consumers and restaurant owners.

The advantages for producers and consumers are obvious. And most of all, the "smiley" is a symbol of trust for the consumer. It guarantees food safety at a high level.

Countries examined in accordance with the previous meeting in Malmö are Germany, Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Latvia. The results are presented below.

Investigated countries

DENMARK

The smiley concept was started in 2001. It is used in the monitoring of all food businesses including restaurants, food stalls and canteens. A smiley symbol informs the consumer about the establishment inspection results and even includes an official report stating details of the inspection. In addition, all inspection results are published on the internet.

- *Type of monitoring authority awarding the symbol and publishing the results:* Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Danish Veterinary and Food Administration

- *What does the respective evaluation system look like?*

In every Danish food business, restaurant or food stall as well as in canteens of companies, schools and retirement homes, the owners are obliged to inform consumers about the result of their latest food quality check-up. The report needs to be displayed in a clearly visible place, and the included smiley symbol will inform visitors about the evaluation at one glance. Additionally, the results from the check-up will be published on the internet.

In Denmark, about 350 official food inspectors perform several check-ups on every business per year, without prior notification. In 2008, they carried out roughly 70,000 checks in total.

- *Are only positive results published?*

No. A business not awarded with the best result (happiest smiley) is entitled to have another check-up done within 6 months. If the business wishes to have the check-up done sooner, it can apply for it but has to take over the associated costs.

😊 had no remarks,

😐 has emphasised that certain rules must be obeyed,

🚫 issued an injunction order or a prohibition,

😡 issued an administrative fine, reported the enterprise to the police or withdrew an approval.

🏆 Elite-smiley

The elite-smiley is awarded to enterprises with the best inspection history.

- *Has the system had a positive or negative impact?*

The system has enjoyed high acceptance amongst both consumers and restaurant owners. Every Danish consumer is now familiar with the smiley system (in place since 2001), 97 percent of the Danes consider it a “good” or “very good” idea, according to a 2008 survey by the Danish Ministry of food. 59% of respondents said they had already avoided a restaurant because of a sad smiley (i.e. a poor result in check-ups). It was mainly restaurant owners who were particularly opposed to the system’s introduction initially. Now, an impressive 88 percent of checked businesses consider the smiley system a “good” or “very good” idea. 86% said they felt evaluated fairly. The smiley system’s success can even be measured statistically: In 2002, 70% of businesses were awarded the happiest smiley; in 2008, that number had reached 83% and had further risen to 86% in 2009. Now, an “elite smiley” has been introduced, a reward given to businesses that have had the best possible result in check-ups four times in a row. Elite smiley rewards are checked less frequently.

GERMANY

On May 19th 2011, the consumer protection ministers of the federal subjects in Germany agreed on employing the so called “hygiene traffic light”, an official means of food quality monitoring to be introduced in the beginning of 2012.

The new monitoring system was initially planned to be used for restaurants and food stalls and would later be used to even monitor bakeries, butchers, food retailers and large-scale canteen kitchens.

The “hygiene traffic light” is designed to make food monitoring results in basic hygiene visible for consumers. Green means excellent hygiene conditions whereas yellow and red mark various degrees of deficiencies.

The ministers of economic affairs in 15 (out of 16) federal subjects are currently blocking the introduction of this system expressing their concerns as to whether the system is binding and comprehensible enough.

Economy representatives regard the system as overly controlling and an additional bureaucratic burden. Several reputable organisations have positioned themselves against the introduction of the system, amongst them the German Hotel and Restaurant Association (DEHOGA). The country-wide introduction of the smiley symbol modeled after the Danish award system has not found the necessary support in parliament. Currently, a colour-coded bar is the preferred solution, yet a consensus between the consumer protection ministers and the ministers of economic affairs has not been reached. A voluntary award system is possible as well, and is in fact already in place in some federal subjects, e.g. Berlin and Hamburg.

SWEDEN

In Sweden there are several systems for publications of results of food inspections. There is no state or overall system, it is every municipality that decides whether to publish or not. Due to the lack of a common system, today is filled with a number of different ways to publish.

This means that it is not always so easy for consumers to benefit from its results. Some municipalities reported only those companies that have voluntarily registered their interest in participating. In these cases, only positive comments are given. In other municipalities, are all the results published. There are different systems with the "smiley icon", both those who are only happy and those who graduated from happy to sad. Furthermore, there are symbols of "traffic-lights", some with green-yellow-red symbols and some with green-yellow symbols. Some municipalities publish the results with a review (with varying degrees of severity for the deficiencies found). The system with a happy smiley is published both at the website and on the door of restaurants.

Moreover, it is not all municipalities in Sweden that choose to publish the results.

- *Type of monitoring authority awarding the symbol and publishing the results:*
Each municipality determines independently what to do.

- *What does the respective evaluation system look like?*

Smiley



Traffic-lights



Review of any deviations or none

Protocols and reviews

- *Are only positive results published?*

Sometimes, but not always

- *Has the system had a positive or negative impact?*

Positive impact. In the municipality of Staffanstorp (traffic-light system) it was found that the number of serious deviations fell by between 6-42% in different areas. The largest improvement came in the area of processes (temperature controls, etc.) where 42% minor discrepancies were found. Personal hygiene was another area that was greatly improved, 36%

KALININGRAD

Kaliningrad Oblast, a federal subject of Russia situated on the Baltic coast. Here we found three different awarding systems Pumpernikel, The Golden Fork and The talent of hospitality.

Most of all three systems are focusing on the customer part of the business, serving, taste and appearance and service. Very little focus is placed on food hygiene in the kitchen.

- *Type of monitoring authority awarding the symbol and publishing the results:*

The organiser of the "Pumpernikel" Contest is "Startup" Sp. z o. o., the owner of the "Baltic Broadway" magazine. Members of the Council of Experts visit the Contest participants without disclosing their identity.

The national prize for the restaurants, "The Golden Fork" is an annual prize in the restaurant industry arranged together with "Vybiray" magazine. Is a competition where the public can vote directly on the prize website, by SMS or a social medium.

“The Talent of Hospitality” Contest has been organised since 2008 by the Agency for Kaliningrad Oblast Tourism. For the purpose of implementing the Contest and arriving at the results, a Contest committee is appointed. The candidates for the prize are evaluated by the team of experts.

The objectives of the Prize:

The development of the restaurant market in the Russian regions.

Improve the level of consumer protection for the public to catering industry.

Give the citizens and guests who visit the Kaliningrad Oblast information about the best public catering.

Create an information platform that enables Contest participants to familiarize themselves with the results of its competitors and will make it possible to follow the latest trends

- *How does the respective evaluation system look like?*



PUMPERNICKEL

- The winners and nominees receive the following prizes:
- All the participants in the Contest receive diplomas.
- Prizes for the 1st and 2nd positions.
- Special prizes identified by the Contest sponsors or partners.



THE GOLDEN FORK

The prize-awarding ceremony: winners in particular categories receive a statuette and a winner’s diploma. Facilities which rank 2nd or 3rd will receive consolation prizes and diplomas; all the finalists (max. 10 restaurants in each category) will receive a diploma.

“THE TALENT OF HOSPITALITY”

Winners in particular categories receive the title of winner and are awarded with a commemorative emblem “The Talent of Hospitality”. They can also place the emblem in their advertising and information materials, on signboards in front of and inside their facility, staff uniforms, company forms and Internet websites.

Information on winners occupying the first three positions will be made available for a period of one year on the websites of the Agency for Kaliningrad Oblast Tourism, and those who took the 1st and 2nd positions can for a period of one year include their information on advertising materials published by the Agency, such as guides, maps

and advertising modules. In addition, all winners can participate in the international tourism fair free of charge.

All participants in the Contest receive commemorative diplomas.

- *Are only positive results published?*

Yes, the system is based on competitions. The competitions are organized by Agency for Kaliningrad Oblast Tourism, the owner of the "Baltic Broadway" magazine and "Vybiray" magazine. Hygiene aspects relating to how well it meets the requirements of the EU legislation are not covered by the assessments.

- *Has the system had a positive or negative impact?*

No results were attributable to a higher standard of hygiene in accordance with legislative requirements.

FINLAND

- *Type of monitoring authority awarding the symbol and publishing the results*

Finnish Food Safety Authority, Evira

- *What does the respective evaluation system look like?*

Oiva is one of the Food Safety Authority Evira coordinated pilot projects on public disclosure of regulatory information. Regulatory information is published in the form of inspection reports, in which the grades obtained during the inspections set forth in the form of a scale. The pilot project is implemented only at the locations involved in the project and in the stores covered by Oiva.

Inspections have always been in the shops and restaurants. The novelty of this pilot project is to inform consumers about the results, results mainly in approaches, hygiene practices and product safety. In the pilot made inspections as uniformly as possible. The goal is that while doing inspection practices in Finland and more uniform.



Very good



Good



Acceptable



Bad

- *Are only positive results published?*

No

- *Has the system had a positive or negative impact?*

The project is evaluated at the moment so no details of the results have yet been published.

POLAND

Results from food monitoring are not made public.

ESTONIA

Results from food monitoring are not made public.

LATVIA

Results from food monitoring are not made public.

LITHUANIA

- *Type of monitoring authority awarding the symbol and publishing the results*

Lithuanian Food and Veterinary Service

- *What does the respective evaluation system look like?*

Consumers and other businesses have the opportunity to find general information on <http://www.pvd.gov.lv> (partly in English). On this web site, the public part of the registry for food businesses is available for everyone to see. In the public part of the “food businesses” database, the results of the most recent food check-up can be viewed.

- *Are only positive results published?*

No. Food businesses are placed in one of three categories by the authorities (comparable to the system used in the US, but without the „points“):

category A – The business fully complies to all legal requirements.

category B – Violations of legal requirements have been discovered, yet without negative impact on the safety of products or processes.

category C – The business does not fulfill the legal requirements, meaning the business has to be banned from operating until the requirements are met again.

- *Has the system had a positive or negative impact?*

The evaluation system with the three categories (A, B, C) and specific critical criteria for “C”-grading are implemented through internal policies/orders. On average, 75-80% of Lithuanian businesses will qualify for category „B“, with category “C” grading given to 0.1%.

- *Which symbol is used?*

A general symbol (barometer or smiley) does not exist. There is no visible marking of the establishment, but the results from check-ups are published in the public database.

Furthermore investigated countries

BELGIUM

The smiley concept was started in 2007. Every food business in Belgium can register with the responsible authority in order to be given a smiley. The authority will then (at the expense of the food business) commission an accredited institute with an

inspection in which the measures that the respective food business has taken and implemented to ensure food safety will be assessed. The results from the inspection will then be united with the monitoring results from official check-ups by the responsible authority leading to a grade/category awarded in the smiley system based on the two individual evaluations. Thus far, the smiley system is only applied to restaurants but is intended to be used for other businesses in the food industry as well.

Monitoring authority is the Federal Agency for Safety in the Food Chain (FASNK) in Brussels

At present, the smiley symbol can only be given to producers engaged in the horeca sector, ie. restaurants, food stalls and snack bars, and in the canteen kitchen sector, ie. canteens in companies, schools, hospitals and restaurant at government service. A business interested in the smiley needs to have a routine of performing self-audits that credibly guarantee the safety of the food chain. Since 2005, the introduction of a self-auditing routine is a legal requirement for all food businesses, but in order for a business to qualify for the smiley symbol, the routine has to additionally:

- include records in a specific self-auditing book and
- be registered with an accredited certifying authority (OCI) for the respective sector.

Only positive results are published.



The "Smiley" (a sticker) is a symbol confirming that the producer has a credible self-auditing routine in place. Every smiley has a unique identification number. It is valid for three years and shall be placed visibly in the establishment.

The advantages for producers and consumers are obvious. A producer that has been awarded a smiley will benefit from the greatly reduced FASNK costs (charged yearly). He will also benefit from less frequent FASNK check-ups due to the fact that food safety hazards have been assessed and are credibly under control. And most of all, the smiley is a symbol of trust for the consumer. It guarantees food safety at a high level.

SWITZERLAND

There are plans for introducing a system for making food monitoring results visible for the general public. How this will be done is to be decided at regulation level. Consumers shall have access to a short version of the monitoring results, which is already the case in the canton of Zug.

LUXEMBOURG

Results from food monitoring are not made public.

AUSTRIA

Results from food monitoring are not made public. However, a nationwide system for quality management in official food monitoring has recently been introduced. The results are recorded using checklists and standardized forms. In order to increase transparency in results, the Federal Association for Food Supervisory and Consumer Safety (V.O.L.K.) now publishes branch-specific checklists and policies.

NETHERLANDS

A debate about food monitoring has been going on for several years now, and generally, the questions are being discussed like follow-up checks, staff training and bureaucratic solutions.

Many initiatives and ideas have been dropped, and currently, the preferred solution is a colour-coded system for food businesses that shall be published on the internet. The consumers will be able to see a business's grading in the system, where colours indicate the following:

- Red – serious problems in hygiene and self-control, hazards for the consumers
- Orange – problems as above, but with improvements ordered to be made in certain fields
- Green – the food business complies with legal requirements, no risks for consumers
- White – no sufficient data for colour grading

Various associations representing food businesses are currently trying to stop the grading from being published on the internet arguing that the results only show the conditions at the time of the check-up and moreover clash with business-internal matters. The Food Safety Agency (VWA) of the Netherlands still wants to have the system introduced but has not yet started its implementation. It is however considered certain that there will be no visible marking/symbol/award at the establishments ("scores on the doors") like in Germany

IRELAND

A "negative list" is published in the internet. The data is available for a limited time (1-3 months). Only improvement orders are published, not the results from regular checks. The evaluation is done in two systems. For primary producers, the authority in charge is the Ministry of Agriculture. For all other food businesses, checks are done by the Ministry of Environment and Hygiene. Link:

http://www.fsai.ie/enforcement/order/enf_criteria.asp

