	safe food Research
Research Administration Manual	Section: Part 1
Type of Research: Commissioned and Non-commissioned Research	Sheet No.: Page 1 of 5
Process: To be completed by safe food Specialist	Issue No.: 1.0
	Issue Date: 17/07/15
Form Type: Tender Information Document	Issued By: Director Food Science



RESEARCH TENDER CALL

TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 04-2016

Project Title:

"An investigation of the adventitious presence of four legislated food allergens in pre-packed food products"

1. Objective/Knowledge Gap

The specific objectives are:

- To select specific pre-packed food products at retail level for investigating the adventitious presence of peanut, soya, egg or gluten allergens;
- to analyse for the presence of peanut, soya, egg or gluten allergens in these products and
- to compare the levels of peanut, soya, egg or gluten allergens found in these products with the allergen information given on the product label.

2. Background


The adventitious presence of food allergens in pre-packed food products continues to present a challenge for food hypersensitive consumers on the island of Ireland (IoI). While recent legislation has ensured that accurate information on deliberately-added allergenic ingredients must be conveyed to the end user, unintentional cross-contamination and the associated *ad hoc* usage of precautionary allergen labelling is still problematic. A number of recent surveys have called into question the approach taken by the food industry in applying precautionary labelling and its reliability for the end user^{1,2,3}.

Consumers with food hypersensitivity find precautionary labelling confusing and there is some evidence to suggest that many are now ignoring precautionary labelling with potentially negative consequences for the risk management of their condition.

¹ Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Audit of Irish Food Manufacturer Allergen Controls and Labelling (May 2012). Retrieved from https://www.fsai.ie/allergens_compliance_audit_18062012.html

² Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Food Allergens & Labelling Survey (June 2011). Retrieved from https://www.fsai.ie/resources_publications.html

³ Survey of allergen advisory labelling and allergen content of UK retail pre-packed processed foods. Reading Scientific Services LTD., 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/survey-allergen-labelling-prepacked.pdf>.

	safefood Research
Research Administration Manual	Section: Part 1
Type of Research: Commissioned and Non-commissioned Research	Sheet No.: Page 2 of 5
Process: To be completed by safefood Specialist	Issue No.: 1.0
	Issue Date: 17/07/15
Form Type: Tender Information Document	Issued By: Director Food Science

The intentional substitution of non-allergenic food ingredients with allergenic counterparts is a further exacerbation of these consumers' attempts to adhere to a risk management strategy for avoiding food allergens. The globalised nature of the food chain and the impact of different drivers of change, such as economic fluctuations and climate change, has highlighted vulnerabilities that can be exploited for profit. In recent years there have been several incidences of the adulteration of pre-packed food products with cheaper ingredients including the adulteration of cumin powder with peanut and almond – a clear risk for those with peanut and nut allergies⁴. Continued vigilance on the part of the regulatory regime is essential for controlling/highlighting allergen cross-contamination and ensuring that pre-packed food products adulterated with allergenic ingredients are apprehended before they reach the market place and cause harm to the food hypersensitive consumer.

3. **Approach**

- 1) This is a short snap-shot survey to investigate the presence of specified undeclared food allergens in pre-packed food products and the levels at which these allergens may be present. The successful tenderer will work with **safefood** in deciding the most appropriate choice of food products to analyse for each of four specified food allergens – peanut, soya, egg or gluten. Sampling will occur at retail level both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.
- 2) Each pre-packed food product will be analysed for one or more of these specified allergens. A full description of the allergen ingredients and other allergen advisory information on the label, including any precautionary allergen labelling, will be made for each food product.

As guidance to applicants, applications should contain robust proposals for the type of pre packed foods to be sampled. This will be informed by previous issues with certain types of food, opportunities for economically motivated adulteration together with perspective understanding of food ingredients, food processing and traceability.

4. **Technical Specification**


- (a) Scope of research
- (b) Literature review
- (c) Qualitative and quantitative work
- (d) Analysis
- (e) Data handling and Reporting
- (f) Quality assurance

(a) Scope of the research

This project will require:

- 1) A comprehensive review of the scientific and other literature;
- 2) design and execution of a sampling plan for pre-packed food products at retail level;

⁴ FDA Consumer Advice on Products Containing Ground Cumin with Undeclared Peanuts. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/SafetyAlertsAdvisories/ucm434274.htm>

	safefood Research
Research Administration Manual	Section: Part 1
Type of Research: Commissioned and Non-commissioned Research	Sheet No.: Page 3 of 5
Process: To be completed by safefood Specialist	Issue No.: 1.0
	Issue Date: 17/07/15
Form Type: Tender Information Document	Issued By: Director Food Science

- 3) analysis of these products for one or more specified food allergens (peanut, soya, egg, gluten);
- 4) documentation of all allergen information on the label of each pre-packed food product and
- 5) a final project report summarising the findings.

(b) Literature review

The successful applicant will be expected to conduct a comprehensive review of the peer reviewed and grey scientific literature, and also media reports and any other relevant sources of information, to define:-

- 1) The problem of cross-contamination of pre-packed food products with food allergens, especially the four specified food allergens of interest in this research (peanut, soya, egg, gluten);
- 2) what is known already about incidences of adulteration of pre-packed food products with the four specified allergenic ingredients and
- 3) what pre-packed food products are at risk of contamination from one or more of the four specified food allergens of interest in this research (peanut, soya, egg, gluten). This will be used as a basis for designing the sampling plan.

(c) Qualitative and quantitative research

Ideally, 80 pre-packed food products will be selected as the basis for this investigation, representing at least 20 products for each food allergen analysis. The successful applicant will produce a sampling plan and carry out the sampling of pre-packed food products at retail level. They will also be responsible for arranging all logistics around sample preparation, transportation and eventual analysis. This will be carried out using validated analytical methods to be approved by **safefood**.

(d) Analysis


The successful applicant will generate a comprehensive laboratory report of the food allergen analyses. They will also be responsible for data interpretation and for the incorporation of all raw data into a final project report for **safefood** that will include a comprehensive discussion of the choice of food product sampled, the analytical findings, and the significance of these findings for the food hypersensitive consumer on the IoI.

(e) Data Handling and Reporting

- 1) The successful applicant will be responsible for collating all outcomes and a Final Project Report will be submitted to **safefood** on completion of the study after 7 months.
- 2) All forms, documentation and electronic files must be retained by the contractor until further notice from **safefood** in case of issues arising after the completion of the research.

(e) Quality Assurance

The successful applicant will agree the sampling plan with **safefood**.

	safefood Research
Research Administration Manual	Section: Part 1
Type of Research: Commissioned and Non-commissioned Research	Sheet No.: Page 4 of 5
Process: To be completed by safefood Specialist	Issue No.: 1.0
	Issue Date: 17/07/15
Form Type: Tender Information Document	Issued By: Director Food Science

The final project report must specify the sources of information, whether peer-reviewed/grey literature/media, or any expert consultations and correspondence, official policy material, etc.

safefood will liaise with the successful applicant throughout the course of the research to assess progress.

5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

The key deliverable from this project will be a Final Project Report to **safefood**.

This will detail:-

- 1) A comprehensive literature review including details of the sources of information;
- 2) full details of the sampling and analytical methodologies used;
- 3) a comprehensive interpretation of the analytical results and what these mean for the food hypersensitive consumer on the IoI and
- 4) any recommendations based on the research outputs including IoI-specific research gaps.

6. Evaluation of Tenders

Tender bids will be evaluated according to the quality of proposals and applicants using the following criteria:

Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables;
- ✓ Research method and facilities;
- ✓ Value for money;
- ✓ Potential for application;
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

Quality of Applicants:


- ✓ Experience in subject area;
- ✓ Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.

8. Duration of Project

Sampling and analyses of selected pre-packed food products should not exceed 6 months. After 7 months the Final Project Report should be submitted to **safefood**.

9. Tender Application Forms and Guidelines

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from www.safefood.eu. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.eu, quoting the project reference number **04-2016**.

	safefood Research
Research Administration Manual	Section: Part 1
Type of Research: Commissioned and Non-commissioned Research	Sheet No.: Page 5 of 5
Process: To be completed by safefood Specialist	Issue No.: 1.0
	Issue Date: 17/07/15
Form Type: Tender Information Document	Issued By: Director Food Science

Alternatively please contact **safefood** as per the details below.

Clodagh Flavin
Research Coordinator
safefood
7 Eastgate Avenue
Eastgate
Little Island
Co. Cork

Tel: +353 21-2304117
Fax: +353 21-2304111

The closing date for receipt of applications by **safefood** is no later than **4pm on Friday 10th June 2016.**