

## **Advice 10-2012 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on the evaluation of the document “Action limits for microbiological contaminants in food”**

This advice concerns an evaluation of the action limits of the annex of the document "Action limits for microbiological contaminants in food", as well as an assessment of the changes that were proposed by the DG Control Policy.

As for the evaluation of the action limits, the Scientific Committee makes general remarks and proposes specific amendments. First, it is emphasized that exceeding the action limits indicates a potential problem. The action limits should be considered in the context of the control program of the FASFC and must allow the FASFC to take, if exceeded, appropriate and uniform measures in the interest of public health.

The Scientific Committee recommends to use action limits for the psychrotrophic (cold-tolerant) bacterial count instead of for the mesophilic bacterial count for refrigerated products in the distribution sector. Also, it is recommended that if the action limit in the distribution of the mesophilic or psychrotrophic bacterial count is exceeded due to the growth of lactic acid bacteria, the food industry is given the possibility to show to the FASFC that this is not an indication of a low hygienic level. The Scientific Committee notes that there are scientific arguments for the action limits in the distribution for the parameters *Bacillus cereus*, yeasts/fungi and the bacterial count to apply at the end of the shelf life for refrigerated foods where microbial growth is possible. The Scientific Committee also recommends to bring certain categories under the same denominator and possibly divide them into new subcategories.

Finally, the Scientific Committee approves the changes that were proposed by the DG Control Policy. With regard to the parameter *Escherichia coli* O104, the Scientific Committee believes that it is not indicated to use separate action limits for each human pathogenic verocytotoxin-producing *E. coli* (VTEC). Therefore, the Scientific Committee proposes to apply the action limits for *E. coli* O104 for all human pathogenic VTEC strains and to include these strains in the document.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section “Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen” and “Comité scientifique/Avis”.