

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF
FOOD**

INFORMATION PAPER

**Update on outbreak of *E. Coli* O157 in South Wales and subsequent
developments**

The attached paper updates Members on the investigations and Public Inquiry linked to the outbreak of *E. coli* O157 in South Wales.

**Secretariat
June 2007**

UPDATE ON OUTBREAK OF E.COLI O157 IN SOUTH WALES AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS – MAY 2007

Background

1. An outbreak of *E.coli* O157, which resulted in over 150 cases, including one fatality, and affected 42 schools, occurred in South Wales in the period September to December 2005. In all, 28 children and five adults were treated in hospital. The outbreak was declared over on 20 December 2005.

Investigations

2. Joint investigations were carried out by the South Wales Police and a number of local authorities in the South Wales area. South Wales Police issued a statement on 27 February 2007 stating that following their detailed investigation there was insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of a conviction in respect of an offence of manslaughter. It was also concluded that a prosecution under the Health and Safety Act 1974 was not appropriate.
3. A combined prosecution for 13 food hygiene offences has been commenced by Bridgend CBC, Caerphilly CBC and Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC. A committal hearing took place on 15 March 2007 and the case was committed to trial on 16th April 2007. At that hearing the Judge determined that the next preliminary hearing shall take place on Monday 4 June at Cardiff Crown Court.

Public Inquiry

4. The National Assembly for Wales has established the Inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005 under the chairmanship of Professor Hugh Pennington with the following terms of reference:

“To inquire into the circumstances that led to the outbreak of the *E.coli* O157 investigation in South Wales in September 2005 and into the handling of the outbreak; and to consider the implications for the future and make recommendations accordingly.”

5. The Inquiry is independent of the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and any other body or organisation. A preliminary hearing was held on 27 June 2006 and the timing of further stages in the Inquiry will be published in due course, including its oral hearings and the appearance of witnesses. FSA Wales is liaising closely with the Inquiry team over the input required from the Agency.