Understanding the food regulatory lifecycle

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Food is a necessity. Many consumers do not give much thought to how their food is made. Quite rightly they expect food they buy to be safe, wholesome and accurately described. In order to fulfil that expectation the production of food is heavily regulated at all stages from development to production and manufacture through to distribution and supply to consumers.

Some consumers demand very specific information about their food and how it is made. This may be from an ethical perspective regarding the humane treatment of animals and the non-exploitation of food workers. Other consumers may have more personal requirements for example protecting against allergies, intolerances or other food related conditions or to fulfil lifestyle choices such as not eating meat and products of animal origin. This presentation will consider some of the key regulatory issues at EU and domestic levels which are aimed at providing all consumers with the information they require to make informed choices about their food. The presentation will follow the regulatory lifecycle from ‘farm to fork’ and will start by considering how animal welfare is protected and promoted. It will then look at traceability which is particularly important for providing accurate information to consumers and protecting the integrity of the food chain. There will then be a discussion regarding how regulation dictates what goes into our food and how it is made to ensure that it is safe and wholesome. The presentation will then look at some specific consumer-facing issues such as the provision of food information and the types of claims that can be made about food. Consideration will be given to measures designed to reduce food waste and strengthen the sustainability of the food system. Finally we will look at some issues around the enforcement of food law and how effective enforcement is essential to providing a level playing field for compliant businesses, deterring non-compliant businesses and promoting the integrity of the food chain amongst consumers.

Biography

Ian Thomas was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1993 and he is a barrister in the Chambers of Stephen Hockman QC, 6 Pump Court, Temple. London. He is also a qualified lawyer in the Republic of Ireland. He is a Specialist Regulatory Lawyer practising in the law relating to food and beverages. He has experience of a wide range of food law matters including, food safety and hygiene, food information and claims, borderline products, food supplements, traceability, withdrawals and recalls, animal welfare and cattle identification. A large part of his practice involves the interpretation and application of EU law. He is a regular speaker at food law and regulatory events and he is an experienced legal trainer. In addition to his food law work, his practice includes other regulatory law matters such as health and safety, trading standards and consumer protection, licensing and environmental. He is authorised by the Bar Standards Board to receive instructions directly from clients as part of the public access scheme. He is a Member of the Society of Food Hygiene and Technology, the Food Law Group, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health and the Health and Safety Lawyers’ Association.

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