

Information for Food Businesses using Frozen Vegetables

Communication on how to store, defrost, prepare and use frozen vegetables safely

In November 2020, Member States endorsed PROFEL's Hygiene guidelines for the control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in the production of quick-frozen vegetables.¹

The guidelines, prepared by the European frozen vegetable sector in consultation with the European Commission and Member States, are designed to ensure consumer safety, by:

1

Delivering best-practice guidance to vegetable freezing companies on how to control *Listeria monocytogenes* in the production of quick-frozen vegetables

2

Providing B2B and B2C customers with information on how frozen vegetables should be stored, defrosted and prepared

Challenge tests performed on different frozen vegetables, demonstrated growth of *Listeria monocytogenes* during defrosting and storage in a refrigerator. Frozen vegetables should therefore be regarded as Non Ready-To-Eat (nRTE). This position is supported by an EFSA Scientific Opinion published in April 2020².

The guidelines recommend the following communication on, for example, product labels, technical sheets, websites, social media, recipes, QR codes, etc.:

Advice for frozen sweetcorn and sweet potatoes:

Need of cooking (product nRTE) and cooking instructions (e.g. mode, time and temperature)

'Cook from frozen' (no prior defrosting and refrigerated storage recommended/no consumption without thorough heating i.e. at least 2 minutes above 70°C)

Advice for all other frozen vegetables:

Need of cooking (product nRTE) and cooking instructions (e.g. mode, time and temperature)

Thawing instructions (if required)

Defrosting and refrigerated storage to be restricted for up to maximum 24h at 5-7°C

PROFEL strongly advises all B2B customers to take the above advice into consideration when organising their own activities.

An English version of the guidelines will be published on the European Commission's DG Health & Food Safety website, providing access to Food Business Operators (FBOs), National Competent Authorities and other stakeholders, including consumers and consumer groups. The guidelines will be translated into other European languages during the next few months, and these will be added to the Commission's website.

These "Listeria Guidelines" are not a regulatory instrument. Implementation will be a roll-out process, and companies will start to adapt their labelling practices. It is anticipated that Competent Authorities will expect FBOs to demonstrate progress in the implementation of the guidelines.

➔ [Link to PROFEL's Hygiene guidelines](#)

¹ The guidelines are for frozen vegetables and do not cover frozen herbs or fruit

² The public health risk posed by *Listeria monocytogenes* in frozen blanched vegetables <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6092>



European Association of
Fruit and Vegetable Processors

Avenue des Nerviens 9-31, 1040 Brussels
+32 2 500 87 59 profel@profel-europe.eu
www.profel-europe.eu