

# M&S

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## M&S' FIVE POINT PLAN

LEADING THE INDUSTRY IN TACKLING THE CAMPYLOBACTER CHALLENGE  
FEBRUARY 2016

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### THE CAMPYLOBACTER CHALLENGE

It's a year since our first Five Point Plan case-study and Campylobacter remains a significant challenge to the industry and a priority for the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Campylobacter in chicken hit the headlines late in 2014. Its presence in poultry was not news itself, the news was that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had made it its number one priority.

Throughout 2015 the FSA challenged retailers to take action and reduce cases of the naturally occurring bacteria.

It also ran a number of public engagement programmes, reminding consumers to follow on-pack cooking, handling and storage advice to help them avoid food poisoning.



M&S has been making it even easier for our customers for many years with initiatives such

as leak proof packaging and labelling every chicken with a specific cooking time based on its weight. But in November 2014 we had to innovate to produce a step-change in Campylobacter presence in M&S chickens. The M&S team took on the challenge to create a ground breaking programme that would not only protect customers, but significantly reduce levels of Campylobacter in the supply chain. And throughout 2015 we continued innovating, updating the plan as we analysed results and trialled new interventions.

### THE PLAN

In November 2014 our team joined with our biggest poultry supplier – 2 Sisters Food Group – and began to research and test ways to make an impact. From work we'd undertaken over the past few years we knew there was not one, silver bullet intervention that would reduce Campylobacter.

Action had to be taken throughout the supply chain, from farms right through to customer homes.

By the end of September 2014, we were ready to trial five initiatives and by November we could see that they were working as an integrated, farm

to customer home approach. The decision was taken to roll the plan out across the M&S / 2 Sisters supply chain and the Five Point Plan was born.

Throughout 2015 we didn't stop learning and looking to improve the plan. We now have more than a year's data that shows that the interventions are working. We know, for example, that zero thinning has had a significant impact in reducing Campylobacter levels on farms, as has paying farmers a bonus for producing chickens on Campylobacter-free farms and introducing a feed supplement. Still having a positive impact, but needing

more analysis and development are the interventions during the processing phase. So this year (December 2015 onwards) we have added a second heat treatment to chickens (known as Secondary Scalding in the industry) and removed the neck skin from processed birds as this is where Campylobacter is most likely to be found. This is in addition to Blast Surface Chilling which has been part of the plan from the beginning.



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## 1. FARMER BONUS



A bonus scheme for farmers that produce Campylobacter free chickens on their farms. This is intended to stop the spread of the bacteria by incentivising farmers to strictly control access to the farms and chicken houses.

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## 2. ZERO THINNING



M&S farmers have stopped part harvesting chickens from flocks through the growing cycle, known in the industry as operating a 'zero thinning' policy. This is helping maintain farm biosecurity throughout the life of the chicken, reducing levels of Campylobacter and delivering animal welfare benefits.

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## 3. FEED SUPPLEMENT



M&S farmers are now adding a supplement into the diet which improves the bird's digestive health, limiting the ability for Campylobacter to multiply in the stomach.

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## 4. PROCESSING INTERVENTIONS



We have invested in new technology that chills (known as Blast Surface Chilling) and heats (known as Secondary Scalding) the chickens. Low and high temperatures help to reduce Campylobacter. We are also removing the neck skin from processed chickens as this is the part of the bird most likely to contain Campylobacter.

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## 5. PACKAGING UPGRADES



We have made the front of pack labelling on M&S whole chickens even clearer for customers, adding a large, front-of-pack label that says 'Washed and ready to cook'. We have also introduced a 'double bag' which means M&S chickens can be placed straight into the oven in a bag. The upgrades make it easier for our customers by reducing the risk of cross contamination in the kitchen.

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# THE RESULTS

The Five Point Plan is an integrated approach that ensures the highest possible standards, incorporates new technology and makes it as easy as possible for our customers. Test results over the past five months show that we have continued to reduce Campylobacter levels and we are now significantly below the FSA's 2015 target of fewer than one-in-ten chickens having the highest levels of the bug. The average over the past five months is 7% of M&S chickens containing the highest levels of Campylobacter. This compares to 9% in the same period last year (September 2014 to January 2015) and

an average of 15% for the 12 months before the plan was introduced (November 2013 to October 2014). The number of Campylobacter-free chickens has also significantly improved, 63% (September 15 to January 16) versus 59% (September 14 to January 15) and 44% (November 2013 to October 2014).

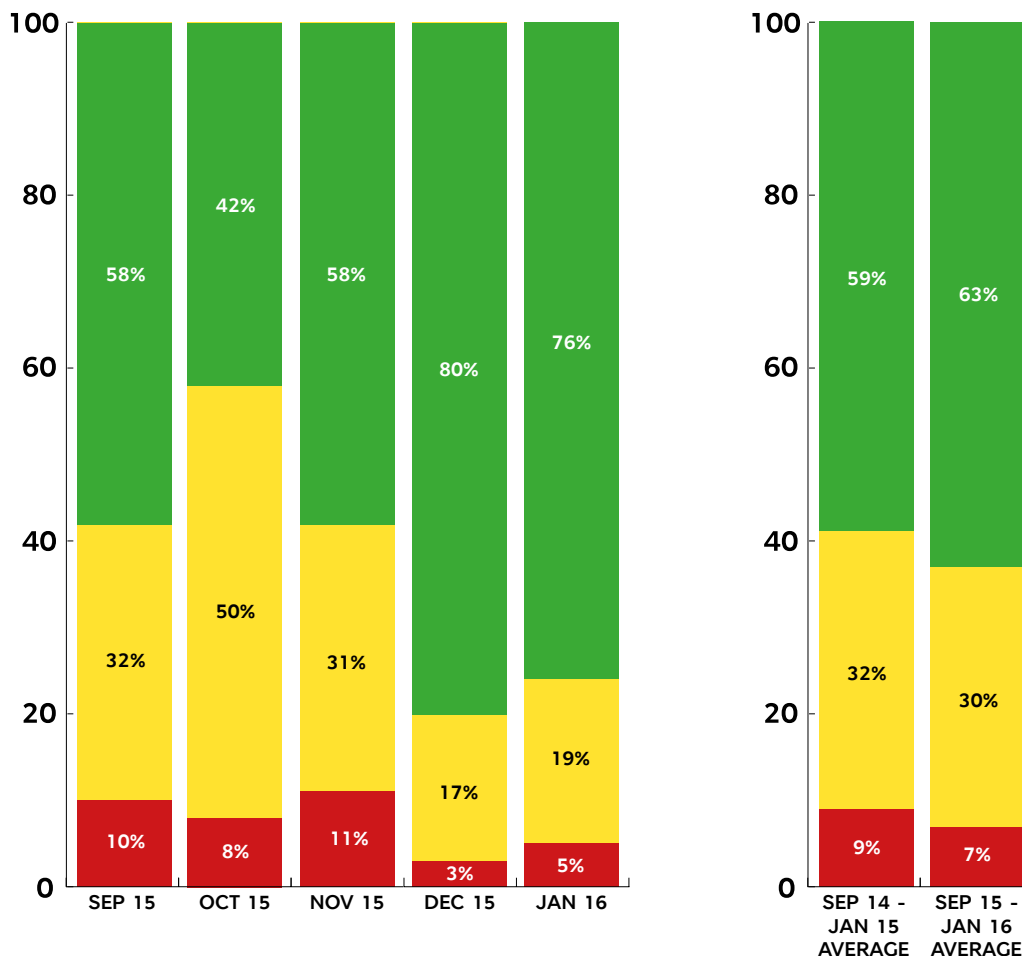
The Five Point Plan has the backing of the FSA. Its policy team has been kept informed throughout the process and we've shared results with them. Steve Wearne, the FSA's Director of Policy, said:

**"M&S was the first retailer to**

**commit to a detailed public plan to reduce Campylobacter at all stages of the food chain. As we know there's no one solution to getting rid of Campylobacter but we fully support M&S's determined and ongoing efforts to reduce the levels on chicken."**

The Five Point Plan is a transformational plan that is leading the industry. We take food safety extremely seriously and are committed to monitoring and further improving it. Acting with integrity in our supply chain is a business priority, it's one of the values that makes M&S food different.

## M&S CAMPYLOBACTER RESULTS SEPTEMBER 2015 TO JANUARY 2016



Methodology – based on a total sample of 500 M&S chickens (Sep 15 - Jan 16). The tests are carried out by FSA approved independent testing laboratory Campden BRI.

The chickens tested are taken at random from the shelves of M&S stores across the UK.

