

## **MINUTES OF THE OPEN BOARD MEETING, 12 OCTOBER 2006, THE BELFAST HILTON HOTEL, BELFAST**

### **OPEN SESSION, 09:00– 11:50**

#### Present:

Dame Deirdre Hutton, Chair  
Julia Unwin, Deputy Chair  
Chrissie Dunn  
Maureen Edmondson  
Valerie Howarth  
Graeme Millar  
Michael Parker  
Christopher Pomfret  
Bill Reilly  
Ian Reynolds  
Sandra Walbran  
Nelisha Wickremasinghe

#### Officials attending:

John Harwood, Chief Executive  
Andrew Wadge, Chief Scientist  
Morris McAllister (item 2.2)  
Terrence Collis, Director of Communications (item 3.1)  
Jaswinder Bangar, Head of Consumer Branch, Communications Division (item 3.1)  
Judith Hilton, Head of Microbiological Safety Division (item 4.1)  
David Statham, Director of Enforcement (item 4.2)  
Keith Gregory, Board Secretariat  
Claire Voller, Board Secretariat

### **Chair's Introduction**

1. The Chair welcomed all observers attending the open Board meeting.
2. The Chair invited the Deputy Chair to introduce the meeting. The Deputy Chair reminded those attending and watching the webcast that the FSA Board discussed policy issues at its open meetings as part of its commitment to transparency and accessibility. There would be an opportunity for questions immediately after the formal session and those watching the webcast could also send questions to the Board.
3. The Deputy Chair informed those watching by webcast that the FSA would be trialling live and on-demand versions in different formats during this meeting and the next meeting. It would therefore be helpful if webcast and on-demand users

could take the time to complete the online feedback forms to allow the FSA to gauge their preference.

4. The Chair noted that apologies had been received from Richard Ayre.
5. The Chair reminded Board members of their obligation to declare interests before discussion of relevant items.

## **Item 1 - Minutes and Oral reports**

### **1.1 - Minutes of Open Meeting on 21 September 2006, Congress Centre, London**

*(FSA 06/010/01)*

6. The Board agreed the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September as an accurate record.

### **1.2 - Actions Arising**

*(FSA 06/10/02)*

7. In considering the table of follow up actions, the Chair informed Board members that the following corrections would be made:
  - *Index 21Sep06/O/303*: the second action point would be reworded to “Consider commissioning research to investigate consumer behaviour”, and the reference in the third action point would be corrected to “(para 50 bullet 5)”.

### **1.3 - Chair’s Report**

#### Appointment of Chief Executive

8. The Chair informed Board members that, with the agreement of the Civil Service Commission, John Harwood had been appointed as Chief Executive for a period of up to two years from the date of his original appointment, which would be of great benefit to the FSA.

#### Visit to Wales

9. The Chair informed Board members that she and the interim Chair of the WFAC<sup>1</sup> had visited Wales, and met with Rhodri Glyn Thomas, the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee. They had also attended a dinner with Dr Brian Gibbons, Minister for Health and Social Services and other Welsh Assembly Members, including the Liberal Democrat Health Spokesperson, Jenny Randerson and Rhodri Glyn Thomas. The visit had been very useful in cementing relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Food Advisory Committee

The interim Chair of WFAC added that it had been particularly useful to meet with spokespeople from the three main political parties.

### Meetings at Party Conferences

10. The Chair informed Board members that she and the Deputy Chair had represented the FSA at the three main UK party political conferences. The Chair had attended the Labour and Conservative party conferences, and the Deputy Chair had attended the Liberal Democrat party conference. They had both spoken at fringe meetings organised by the British Heart Foundation and Diabetes UK, and jointly held two dinners and a breakfast organised by the FSA and the National Heart Forum. The fringe meetings had been well attended and presented opportunities to talk about key issues, such as signpost labelling.

### Ofcom Consultation on Further Restrictions on the Promotion of Food to Children

11. The Chair informed Board members that Ofcom intended to publish its response to the consultation exercise on the advertising of foods to children in November.

## **Item 2 - Reports from the Executive**

### **2.1 - Chief Executive's Report**

*(FSA 06/10/03)*

12. The Chief Executive referred Board members to his written report. There were no questions from Board members on this report. In addition, the Chief Executive updated Board Members on the following issues.

### Malicious contamination of Kingsmill Bread

13. The Chief Executive invited the Director of Enforcement to the table to update the Board on latest developments regarding the malicious contamination of Kingsmill Bread.

14. The Director of Enforcement informed Board members that Allied Bakeries in Orpington had reported three incidents to the police of suspected malicious contamination of Kingsmill bread. The contaminants reported were two pieces of glass found in separate loaves and a needle found in another loaf.

15. The Director of Enforcement reminded Board Members that incidents of this nature had affected the bakery for some time, and that the last complaints had been reported to them in April. Since then, it had been hoped that the introduction of tamper-evident packaging on the bread had actually resolved this problem. However, the latest incidents, which all appeared to have arisen on 6 October, involved contaminants placed just under the wrapping, indicating the contamination taking place after the bread had been produced. The FSA had

been notified by the police, who were also involved in the investigation of these complaints. The FSA was urgently discussing with the police and with Allied Bakeries, the advice that should be provided to consumers.

16. One Board member expressed concern that Allied Bakeries had not informed the FSA directly of these latest incidents. The Director of Enforcement agreed that the company had a legal duty to notify the local authorities, but had failed to do so, and hence the local authorities had been unable to pass any information to the Agency. The Chair asked that the company be reminded that it had a legal obligation to report all such incidents, and to ensure that any additional information was passed on to ensure the FSA could provide appropriate advice to consumers.

#### Health Challenge England – next steps for Choosing Health

17. One Board member asked how the FSA was responding to recent media coverage of the Department of Health's *Health Challenge England - next steps for Choosing Health*, and the information on eating habits profiled against local populations. In particular, would the FSA be including this new regional information in its dietary health work?
18. The Chief Executive confirmed that the FSA had been working closely with the Department of Health in respect of the serious dietary problems that had been identified in certain parts of the population. The FSA's work on signpost labelling would enable healthier choices for a better diet. The FSA had continued to affirm its interest in healthy eating and nutrition to the Department of Health.

#### Relations with the European Commission

19. The Chief Executive updated Board members on developments relating to the FVO<sup>2</sup> inspection in the summer of a Lancashire plant owned by the company Bowland Dairy Products, which processed milk into cheese curd. The Commission had indicated that it was unhappy with some of the processes that were taking place at the plant. In the light of this, the FSA and the relevant local authorities had halted some of the processes and issued a RASFF<sup>3</sup> alert requiring certain products to be withdrawn from sale. The FSA had also required changes in some of the other processes that were taking place at the plant.
20. As a result of a further visit by the FVO in September, the Commission had put forward a decision to SCoFCAH<sup>4</sup> to halt all processes at Bowland. It was difficult at this stage to provide further information, as the FVO report had not yet been made available to the FSA. The issues concerned were highly technical, and the

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<sup>2</sup> Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission

<sup>3</sup> Rapid Alert System for Feed and Food

<sup>4</sup> Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health

Chief Scientist was at the table so that Board members could ask for further detail.

21. The Chief Executive emphasised that the European Commission and the FSA agreed on the fundamental principles of food safety, and that food unfit for human consumption should be prevented from entering the food chain. The differing views related to the technical aspects of how the testing methods were employed and the way the UK, and perhaps other European countries, used the results to make judgements. The FSA believed that it was necessary for expert discussions to agree a common regime and protocol for testing these types of products across the EU.

22. The Chief Executive would keep Board members informed of developments.

## **2.2 - Report from the Director of FSA Northern Ireland**

23. The Chair welcomed the Director of FSA Northern Ireland to the table, and invited him to present his report to the Board.

24. The Director of FSA NI gave a presentation to Board members covering the following points:

- NI had a population of 1.724m, which was one of Europe's youngest populations. The unemployment rate was relatively low at 4.1% compared to the UK average of 5.1% which was tempered by a very low average wage.
- the main players in food control in NI were FSA NI, DARD<sup>5</sup> (including Veterinary Public Health Unit and the Quality Assurance Branch) and 26 district councils with laboratory services provided by the Public Health Laboratories, AFBI and the single Public Analyst.
- the political landscape was complex. In the absence of the NI Assembly, the FSA NI was working with NI Office Ministers. There were currently positive signs that the NI Assembly would return. This would place major additional resource burdens on FSA NI, and highlight political sensitivities over all island institutions including the FSPB.
- there were 342,000 pupils in NI schools. The proportion of these entitled to free school meals were 19.6% in primary schools, 27.5% in secondary (non-grammar) and 6.6% in grammar schools.
- it was particularly worrying that more children were living in poverty in NI compared to any other part of the UK. 20% of children did not have breakfast

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

every day, even at weekends. Only 1 in 10 children were eating the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.

- on diet and health, 250,000 people in NI were clinically obese, and this had increased by 50% in the last decade. Obesity was estimated to cause 450 deaths each year, leading to the loss of 260,000 working days per annum and costing the NI economy approximately £500m. 1 in 4 deaths were due to heart disease; 1 in 5 deaths due to coronary heart disease and 1 in 10 deaths due to stroke.
- there was a high dependency on employment in the public sector which accounted for 63% of the economy, compared to 43% in the UK. Efforts were being made to decrease this dependency and boost private sector employment.
- agriculture was two and a half times more important to the NI economy than it was to the UK economy. In 2005, agriculture's contribution to the NI economy fell by 40%. There were around 17,000 food businesses, which included just over 10,000 restaurants/caterers.
- NI was the only part of the UK which had a land frontier with another EU member state. A number of bodies had been appointed under the Good Friday Agreement including FSPB<sup>6</sup> whose remit covered the whole of the island and was responsible for, *inter alia* food safety promotion. The FSA NI with FSPB worked hard to make sure that overlaps in activities were minimised and that resources were targeted effectively.
- the Review of Public Administration (RPA) aimed to rationalise public services and achieve efficiencies. One key proposal was to reduce the number of local councils from 26 to 7. The FSA NI would need to foster relationships with the new councils and other relevant public bodies to ensure that consumer protection was a priority.
- the role of the FSA NI includes advising Ministers on food safety and standards issues, and monitoring and auditing the food enforcement activities of District Councils and DARD.
- FSA NI had a complement of 35 staff, and delivered the full range of FSA functions. FSA NI's budget for 2006/07 was £11m which consisted of £7.2m for meat hygiene, £2.1m for direct running costs, £1.3m for District Council Food Law enforcement, leaving only 0.4m for all other programmes.

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<sup>6</sup> Food Safety Promotion Board

- some key achievements of FSA NI had been keeping pace with GB despite very limited resources, and the public perceiving the FSA as the second most reliable source of information in a food scare, after their GP.
- priorities for the future included establishing relationships with the new administration when the Assembly returned, auditing enforcers, work on the food and nutrition strategy and the relationship with DARD.

25. The Chair congratulated the FSA NI Director on the excellent pack that had been produced to encourage students to eat healthily<sup>7</sup>. This would be a useful pack to roll out to the rest of the UK. The Director of FSA NI responded that his team had worked hard to develop the pack and he expressed his gratitude and that of his staff for the support provided by the FSA HQ teams on Communications and Consumer and Dietary Health to produce the student pack. Although this was badged as a NI product, it was being used as a pilot which, if successful, could well be rolled out to good effect in the rest of the UK.

26. Board members raised the following points and questions during the discussion:

- there was concern that the reduction from 26 to 7 councils under the RPA could adversely affect resources for food safety due to other competing priorities e.g. transport and planning taking precedence;
- further information was requested on the mechanisms used by the FSA NI for cross-border working;
- what was the level of internet access in NI for use in conveying advice and information to consumers?;
- how did the FSA NI engage with consumers in poorer areas where there was high unemployment?

27. In response, the Director of FSA NI confirmed that the RPA would bring benefits in respect of economies of scale, and would allow environmental health specialism to develop in each of the District Councils. It was not possible for FSA NI to make guarantees on competing pressures on resources in District Councils. However, FSA NI would keep in close contact with councils to stress the importance of food and health concerns being appropriately prioritised. On cross-border working, FSA NI met regularly with the FSPB and FSAI<sup>8</sup> at official and Chair level, to discuss forward business plans. They also jointly developed food hygiene campaigns and literature, carried out joint training on enforcement issues relating to imported food and food incidents. Another example of cross-

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<sup>7</sup> The “Fresher Food” guide: a student survival pack on diet and nutrition for first-year students which was produced jointly by the FSA NI and the University of Ulster

<sup>8</sup> Food Safety Authority of Ireland

border working was the recent NI Safe Catering HACCP<sup>9</sup> pack, which the FSAI had adopted in the Republic.

28. The Director of FSA NI agreed that engaging with consumers in areas of high poverty was challenging as was reducing dependency on the public sector. There were moves to boost private sector employment e.g. call centres, and the FSA NI worked directly with the community and peer groups to provide them with the skills and capacity to help themselves, rather than relying solely on conveying messages by the internet.
29. The Chair thanked the Director of FSA NI for his presentation and recognised the hard work that FSA NI was undertaking. It would be useful to consider how successful approaches used by FSA NI could be transposed to the rest of the UK. The Chair asked for the Director of FSA NI to keep the Board informed of developments on the RPA including potential risks, and to include this in his next report to the Board.

### **Item 3 - Discussion Items**

#### **3.1 - Consumer Engagement Model**

*(Paper FSA 06/10/04)*

30. The Chair welcomed Terrence Collis (Director of Communications) and Jaswinder Bangar (Head of Consumer Branch, Communications Division) to the table to introduce this paper and answer questions.
31. The Director of Communications informed Board members that consumer engagement was a highly complex and controversial issue. It was vital to the FSA to develop a clear knowledge of consumers' views which would drive policy development. The paper proposed considering the model in three parts:
- direct engagement with individual consumers;
  - engagement with consumer stakeholder groups; and
  - engagement with 'hard to reach/hard to hear' groups.

There had been considerable consultation on these proposals, including with colleagues in the FSA, consumer stakeholder groups, other government departments and regulators and think tanks such as Demos.

32. The Director of Communications informed Board members that the consumer engagement strategy would be made up of the following key principles:
- the setting up of consumer panels as a mechanism to facilitate dialogues with individual consumer(table 1);

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<sup>9</sup> Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point

- the appointment of a Head of External Affairs to provide a single point of contact for stakeholders;
- further work to establish who the 'hard to reach/hear' groups were, including how best to engage them on an issue-by-issue basis;
- a quality assurance process to ensure engagement work was robust, included independent challenge and was fit for purpose on a UK wide basis. This audit mechanism would take the form of an Advisory Committee on Consumer Engagement. It was proposed that the Committee should be chaired by an independent member e.g. with a Civic society brief, and would report to the Board twice a year;
- in collaboration with the Chief Scientist, a Social Sciences Research Committee would be set up in addition to the other 9 independent scientific committees.

33. The Deputy Chair reminded Board members of the background relating to consumer engagement. Consumer engagement was essential to how the FSA delivered its mission, and improving it was a long-standing issue. The Board had decided in December 2005 to discontinue the Consumer Committee, and replace this with a more effective and innovative approach. This was not a straightforward task and it was important to recognise that the proposals under consideration here were the start of a journey. The aim of a new strategy for consumer engagement should be to provide better links with consumers across the UK and with the civil society, e.g. children's charities, health NGOs<sup>10</sup> and community groups. It should also provide an assurance process for Board members.

34. Board members raised the following points during the discussion:

- there was general agreement to the principles set out in the paper on the basis that this was only the start of the process;
- there was some uncertainty expressed as to what the bigger picture was in terms of consumer engagement, and that the model suggested might be too restrictive;
- more research was needed including trend analysis with key stakeholders and specific research on key topics e.g. folic acid;
- as this was an evolving process, there needed to be a way of gauging and measuring progress to facilitate change. The FSA should find a way of plugging into big research studies to understand consumer trends;

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<sup>10</sup> non-governmental organisations

- there were some reservations expressed about the appointment of a Head of External Affairs, as other FSA staff should have contact with stakeholders. Better use also needed to be made of using the Board's skills in engaging with consumer groups;
- it was agreed critical to have the assurance framework, which as well as assisting the Board, would also help public perception of the FSA's work. The assurance framework should be prepared to challenge and ask difficult questions;
- it was important to have a Social Sciences Committee, to provide the Board with equivalent assurance and advice to that provided by other scientific committees. It would be useful to factor into the Social Sciences Committee any areas of improvement that had been identified for the scientific committees;
- the consumer panels should also provide the opportunity for young people (13 - 18 year olds) to participate;
- the consumers panels should provide the ability to understand and interpret information from the public;
- "Citizens' Forums on Food" was proposed a more suitable name for the consumer panels;
- further details were requested in respect of the resource implications set out in paragraph 38, in particular whether this included the cost of the appointment of a Head of External Affairs;
- there was enthusiasm for the ideas set out in the Demos paper, which provided a basis for further development. In particular, it was pleasing that this acknowledged the need for "emotionally-intelligent" expertise;
- the Demos paper stated that "a real dialogue requires empathy, which means engaging with people on their own terms", and there had been helpful work by the FSA on engaging with local communities (paragraph 4 of the paper). There was concern that the committees proposed would not allow direct engagement with local communities particularly in deprived areas;
- the FSA should be an organisation that was learning and adapting its approach. The proposals relating to the "hard to reach/hear" groups needed to be stronger. This was not about increasing the volume of messages, but changing the language to ensure the visibility of messages was increased in communities. The FSA had a responsibility to know who these groups were,

and it should act on a risk-based approach. It was not acceptable to use the term “hard to hear” groups;

- the internet forum on the GM debate, had proved to be a useful tool for engaging consumers and gathering views;

35. The Director of Communications responded that his marketing team already commissioned research on consumer behaviour which would be fed into the consumer engagement process. The FSA also carried out other research such as the consumer survey tracker. It was not intended that the proposed Head of External Affairs would have sole contact with external stakeholders, but would be responsible for co-ordinating and managing these relationships, and ensuring transparency. The total resource required for the consumer engagement model was already budgeted for and was not new money. The Chair clarified that both of these aspects were decisions for the Executive.

36. The Chief Scientist confirmed that it would not be appropriate to adopt precisely the same model used for the existing scientific committees, given that social sciences was a much broader discipline, and thought would be given to the most appropriate way of setting up this new Committee.

37. The Chair agreed that the Consumer panels should be called Citizens’ Forums for Food. The Director of Communications confirmed that these forums would be evolving and would provide useful spin-offs. The model proposed was not a static process but provided a starting point that could be adapted. Further thought would be given on how to include young people in the process, which was currently served by the Schools’ Councils.

38. In summary, the Chair noted that the Board had agreed the broad principles of the model for consumer engagement, subject to:

- this process being set by individuals and not the FSA, to enable a proper dialogue that empowered consumers;
- more emphasis being placed on trend analysis research work, and the need for this to be carried out on a UK-wide basis;
- the setting up of the Social Science Committee should take into account the impact and lessons learnt from the other scientific committees;
- the assurance process incorporating real challenge and difficult debates;
- the need to ensure the engagement processes used were properly evaluated to ensure they were helping consumers;

39. The Chair noted that a progress report should be provided to the Board in two years' time. In the meantime, the Board should be provided with update reports every six months.

**Action: Terrence Collis**

#### **Item 4 - Progress Reports**

##### **4.1 - Foodborne Disease: Final Report of the 2001/2006 Target and Report on Progress to Deliver the 2005/2010 Campylobacter Target**

*(Paper PRO 06/10/01)*

[Prior to discussion of this item, Bill Reilly declared an interest as being involved in the provision of data from Scotland. The Chair did not consider this to be a material conflict of interest, and agreed that Bill Reilly should participate in the discussion of this issue.]

40. The Chair welcomed Judith Hilton, Head of Microbiological Safety Division, to the table to answer questions on this paper, which provided a final report on reduction in foodborne disease in the UK over the period 2001-2005. The Foodborne Disease Strategy (FDS) had been developed to deliver the FSA's 2001 Service Delivery Agreement target to reduce the incidence of foodborne disease by 20% over 5 years by 2006. The Strategy aimed to secure further reductions in foodborne disease through delivery of targets in the Strategic Plan, which was due to be discussed at the December open Board meeting. The paper also reported on recent activities in foodborne disease work
41. The headline result for the FDS was a reduction in the incidence of foodborne disease by 19.2%. The results had been based on monitoring the number of laboratory reported cases for 5 key pathogens (Annex 1). Data for the period 2000 - 2005 and an assessment on the severity of diseases had indicated that increased effort needed to be targeted at reducing *Campylobacter*, *E. coli* O157 and *Listeria* (Annex 2).
42. Recent FDS activities (Annex 3) included working with farmers to encourage good hygiene practice in animal production and the disposal of waste products; promoting biosecurity on poultry farms to reduce *Campylobacter*, and the Safer Food Better Business (SFFB), Cooksafe and Safe Catering packs in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland developed for SMEs<sup>11</sup>. Previous food hygiene campaigns from December 2005 and June/July 2006 had been evaluated and demonstrated high public awareness, and the findings from these had been used to develop the new 4Cs<sup>12</sup> strategy.

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<sup>11</sup> small and medium enterprises

<sup>12</sup> FSA's 4Cs Hygiene Strategy: Cooking, Chilling, Cleaning and avoiding Cross-contamination to promote safe preparation and handling of food

43. There were various caveats to bear in mind when considering the validity of the data (Annex 4). The FDS data only monitored cases in numerical terms, and did not take into account the severity or impact of the disease. However the risk matrix model, based on HPA<sup>13</sup> work to assess disease severity, had shown that the estimated number of foodborne disease cases and hospitalisation had reduced compared with the 2000 baseline, though the number of deaths had remained constant. It was important to acknowledge that HPA estimates had decreased due to a sharp reduction in cases of infectious intestinal diseases reported to the RCGP<sup>14</sup> scheme, and this could be due to other factors such as the use of NHS Direct. The cost and staff effort to the FSA for the FDS work was provided in Annex 5. It was more difficult to assess accurately costs to the industry than to the FSA, though the estimated economic savings resulting from the decline of foodborne disease was around £750m over 2001-2005.

44. Following public consultation based on results from national retail chicken surveys, further work was being taken forward by the FSA to reduce the contamination of *Campylobacter* in chickens from 70% to 35% by 2010. An interim survey would take place next year, and the strategy would be revised in the light of this as appropriate.

45. Board members raised the following points and questions during the discussion:

- it was important to improve the assessment of costs and impact of foodborne disease, and to extend this to cover Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide a fuller picture across the UK;
- it would be helpful to take account of the sale of medicines from pharmacies which might be an indicator of the incidence of infectious intestinal disease;
- it was particularly worrying that the number of *Listeria* cases had doubled since 2002;
- some of the data showed fluctuations in the cases of foodborne diseases relating to one-off outbreaks. It was important to have a clear assessment of data that was not distorted by these anomalies. It would also be useful to understand the measures that could be used to reduce the severity of foodborne diseases.
- were campaigns to promote good hygiene practices in the industry being targeted at particular areas?
- would the increased measures on the industry increase costs for consumers?

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<sup>13</sup> Health Protection Agency

<sup>14</sup> The Royal College of General Practitioners' Weekly returns

- it would be useful to have a broader view of what activities had been useful, and what future areas would need to be targeted in future years, including imported food and the transmission of viruses.
- overall, reducing foodborne illnesses by 19.2% had been a significant achievement due to the FSA's effective work with the industry, which was praised by Board members.

46. In response, Judith Hilton agreed that data used to estimate economic costs needed to be developed further. It did not include Scotland and Northern Ireland at present as it was based on results obtained from a study on infectious intestinal diseases collected in 1993 and 1994 in England. A new study was being set up to cover the whole of the UK, but this would be complex to organise and would take three years to complete. On the increase in *Listeria* cases, the HPA had investigated these but had not established a link. The HPA were continuing to monitor and study new cases.

47. The impact and effects of diseases depended on the pathogens involved. Most cases of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* were sporadic and outbreaks therefore had little impact on trends. On the other hand, outbreaks of *E. coli* O157 tended to have a major effect on incidence because of the relatively small number of sporadic case. The EU Directive on Zoonoses required measures to be taken to reduce the incidence of *Salmonella* in pigs and poultry. From this, targets had been put in place which should help to reduce the incidence of foodborne diseases e.g. all table eggs had to come from *Salmonella* free flocks by 2010. The situation for *Campylobacter* was less clear. Defra<sup>15</sup> planned to carry out a flock survey to provide a baseline which could be compared with the incidence of contamination in poultry meat and it was likely that flock prevalence targets would eventually be set at EU level. Judith Hilton confirmed that the new poultry meat survey would include frozen meat and portions as well as chilled whole carcasses, to reflect the market share of each type of meat.

48. Judith Hilton confirmed that the promotion of good hygiene practice and other recent activities to reduce the incidence of foodborne diseases, would not have adverse cost implications for consumers. The industry should already be following these controls and best practice procedures. The FSA had been doing some interesting work with poultry farms to brief them on the importance of biosecurity and how this prevented the spread of diseases such as avian 'flu. Statistics on foodborne illnesses derived from imported food were more difficult to assess as they were not covered by UK or EU hygiene production controls. The FSA would try to assess the impact of imported foods in future work. Another aspect that needed to be addressed was ensuring there were better methods for picking up viruses. Further account would also be taken to capture cases of foodborne disease cases which were not referred to GPs, including NHS Direct

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<sup>15</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

data. The sale of stomach upset medicines in pharmacies might also be considered in this context.

49. The Chair thanked Judith Hilton on behalf of the Board for her useful report, which had set into context the difficulties concerning the validity of data which would need to be borne in mind in future activities. The Chair congratulated Judith Hilton and her team, on behalf of the Board on their success with this work.

#### **4.2 - Food Law Enforcement by Local Authorities: The New Vision**

*(PRO 06/10/02)*

50. The Chair welcomed David Statham, Director of Enforcement to the table to answer questions on this paper, which reported on the four policy reviews currently being undertaken by Enforcement Division to introduce a new approach to food law enforcement in partnership with Local Authorities (LAs).

51. The Director for Enforcement reminded Board members that this paper followed a presentation they had received in May 2006. The paper set out the new vision on how LAs would be provided with the tools to deliver a risk-based enforcement approach, including the flexibility to choose different types of intervention depending on circumstances. Key stakeholders and FSA Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were fully involved in discussions. There would also be a full consultation exercise with all LAs. The paper outlined the work that would be put in place for each of the reviews. As part of the review on enforcement policy on interventions, it would be necessary to consider amending the Code of Practice and accompanying Practice Guidance. This would form a key building block before the changes could be put in place for the reviews on the monitoring system and the audit arrangements. The fourth review, on the Framework Agreement, would take account of the outcomes from all three of these reviews. The overall aim of the new vision was to provide LA enforcement which was fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

52. In discussion Board members made the following comments:

- the Chair of SFAC noted that different parts of the UK operated differently, and had different funding arrangements which needed to be taken into account;
- the new vision was welcomed, but the scale of this task should not be underestimated. It was important that LAs had a clear idea of what was meant by a risk-based approach;
- clarity was sought on how much of the budget would be invested into staff training;

- the new vision would be helpful in releasing resources that were needed for high priority issues;
- the specific aims of the review outlined in the paper referred to placing more emphasis on the confidence in management.

53. The Director of Enforcement responded that there was general consensus that UK enforcement policy as a whole needed to move forward. There had already been discussions involving all four UK countries. Essentially LAs operated on similar lines and there was real commitment from them to deliver more effective and appropriate enforcement. The Director of Enforcement agreed that this would not be an easy task. Some aspects of LA work would take a long time to change e.g. implementing new software, and there would inevitably be problems during the process of transition. The risks of change were there, but this was not a reason to prevent progress in moving towards the new vision. The FSA had already started putting work in hand, by holding workshops with LAs. On placing emphasis on the “confidence of management”, this was the current terminology used in the LAs’ Code of Practice, and this point would be addressed during the first review on enforcement policy.

54. The Chair commented that it was essential that the European Commission was satisfied with the new vision on a risk-based approach to enforcement. The Chief Executive added that the UK approach to enforcement was unusual, in that other member states operated single state-controlled food systems. It was therefore important to ensure the new enforcement vision was communicated effectively to the European Commission.

55. The Chair asked the Director of Enforcement to keep the Board informed of developments. In particular, it would be important to ensure there was an appropriate level of engagement at Board level on the European context. The Chair asked that the diagram of the review and their co-ordination be included in future papers relating to this issue.

## **Item 5 - Information Papers and Any Other Business**

### Information paper and Standing Order papers

56. The Chair drew Board members’ attention to the Information Paper on the Food Fraud Task Force, and the Standing Order papers provided in the papers for this open Board meeting.

### **Date of next meeting**

57. The next scheduled open meeting would be held in London on 7 December 2006.