

**The Scottish Food Advisory Committee
Verdant Works, Dundee
13th September 2006
10:00 – 12:30**

Open Session

Present

Committee Members:

Graeme Millar, Chair
Bill Reilly, Deputy Chair
Charlotte Maltin
David Cameron
John Cowden
Catherine Brady
Brian Ratcliffe
Catherine Benton
Amanda O'Donoghue

FSAS Officials:

Dr George Paterson, Director, FSAS
Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS
Jane Ferries, Committee Secretary, FSAS
Melanie Martin, Committee Administrator, FSAS
Emma Lane, Senior Communications Officer, FSAS
Bill Adamson, Head of Strategy & Co ordination, FSAS
Samantha McKeown, Senior Policy Officer, FSAS

GUESTS

Neil Roden, Head of Strategy & Planning Unit, FSA UK
Jaz Bangar, Head of Consumer Branch, FSA UK

1 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

1. The Chairman welcomed members, guests and observers to the open meeting of the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC). The Committee was pleased to be in Dundee.
2. The role of SFAC is to provide advice to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on all food safety and standards matters, which have a specific Scottish perspective. The Agency in turn has to fully consider the Committees views when determining its actions and the policy advice it gives to Ministers. Most food issues are devolved to Scottish Ministers and changes are implemented by the Scottish Parliament. This Committee is an essential element to the Agency to ensure that devolution is fully taken into account. The Committee holds regular meetings throughout Scotland.
3. Members of the Committee were invited to declare any conflicts of interest on specific areas before they are discussed to allow a decision to be taken on whether participation would be correct.
4. The Chairman asked for items of AOB. Three items were raised.
5. There were apologies from Jim Thomson (Assistant Director FSAS), Jim Arbuckle and Moyra Burns.

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2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

6. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting.
7. The Committee agreed that the minutes were a true record and accurate reflection of the meeting on 27th July in Peebles.

ITEM 3 STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

8. The Chair welcomed Neil Roden to the table who gave a brief presentation explaining why the FSA Board was seeking views from all Advisory Committees on the Strategic Plan Review and how their views would assist with discussions at the September Board meeting. His presentation covered the following: -
 - What the review covers
 - The objectives of the review
 - Managing the review
 - Role of project work streams
 - Emerging findings from Phase 1 of the Strategic Plan
 - Completion and adjustments
 - Possible changes and additions
 - Project timetable
9. The Chair opened the discussion to the Committee
10. The Committee made the following comments:-
 - Some areas/targets were not specifically strategic or as **Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely (SMART)** as they could be. Members felt that the document was a combination of a Strategic Plan and an implementation programme.
 - The process of the review was an excellent way forward and was seen as an opportunity to communicate what the Agency had achieved and its success.
 - Some Members felt confusion between the link with the Business Plans and the main Strategic Plan and suggested more cross-referencing needed to be made.
 - Careful consideration was needed to explain why the Agency was unable to achieve some targets, and an action plan should be devised to establish further achievements due in years to come.
 - Members hoped that the review would help this plan become more strategic.
 - Could any lessons to be learnt be identified from looking at how individual nations in the UK were achieving targets e.g. funding differences, different approaches.
 - Members felt it was essential the delivery of the Agency's targets were well managed otherwise there could be a risk that stakeholders would not engage and consumers would not be aware of the work of the FSA.

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- Members felt it should be a rolling Strategic Plan as opposed to developing a 'new' Strategic Plan and would prefer to have it referred to as an update.
 - There needed to be an understanding of baseline changes when reviewing the original targets.
 - The plan should show high-level objectives and then be underpinned by the delivery of these in a business Plan.
11. The Chair asked if stakeholders would be consulted on the results of the review of the Plan.
 12. Neil informed the Committee that it was the intention of the Agency to consult with key stakeholders on areas where significant changes were proposed to the original plan and would be providing the FSA Board with monthly updates on the progress of this.
 13. The Chair agreed that the Committee would discuss this again once the draft paper of the review was published for the main FSA Board meeting in December.
 14. The Chair opened the debate to observers.
 15. **Christine Fraser, Dundee College** was surprised by the lack of knowledge some people had of the FSA and asked if the Agency had considered a more approachable method of providing advice (e.g. Science & Technology Centre in Dublin) rather than disseminating the information one way (i.e. through leaflets etc.)
 16. The Chair responded by highlighting that Scottish Enterprise (SE) had recently re-established their priorities and identified the need for the initiatives that had been mentioned. It was hoped that the FSA would find a way of improving their approach.
 17. The Chair thanked Neil for his presentation and providing an opportunity for the Committee to contribute to discussions, which would be held at the FSA Board meeting in September.

ACTION: SFAC to discuss Strategic Plan Review once the paper has been drafted.

ITEM 4 MONITORING THE SCOTTISH DIET

18. The Chair opened the debate by introducing George Paterson who gave a brief overview of the FSAS conference held on the 11th September in Dundee.
19. George highlighted the following points:-
 - Dr Wendy Wrieden, Dundee University, gave the key presentation disseminating results of the recent FSAS project on monitoring progress towards the Scottish Dietary Targets, Which was now published on the Agency's website. (www.food.gov.uk)
 - Contractors Dr Geraldine McNeill and Christine Sheely described the survey approaches and methodology being used in the FSAS survey of MNES sugars in Scottish children.

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- Workshop sessions took place to help establish what future priorities the FSA should have by asking '*what should be surveyed?* , *How should we survey?* and *who should we survey?*
20. George handed the discussion to Charlotte Maltin, who attended the conference from SFAC. Charlotte highlighted the following findings: -
 - Workshops came up with the view that since FSA had a strategic target for saturated fat measured as a percentage of energy the whole diet must be measured.
 - The only micronutrient regarded as important above those currently stated in 'Hungry for Success' was Vitamin D.
 - Differences were found within the report with regard to food consumption between the least deprived and the more deprived.
 - Deprived people, such as the homeless, should be surveyed as well as first time caterers, children at nursery and the elderly. Behavioural eating patterns of individuals should also be looked into.
 - It was evident that how surveys were carried out was important in order to achieve the best results. FSA should attempt to make best use of new electronic data capture methods. ?
 21. The Chair thanked George and Charlotte for their outline and highlighted that a review of this report and recommendations would be developed by FSAS officials and the Committee would have a chance to fully debate this towards the end of the year. He opened the debate to the Committee.
 22. Some members of the Committee highlighted that the press handling of this subject had put an unfavourable spin on the information and it was a misrepresentation of reality to consumers.
 23. Members highlighted that working patterns had changed (e.g. shift workers) and this is an area FSA should look at also.
 24. The Chair opened the debate to the observers.
 25. **Christine Fraser, Dundee College** highlighted that she had seen an increase with the intake of water within the college and asked if an initiative with a major water company could be put in place to promote healthy eating especially in schools.
 26. The Chair informed observers that there were some schools throughout the UK where these initiatives were available.
 27. The Chair thanked members and observers for their contributions to the discussion.

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ITEM 5 CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

28. The Chair welcomed Bill Adamson and Jaz Bangar who gave a presentation covering
 - The new way of working with Consumer Engagement
 - The context of the new strategies
 - What FSA have been doing throughout the UK (specifically Scottish initiatives)
 - Consumer engagement model
 - Building capacity within the FSA
29. The Chair declared an interest as past Chairman of the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) and a past member of the National Consumer Council (NCC)
30. The Chair commended the Agency on their new approach and encouraged working with external partners. He also stressed that the Agency should not fall into categorising consumers in an abstract form. The debate was opened to the Committee.
31. Members made the following observations: -
 - People who attend the consumer forums in hard to reach areas would generally be people who cared about healthy living and eating. Members felt that more work needed to be done to reach those who would not attend such events.
 - There were concerns that the message the Agency was attempting to give out would not reach those who were not contacted directly. There was a suggestion that forums should maybe not be branded as an FSA event.
 - Evaluation of any changes in peoples behaviour as a result of advertising campaigns (e.g. Sid the slug) should be an area for the Agency to focus on.
 - The categories used within the model were logical, however, Members felt consideration should be given to people who think they are eating healthily but aren't and consumers who do not wish to know or learn about healthy eating and living.
 - Members felt it was vital that the range of people within focus groups were diverse.
 - Linking with external bodies such as NHS Boards should be seen the way forward.
 - Members felt it was important to communicate back to consumers once their voice had been heard.
 - External agencies, which were already established, should be used to assist with reaching the hard to hear consumers.
 - Overall members agreed that the pilot model was a positive way forward and recognised the financial restraints the Agency may face.

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32. The Chair reminded Members of the two Scottish consumer forums in the coming months and asked for those who would be interested to contact the Secretariat.
33. The Chair opened the debate to the observers.
34. **Christine Fraser, Dundee College** commended the Agency on their work to date and encouraged them to work closely with children and suggested that an open forum within a supermarket could be a way forward. She also suggested that retailers to promote healthy living could adapt weekly discounts of health promotion foods.
35. The Chair thanked Jaz Bangar and Bill Adamson and hoped that the comments from the Committee would assist the full discussion, which would take place at the FSA Board meeting in October. He informed the Committee that Consumer Engagement would return to the SFAC agenda in the future.

ACTION: CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT TO RETURN TO A FUTURE SFAC MEETING FOR UPDATE

ACTION: MEMBERS TO CONTACT SECRETARIAT WITH REGARD TO ATTENDING CONSUMER FORUMS

What about SFAC views into Board Paper?

ITEM 6

EU COMMISSION DISCUSSION ON MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM LEVELS FOR VITAMINS & MINERALS IN FOODSTUFFS

36. The Chair informed the Committee that the discussion paper had been presented to both Wales and Northern Ireland and followed on from two video conferences involving all devolved administrations and London. He handed over to stakeholder David Cameron who attended one of the video conferences.
37. David informed the Committee of the main points he gathered from the video conference held on the 4th September.
 - In relation to adverse effects of vitamins and minerals it was felt that there was poor scientific evidence of this and the question was raised as to why food supplements were singled out when the focus was vitamins and minerals within the diet.
 - In relation to maximum levels there were concerns over looking at 100gms rather than portion size, and within certain groups of people (e.g. vegans) the amounts may look distorted.
 - In relation to the data it was felt that some of information being used was outdated and the question was asked as to how valid comments based on this data would be.
 - UK data was some of the most comprehensive data being used in the EU and there were questions surrounding the proposal of moving forward with this data on a EU-wide basis. Food purchasing data was also raised as a possible way forward.
 - There was general agreement that Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA) should be based on disease avoidance, rather than healthy levels to improve and maintain health.

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38. The Chair thanked David for his observations and informed the Committee that this subject would come back to the SFAC Agenda in early 2007.

ITEM 8 AOB

39. The Chair raised the following issues
- EU Food Labelling Review – Members were informed that the SFAC working group on this subject would meet around the retreat in November.
 - Enforcement of the EU Food Hygiene Legislation on Farm in Scotland – members were informed that comments from this consultation would form part of the main discussion of the Open SFAC meeting in November.
 - 2006 Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Food Law Enforcement Monitoring System – Members were asked to submit their responses in writing to the Secretariat by 6th October.
 - Mussels with High Toxin Levels – the Chair referred to the Press Release issued by FSAS on this subject. (web ref??)

ACTION MEMBERS TO DEVISE A RESPONSE TO EU FOOD HYGIENE CONSULTATION FOR DISCUSSION AT NOVEMBER MEETING

ACTION MEMBERS TO SUBMIT ANY RESPONSE TO FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT MONITORING SYSTEM CONSULTATION BY 6TH OCTOBER

ACTION EU FOOD LABELLING SUB GROUP TO MEET AT RETREAT

40. The Chair thanked all Members and observers for attending the meeting and informed them that the next meeting would be held on 22nd November in Dunkeld.
41. The meeting closed at 12:35.