

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 16 NOVEMBER 2016**

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 16 November NIFAC open meeting.

Members are invited to:

- Agree minutes as a true record of proceedings.

FSA Northern Ireland

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REF NIFAC MINUTES 5/16
OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY
COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2016, 10.00AM, AT THE FSA
OFFICES, BELFAST.

Those present:	FSA
<p><u>NIFAC members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colm McKenna – Chairman. • Aodhan O’Donnell. • Christine Kennedy. • Phelim O’Neill. • Colin Reid. • Elizabeth Mitchell. • Brian Smyth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Jennings – Director for Northern Ireland and Organisational Development. • Kirsten Dunbar – NI Head of Operational Policy and Delivery. • Seth Chanas – NIFAC Secretariat. • Roberta Ferson – NI Head of Finance Business Support and Communications. <p><u>By Video/Teleconference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kate Todd, FSA EU & International Strategy. • Rod Ainsworth, the FSA’s Director of Regulatory and Legal Strategy. • Patrick Miller, Joint Head of the Chief Scientific Adviser’s Team. • Guy Poppy, the FSA’s Chief Scientific Adviser. • Javier Dominguez, the FSA’s Veterinary Director and Head of Science, Evidence and Research.

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members to the meeting, explaining that there were no apologies. The Chair also welcomed the observers who had attended this Open meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 12 September 2016.

- 2.1. The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's open meeting on 12 September. An amendment was suggested to paragraph 3.4. The secretariat undertook to amend the paragraph and arrange for the publication of the minutes.

Action Point – Secretariat to make amendment to paragraph 3.4 and arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 12 September 2016.

3. Chair's Report and Director's Update

- 3.1. The Chair drew attention to a paper on the role of the FACs that had been circulated to NIFAC members and would be discussed at the meeting of the FSA Board at their meeting on the 23 November. He also updated NIFAC about visits he had undertaken as a part of his induction to Heathrow Airport and Belfast Port.
- 3.2. Maria Jennings updated the Committee on items from the Director's report contained in the meeting papers, including:
- Operation Rosetta;
 - Annual review of Food Fortress Information Exchange Protocol;
 - Food Product Improvement.
- 3.3. It was explained that the FSA in NI had been building its capabilities to combat food crime, working with colleagues in the PSNI and the success Operation Rosetta demonstrated the value of the approach.
- 3.4. Maria Jennings pointed out that all parties involved in the discussions around the Food Fortress Information Exchange Protocol are now content with the protocol.
- 3.5. It was pointed out that there are several good examples of partnership working outlined in the report highlighting, in particular, the work of the Standards and Dietary Health team around Food Product Improvement. This has been a key piece of work and demonstrates the FSA's importance to the Department of Health in delivering the outcomes in the Programme for Government.
- 3.6. A question was asked about the findings of research mentioned in the report that Just Eat has conducted in relation to providing hygiene rating information in online environments. Maria Jennings offered to circulate a summary of the research findings to Committee members.

Action Point – Director to circulate a summary of findings of Just Eat research on FHRS to NIFAC members.

4. Review of the National Food Crime Unit.

4.1. The Chair welcomed Kate Todd of the FSA's EU & International Strategy team and Rod Ainsworth, the FSA's Director of Regulatory and Legal Strategy, to the meeting to introduce the Board paper on the review of the National Food Crime Unit, by video link from the FSA's office at Aviation House in London. The paper covered:

- issues addressed in the review;
- whether the unit should have an investigative capacity and, if so, where this capacity would be best instituted;
- key considerations for the Board; and
- the lack of detail in the report on the implications for Wales and Northern Ireland and the need for this to be addressed.

4.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- This is a very comprehensive paper and the Committee agreed with its recommendations. It was considered that there was however a lack of detail for NI and that the review has not, at this stage, sufficiently considered the implications for the devolved administrations.
- The clarity provided at the meeting about the preference for the Food Crime Unit to have prosecuting powers was welcomed and it may have been beneficial for a statement to that effect to be included in the paper to make this more explicit. The Committee agreed with the approach.
- While it was acknowledged that the FSA has always had protocols to ensure the security of sensitive information, it was considered that the FSA's dedication to transparency still provided a source of concern for industry when sharing information with the FSA. It was considered that this might be partially addressed by constituting the Food Crime Unit as an Arms-Length body of the FSA. However, doing so would raise more questions over the level of oversight and governance of the Unit and more details on how any such body could be constituted would be welcomed.
- It was suggested that looking to the collaborative model, which exists in the Republic of Ireland, may be informative for how such a Unit could operate effectively in NI and is similar to the approach to food crime taken by staff in the FSA's NI office currently.

4.3. The Chair thanked Kate Todd and Rod Ainsworth for bringing this paper to NIFAC for consideration.

5. FSA Science: Retrospective Update and Prospective Priorities.

5.1. The Chair welcomed Guy Poppy, the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser and Patrick Miller, Joint Head of the Chief Scientific Adviser's Team, to the meeting to introduce this paper by video link from the FSA's office at Aviation House in London. The presentation covered:

- discussions around being a data driven organisation;
- the data pyramid;
- the Regulating our Future programme; and
- the spend on parts of the programme.

5.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- The paper gives a figure for the amount the FSA spends on externally commissioned science. NIFAC suggested that it would also be useful if a figure for how much the FSA spends internally on science could be included. It was acknowledged that this figure would represent the staff costs rather than the cost of the research but it would help to give a more complete picture of the actual spend.
- The Committee supported the suggestion that, in reviewing the trajectory of science spending, the FSA should examine what is contained within core business spend. Consideration should be given to what, within this area, is a statutory requirement of the FSA and must be maintained. This may result in an effective decrease in core business spend, allowing budget to be reallocated toward investment.
- It was observed that the paper lacked a devolution section. Given the divergence in the remit between England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it was suggested there is a strong case for future reports to include a statement acknowledging the significance of devolution for FSA Science and include region specific figures where appropriate to do so.

5.3. The Chair thanked Guy Poppy and Patrick Miller for this update.

6. Food and Feed Surveillance.

6.1. The Chair welcomed Javier Dominguez, the FSA's Veterinary Director and Head of Science, Evidence and Research to the meeting to introduce the above Board paper by video link from the FSA's office at Aviation House in London. The presentation covered:

- a new approach to surveillance;
- opportunities presented by a new surveillance system;

- activities undertaken in investigating existing systems and stakeholder engagement;
- characteristics of the new system; and
- the move away from sampling and analysis;

6.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following comments were made:

- The Committee welcomed the new approach to surveillance and noted that the work being done on AMR as a pilot of the new system was appropriate. It was also agreed that it would be appropriate for the Board to consider and agree the priorities for surveillance annually and receive reports on material risk management actions identified by such surveillance.
- It was concerning to hear that, despite finding a widespread awareness of the need to share information for the public good, industry is still often reluctant to share data with the FSA as commercially sensitive information is perceived to be vulnerable to the Agency's commitment to openness. There is a question of whether an awareness of the issue and the public good presents sufficient motivation. It was suggested that there is a good example to be found in work done by the Northern Ireland Grain Trade Association in Northern Ireland where it had been demonstrated that the public good and commercial benefit are not mutually exclusive.
- NIFAC noted the scale of the issue of anti-microbial resistance (AMR). It was suggested that, as a global issue, maintaining a uniformity of approach with other EU member states should remain key aspect of the AMR program post-Brexit.
- An outline of the link to the FSA Science budget would be welcomed including a quantum for future research and an outline of whether this would constitute core business or investment to better present the impact of this work for FSA Science generally.

6.3. The Chair thanked Javier Dominguez for bringing this item to the Committee.

7. Developing Proportionate Controls for Risky Foods.

7.1. The Chair welcomed Patrick Miller, Joint Head of the Chief Scientific Adviser's Team to the meeting to introduce this paper by video link from the FSA's office at Aviation House in London. The presentation covered:

- previous discussions on this subject;
- the framework outlined at Annexe A; and
- the question of whether the proposed framework delivers on the undertaking previously made to the Board.

7.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- NIFAC welcomed this paper as presenting a very good and logical analysis of a complex subject. The Committee fully supported the approach and look forward to seeing how it will be taken up.

7.3. The Chair thanked Patrick Miller for assisting with the Committee's consideration of this paper.

8. Update from the FSA in NI Finance, Business Support and Communications Team.

8.1. The Chair welcomed Roberta Ferson, the FSA in NI's Head of Finance, Business Support and Communications to the meeting to deliver a presentation on the work of this team. This was the fifth update of a series where the various teams within the FSA in NI take turns to update NIFAC on key activities and work carried out by that team. The presentation covered:

- the new FSA communications strategy;
- maintaining the relevance of and trust in the FSA;
- the new FSA communications structure;
- FSA the movie;
- 2016 Campaign highlights;
- the FSA website;
- social media;
- staff advocacy; and
- FSA voices;

8.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- The Committee congratulated the FSA on the scope and quality of the work displayed in this presentation.
- The move toward social media and online communications was supported, emphasising that a focus should also be maintained on those lacking the means to access these messages. These are frequently the most vulnerable individuals who could benefit most from information. It was acknowledged that the FSA also does good outreach and events work. The importance of education and of getting the message to the right consumers was highlighted as the key to effective communications and the evidence based way in which the FSA does its communications work was commended.

8.3. The Chair thanked Roberta Ferson for bringing this item to the Committee.

Any Other Business

8.4. Comments were invited from observers on any of the items the following comments were received:

- The naming and shaming of retailers whose raw chicken contained high levels of campylobacter, while contributing effectively to campylobacter reduction, has also contributed to a scepticism among some producers about whether the FSA can be trusted with commercially sensitive data. The FSA faces a challenge in rebuilding this trust if it is to persuade businesses to share data in the future.
- The lack of a specific food-fraud offence in statute represents a lacuna in the legislation. The filling of this gap may be beneficial for the work of the National Food Crime unit.
- The link between the Food Crime Unit and the District Councils is not clearly spelled out and more detail on this would be welcome.

8.5. No further business was raised and the meeting was closed. The next Open meeting will be held on 8 March.

TABLE OF ACTION POINTS

No	Action	To be actioned by	To be completed by
1.	To make amendment to paragraph 3.4 and arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 12 September 2016.	Secretariat	08/03/2017
2.	To circulate a summary of findings of Just Eat research on FHRS to NIFAC members.	Director	08/03/2017