**Meeting of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee on Wednesday 18th January 2023 at**

**Food Standards Agency Belfast Office and via Microsoft Teams**

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# **Agenda**

09:30 Welcome and Housekeeping

Draft Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 10th November 2022

Declarations of Interest 

09:35 Chair and Director Updates 

10:00 Overview of Standards and Food Standards Delivery Model – *Sharon*  *Gilmore and Nuala Meehan* 

10:15 Delivery Model and KPIs – *Aaron Esler* 

10:45 Intelligence – *Steve Smith* 

11:05 Food Standards Delivery Model Pilot – *Paula O’Neill*

11:15 Break

11:30 Discussion 

12:00 New Structure – *Anjali Juneja* *and Andy Cole* 

12:30 Lunch 

1.00 Key Priorities and Planning – *All* 

3.00 Close

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION**

## **Draft Minutes of Open Meeting on 10th November 2022**

**Executive Summary**

Attached are the draft minutes of the 10th November 2022 NIFAC meeting.

Members are invited to:

* Agree the minutes as a true record of proceedings.

**FSA in Northern Ireland**

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**OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON THURSDAY 10TH NOVEMBER AT LAKELAND DAIRIES**

**Those present:**

**NIFAC Members**

* Anthony Harbinson
* Fiona Hanna
* Greg Irwin
* Cathal McDonnell
* Ciaran McCartan
* Lorraine Crawford
* Judith Hanvey – Boardroom Apprentice

**FSA Officials**

* Maria Jennings – Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland
* Andy Cole – Deputy Director for Northern Ireland
* Roberta Ferson – Head of Corporate Services and Strategic Engagement
* Firth Piracha – Head of EU Relations, Trade and Legislation
* Kathryn Baker – Head of Local Authority Policy and Delivery
* Jayne McGlaughlin – Senior Advisor – Assembly Liaison

**Lakeland Dairies**

* Tim Acheson – General Foodservice Operations Manager

**Apologies**

* Ellen Finlay
* Lynne McMullan
* Sharon Gilmore

1. **Welcome and Housekeeping**
   1. The Chair welcomed NIFAC members and FSA officials to the meeting and thanked Lakeland Dairies for hosting the Committee at their site.
   2. The Chair noted that he had received apologies from Ellen Finlay, Lynne McMullan and Sharon Gilmore.
   3. The Chair asked if Members had any interests to declare.
2. **Minutes of the meeting of 28th June**
   1. The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of the NIFAC meeting which was held on 28th June 2022. No issues were raised and the Secretariat agreed to publish the minutes.
3. **Presentation from Lakeland Dairies**
   1. The Chair invited Tim Acheson, General Foodservice Operations Manager at Lakeland Dairies, to deliver his presentation to the Committee.
   2. Tim welcomed the Committee to Lakeland Dairies and explained that Lakeland is a farmer owned and controlled dairy cooperative.
   3. While updating the Committee about the work of Lakeland, Tim added that the group processes approximately 2 billion litres of milk annually into a range of value added dairy foodservice products and functional dairy food ingredients.
   4. The presentation from Tim covered a number of areas including:

* Lakeland Dairies – who we are and what we do
* Current challenges
* Strategic objectives
* Preservation technologies
* International trade
* Supply chains
* Environmental credentials
* Reformulation and innovation
* Future aspirations
  1. Following the presentation, the Committee raised a number of key points.
  2. Members were interested in discussing the overall demand for milk and milk based products. Tim explained that dairy consumption worldwide is increasing and in some areas, demand is outstripping supply.
  3. Tim added that Lakeland is also very conscious of plant based products and the business is not adverse to looking at such products. For example, they are currently working on a new oat milk product.
  4. In relation to supply chains, Members asked how supply chains were holding up and how the business is able to supply right around the world, noting the complexities of supplying globally. Tim emphasised that they utilise milk preservation technologies to extend the shelf-life of some products which helps to facilitate international trade.
  5. Tim noted that the business has been evolving and will continue to do so and accentuated that innovation is key.
  6. Members asked about the new products that Lakeland is currently working on. Tim emphasised the work that Lakeland has done and is continuing to do in the reformulation space. For example, they are proactively working with consumers to improve the nutritional profile of their products to ensure consumers are provided with healthier options.
  7. Tim added that this includes lower sugar and no added sugar milks for children – seeking to align product innovation with tackling childhood obesity plans.
  8. Members discussed Lakeland’s sugar reduction programme and the work they are doing to decrease the amount of sugar in their soft serve ice cream.
  9. The Committee also noted their interest in the work Lakeland is doing in relation to their environmental credentials. Tim added that sustainability is very important to the business and there is more innovation to come in this area.
  10. When discussing their future aspirations, Tim accentuated that one of Lakeland’s key aims moving forward is to ensure that any unintended consequences of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill on the Northern Ireland dairy section and broader Northern Ireland economy in the short and long term are understood.
  11. In addition, Tim added that Lakeland will be seeking to reinvigorate growth plans and will be rebalancing and refocusing following the pandemic.
  12. The Chair and Members thanked Tim for his presentation and noted that the Committee is keen to continuing engaging with Lakeland. Tim thanked the FSA for their continued support and noted that they look forward to welcoming the FSA Board.
  13. Following the presentation, the Committee undertook a tour of the Lakeland Dairies facilities.

1. **Director and Chair Updates**
   1. The Chair invited Maria Jennings, Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland to present her update to the Committee.
   2. Maria highlighted a number of the issues contained within the report, including: In Country Trade visits, progress on the Local Authority Recovery Plan and Food and You Wave 4.
   3. In relation to the STEC Incident, the Committee asked if water quality was a concern for this bacteria. Maria confirmed that investigations were still ongoing although a number of possible foods had been identified as possible sources.
   4. Members also asked about work in relation to Precision Breeding, noting that a series of stakeholder workshops had taken place. Maria confirmed that phase two of consumer research is now in the field with a view to being completed before the end of the year. She also added that stakeholder engagement will continue with stakeholders in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain.
   5. The Chair then gave an update about Board-related activities. The Chair confirmed that the Board meeting in September had gone well and he had reflected the Committee’s comments and considerations on each of the papers.
   6. Furthermore, the Chair added that there were a number of key papers being considered at the Board meeting in December, including a paper on In Year Prioritisation. He confirmed that the papers would be considered by the Committee before the Board meeting.
2. **Northern Ireland Protocol Bill**
   1. The Chair invited Firth Piracha to deliver a presentation to the Committee on the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill.
   2. Firth provided an overview of the key policy principles of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill including the Dual Regulatory Regime and the Trade Boundary Model, including assurance approaches to support these.
   3. The Committee considered the different aspects of the Bill that would have an impact for the FSA as a whole and particularly in Northern Ireland.
   4. Firth confirmed that teams across the FSA were looking closely at the policy proposals contained within the Bill and this work would continue as the Bill continues its legislative passage through the House of Lords.
   5. The Committee asked about engagement and Firth confirmed that the FSA is working closely with other government departments and stakeholders to inform understanding and policy development.
   6. Members discussed the intersect between the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill and the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill and the impact that the Bills would have on FSA resource moving forward.
   7. The Committee voiced their support for the work that the FSA in Northern Ireland is doing in relation to both of the Bills.
3. **Any other business**
   1. The end of the meeting marked Maria Jennings’ last in-person NIFAC meeting. The Chair and the Committee thanked Maria for the work that she has done both with and for the FSA and expressed their thanks for her support and guidance.

**PAPER FOR INFORMATION**

### **Update from the Director for Northern Ireland**

**Executive Summary**

Attached is the FSA in Northern Ireland Director’s update to the Committee for January 2023.

* No action by members is necessary.

**FSA in Northern Ireland**

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**Report from the Director for Northern Ireland**

**Evidence Generator**

**Retail Intelligence Surveillance Sampling Programme 2022/23**

The retail intelligence surveillance sampling programme commenced at the beginning of December 2022 and will run until April 2023 in Northern Ireland. Sampling priorities for the programme have been developed jointly with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in order to deliver useful intelligence on the food and feed system, build our evidence base on potential areas of risk and help inform targeting of routine sampling undertaken by district councils (DCs).

Samples have been grouped into two categories: those which will be sampled as part of a one-off targeted surveillance approach and those which will be sampled as part of a targeted ‘basket of foods’ approach. The FSA will continually review and action results, sharing relevant data with DCs and primary authorities during the course of the survey for information and potential follow up action.

**Food and You 2 Survey Northern Ireland Report**

In November, the Science and Surveillance Team in partnership with FSA SERD colleagues published a [report](https://www.food.gov.uk/research/fy2-wave-3-4-ni-executive-summary) on the latest Food and You 2 Northern Ireland data. The survey measures self-reported consumer knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to food safety and other food issues amongst adults.

The modules presented in this report include food you can trust, concerns about food, food security, eating out and takeaways, food allergies, intolerances and other hypersensitivities, eating at home, food shopping and labelling and healthy eating. Fieldwork for Waves 3 and 4 took place between 28th April and 25th June 2021, and 18th October 2021 and 10th January 2022 respectively.

The key findings from the Northern Ireland Wave 3-4 report include:

* Respondents were more likely to report confidence in farmers (90%), shops and supermarkets (85%), and restaurants (85%) than in takeaways (68%), and food delivery services (47%)
* The most common concerns about food amongst respondents related to food waste (55%), the amount of sugar in food (54%) and food prices (52%)
* Approximately one in six respondents reported being food insecure (i.e. experienced low or very low food security). Food insecurity levels in NI (18%) were comparable with that in England (18%) and in Wales (17%).

**Nutritional Standards for Council Catering, Vending and Procurement** 

The Dietary Health Team completed a co-creation exercise with the 11 DCs on draft nutritional standards for catering, vending and procurement. The development of nutritional standards in this sector forms part of the strategy to tackle obesity in Northern Ireland. Feedback was gathered via survey monkey software and the response was high for all documents with substantial learning on all aspects.

The results are currently being analysed and a feedback session with DC representatives is planned for February 2023. Plans are also in place to form a steering group with representatives from each DC to further develop the nutritional standards following the co-creation feedback and prepare the standards for formal consultation.

**Policy Maker**

**Retained EU Law Bill**

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill intends to sunset Retained EU Law (REUL) at the end of 2023, unless Ministers agree to preserve, reform or restate individual pieces of legislation, or extend them with a commitment to reform by 2026. As EU food and feed law is directly applicable in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, there is no retained direct EU legislation in the remit of the FSA in Northern Ireland

The Bill, in its current form impacts Northern Ireland subordinate legislation which enforces EU requirements or transposes such requirements into domestic law. The FSA intends to preserve our affected legislation in Northern Ireland to provide certainty and consistency for Northern Ireland industry and consumers. Our priority is to continue to prioritise public health and any decisions taken will be in line with the guiding principles agreed by the FSA Board.

**Borders Target Operating Model**

The team continues to be heavily involved in the development of the Borders Target Operating Model. This will deliver a modernised border that will ensure that proportionate, effective and efficient border controls that protect consumers to high standards are in place.

The Target Operating Model is being developed by Cabinet Office (CO) with contributions from across other government departments, including the FSA. A draft is planned to be published in February 2023 with final publication in April. Discussions are ongoing with the Devolved Administrations across the UK with the close involvement of the FSA.

**Regulator**

**Incident Handling and Food Fraud Training**

The Consumer Protection Team provided Incident Handling and Food Fraud training to DC partners. This comprised four face-to-face sessions on search warrant training with food officers from the 11 DCs as well as one-to-one sessions on food fraud processes and the creation of three electronic recorded modules on food incident handling for food officers in DCs. This will ensure competent authorities are supported in their handling of complex food fraud and food safety incidents and promote consistency of approach.

**October Temperature Check**

Northern Ireland had a 100% response rate to both the food hygiene and food standards October temperature check surveys – implemented to monitor Local Authority performance against the Local Authority Recovery Plan. All DCs reported that they anticipate they will be able to meet the December 2022 milestone and have sufficient resources to meet the Recovery Plan. Whilst flags were raised for a few of the DCs against the performance risk matrices the scores associated with the flags were low in comparison to results for England and Wales. The flags raised were for one or more of the following reasons:

* <75% of the allocated full time equivalent posts were occupied (3 DCs)
* The number of unrated establishments exceeded 100 (1 DC)
* Food hygiene interventions of Category A, B or C establishments were overdue (2 DCs)
* Food Standards interventions of Category A establishments were overdue (2 DCs)
* The number of food establishments prioritised for a visit and still awaiting an inspection was >10 (4DCs).

All DCs with flags raised have been contacted and sufficient assurances given that the DCs have either rectified the issues or have plans in place to address them.

**Draft Food Hygiene Rating (Online Display) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023**

The FSA’s summary of responses to the consultation on the draft Food Hygiene Rating (Online Display) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 was [published on FSA’s website](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.food.gov.uk%2Four-work%2Fsummary-of-responses-consultation-on-the-draft-food-hygiene-rating-online-display-regulations-northern-ireland-2023&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cd4768b88dddb45681aef08dad44bf795%7C8a1c50f901b74c8aa6fa90eb906f18e9%7C0%7C0%7C638055719974782346%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=i9jI8FNHEgh6xgadpOBnv8RShe5sN142M2PRlAJ2aZg%3D&reserved=0) in November. A total of 18 stakeholders responded to the consultation, their contributions were published alongside FSA’s consideration of their views. In the absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, the Regulations cannot be progressed at this time. However, the team will continue to engage with stakeholders to encourage online display of Food Hygiene Ratings in line with the manner specified in the proposed regulations.

**Renewal of FSA Fish and Shellfish Official Control Contracts**  

The Local Authority Policy and Delivery Team are liaising closely with procurement colleagues to renew several contracts associated with the delivery of the Northern Ireland shellfish official control (OC) monitoring programme**.**

The contracts up for renewal at end of March 2023 include: biotoxin and phytoplankton analysis of OC samples; collection of OC samples from Belfast and Larne Loughs; sanitary surveys and analysis of wild fish OC samples. The recently completed rationalisation of the shellfish biotoxin OC monitoring programme will be incorporated into the new biotoxin and phytoplankton analysis contract.

**2023 Shellfish Classifications**

We have recently published the annual shellfish classifications for Northern Ireland. The classification of a shellfish production area determines the treatment required before Live Bivalve Molluscs (shellfish) may be marketed for human consumption. Shellfish production and relay areas are classified according to the levels of *E. coli* detected in shellfish flesh.

In Northern Ireland there are currently 31 classified shellfish beds and three dormant beds (unclassified). The breakdown of the 31 classified beds is:

* A classification – 0
* Seasonal A/B classifications – 2
* B classifications – 21
* Seasonal B/C classifications – 0
* C classifications – 8
* Downgrades – 3
* Upgrades - 0

**Food Standards Delivery Model**

The new Food Standards Delivery Model intends to change the way DCs monitor and enforce compliance with food standards. The proposals within the new model include a risk assessment scheme that DC officers will use to evaluate the risks posed by a food business and a new decision matrix to determine the frequency at which food standards official controls should be delivered in line with the outcome of the risk assessment.

The consultation on the model recently concluded. As part of the consultation on the proposed New Food Standards Delivery Model, the FSA in Northern Ireland held a Food Standards Delivery Model engagement event with representatives from DCs in late November. The engagement event was an opportunity to consider the ongoing consultation, as well as an opportunity to discuss the next steps and recommendations in relation to the new Food Standards Delivery Model, and an opportunity for DCs to provide feedback in relation to the ongoing consultation.

Colleagues from the Regulatory Compliance Division led the presentations on the new model, the role of intelligence in the model, and a workshop on Key Performance Indicators with respect to Food Standards under the model. As one of the pilot councils, a representative from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council provided insights on the 15-month pilot of the new delivery model.

**Watchdog**

**Evaluation of Pre-Packed for Direct Sale (PPDS) Legislation**

Following the introduction of the new labelling requirements for pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) foods – introduced in October 2021 – the FSA is undertaking a formal evaluation of PPDS implementation. As part of the evaluation of PPDS, the FSA has commissioned IFF Research to evaluate the rollout and implementation of PPDS. This research will be taking place throughout December 2022 and January 2023, covering Northern Ireland DCs, FBOs and consumers with food hypersensitivities, looking at awareness and compliance of the new Regulations. The results are expected in early 2023.

**Convenor and Collaborator**

**New Obesity Strategy**

Members of the Dietary Health Team have been continuing to engage with Department of Health (DoH) officials on the development of the new obesity strategy for Northern Ireland. Meetings have taken place to identify the FSA programmes which will be carried over to the new strategy along with the various partnership projects. Separate meetings have been planned for January to clarify what dietary health policy will be included and identify the roles and responsibilities for each organisation with regards to policy development. DoH plan to go out to consult on broad themes for the new obesity strategy in January.

**Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group**

The FSA has become a member of a subgroup of the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group (ROPIG), chaired by the Public Health Agency, to oversee and direct the implementation of a Whole System Approach (WSA) to obesity prevention in three early adopter council sites in Northern Ireland. Six DCs have submitted expressions of interest and will be involved in the project through a phased start, depending on their readiness to begin. One of the DCs will begin work on this project in January 2023 with other DCs starting later in the year or in Phase 2 in January 2024. The work of the WSA subgroup will support the implementation of the new obesity strategy.

**Local Authority Strategic Update Webinars**

As part of the FSA’s commitment to engaging with our Local Authority (LA) partners, we have three strategic webinars planned for 2023. The webinars will provide LAs across England, Wales and Northern Ireland with an update on: The value of intelligence in the delivery of food and feed controls (18th January); ABC – Enterprise Level Regulation Workstream (21st February); and ABC – Online Assurance Workstream –the Aggregator’s Food Safety Charter and the (online) training Aide Memoire(14th March). All webinars will include a presentation by the FSA project leads, followed by a question and answer session.

**TRACES systems issues affecting GB to Northern Ireland trade**

The EU’s Import Control system TRACES developed a technical issue which inhibited traders from raising pre-notifications (CHEDs) for composite products. This posed an issue for GB-Northern Ireland trade, particularly large retailers due to the frequency of trade and time of year. The Trade Team in the FSA in Northern Ireland were alerted by a major retailer and worked collectively with DCs, DAERA, Defra and EU to develop  a technical work around to enable industry to continue importing affected products in compliance with import official controls. Following our engagement directly with the EU, an amendment to TRACES was made, introducing a long-term sustainable solution for this issue.

Whilst resolving one issue, the update to TRACES gave rise to another technical issue inhibiting multiple commodities covered by the same Export Health Certificate from being raised on the same CHED. The team has worked with DCs and DAERA to develop another technical work around to enable trade to continue. A definitive solution for this is being developed by the EU and is expected to be available soon. In the meantime, industry and competent authorities are managing the increased administrative burden as efficiently as possible. In the light of these issues, the FSA convened a meeting with DAERA and affected large retailers to clarify appropriate escalation and resolution routes if similar issues arise in future.

Andy Cole

**Director for Northern Ireland**

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#### NIFAC Discussion

**Food Standards Delivery Model**

The theme of this meeting is the Food Standards Delivery Model. To set the context, the Committee will hear from both the Head of Standards and Dietary Health and the Food Standards Lead in Northern Ireland who lead the new Food Standards Delivery Model work in Northern Ireland. The Committee will also receive presentations from FSA officials in the Regulatory Compliance Division who will cover the new delivery model in more detail including the role of intelligence in the new model as well as Key Performance Indicators with respect to Food Standards under the model.

In addition to the presentations from FSA officials, Paula O’Neill from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, will provide insights on the 15-month pilot of the new delivery model.

Following the presentations, there will be an opportunity for the Committee to consider the theme in more detail, allowing NIFAC members to ask further questions to help inform the Committee’s advice and information to the FSA on this topic.

Members are invited to:

* Consider the content of the presentations and
* Comment on and consider the development of the model and its impact in Northern Ireland.

**FSA in Northern Ireland**

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