

Minutes of the themed meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on 16 July 2024.

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

- Dr Rhian Hayward, MBE, Chair
- Dr Philip Hollington
- Dr John Williams
- Dave Holland
- Georgia Taylor

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

- Anjali Juneja – Director for UK & International Affairs
- Nathan Barnhouse - Director for FSA in Wales
- Sioned Fidler – Head of Communications, Welsh Language and Business Support
- Lucy Edwards – Senior Business Manager
- Owen Lewis – Head of Regulatory Policy and Local Authority Partnerships
- Jonathan Davies – Head of Standards Policy and Consumer Protection

Presenters:

- Jodie Wild, Head of Incidents Unit, FSA
- Nathan Harvey, Head of Incidents Management, FSA in Wales
- Giles Chapman, Head of Analysis and Futures, FSA
- Greg Wasinski, Team Leader – Strategic Insights, FSA

Observers:

Representatives from:

- Caerphilly CBC

- Merthyr Tydfil CBC
- Ynys Mon CC
- Shared Regulatory Services
- Newport CC
- Conwy CC
- Welsh Local Government Association

1.Introductions, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Helen Taylor and Jessica Williams. The minutes of the April 2024 meeting were agreed.

2.Declaration of interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3. Incidents and Resilience

3.1 **Jodie Wild, Head of Incidents Unit** – the presentation gave an overview of Incidents, Resilience and Prevention work. Jodie explained how the FSA works with Local Authorities, other stakeholders and industry to ensure food is safe and to remove unsafe food from the market. The team also works with Field Operations colleagues on incidents at FSA approved establishments and coordinates with FSA colleagues to provide risk management advice and where required, risk management advice. Jodie then detailed the FSAs role in outbreak management and advised of the classification of Incidents as well as detailing incident and emergency response procedures. Jodie explained the work of the Signals Team, which provides an increased capability & capacity to detect, respond and prevent food and feed safety incidents occurring in the UK. Jodie explained how an algorithm has been developed to extract and store key information from food safety alerts and articles to identify potential incident trends or emerging risks through the wider analysis of data. Jodie also gave some examples of recent non-routine incidents that the team have worked on - algal blooms in Lough Neagh, lead in human breastmilk and SRM in Bovine tongue exports.

3.2 Nathan Harvey, Head of Incident Management in Wales - the presentation detailed the four-nation approach to Incidents, highlighting that there is a separate incidents team in each nation, but these teams work extremely closely together. The presentation outlined the roles of the team in Wales and gave the definition of an incident as outlined in both the Food Law Code of Practice and Feed Law Code of Practice (Wales). Nathan explained the flow of how incidents are notified and managed from the initial notification to risk management advice, FBO and FSA actions through to incident closure. He then detailed the incident types: Physical Contamination, Microbiological Contamination, Chemical Contamination, Allergenic Contamination, Environmental Contamination and on farm and Veterinary Medicine Residues. Nathan explained that a lot of work is done in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales and Public Health Wales (PHE) in relation to environmental contamination incidents whereas for food chain investigations the FSA takes the lead and coordinates with Local Authorities. In the case of foodborne outbreaks, the team works closely with PHW and UKHSA. Nathan further explained the roles of the FSA team, which are to:

- Investigate Food & Feed Safety Incidents / Outbreaks
- Co-ordinate FSA teams for Scientific input, Risk Management and / or Risk Assessment
- Publish Food Alerts
- Facilitate Product Recalls/Withdrawals
- Communications (International, Industry, LA)
- Initiate Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

Nathan informed of the Incidents and Resilience Annual report which was presented to the Board at the June meeting and highlighted some of the Wales specific data including incident trends, RCA, industry engagement, preparedness and resilience and two case studies.

3.3 There were questions and discussions from the committee on Whole Genome sequencing, and Nathan described how this has changed the way the FSA works on incidents with more data and information in relation to cases which gives the ability for

cases to be linked and clustered. There was also discussion around the impact of and performance of recalls and how these are monitored. The committee were also interested in the Root cause analysis work and commented that they look forward to a further update in the future on how this work is progressing.

3.4 Giles Chapman, Head of Analysis and Futures, National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) – the presentation gave an overview of the work of the NFCU and provided the mission statement – ‘Our mission is to identify, investigate, disrupt and prevent serious food fraud’. Giles explained how the team protects consumers and legitimate businesses by conducting intelligence-led food fraud investigations, by assessing and communicating the threat, and through food crime prevention activity with regulators, government and industry. Giles highlighted the cost of food fraud crime, unsafe products, consumers being misled and reputational damage that can result from food fraud in undermining consumer confidence i.e. horsemeat incident. He then gave an overview of the teams within the NFCU which are split into two branches: Intelligence, Strategy and Prevention and Investigations. The key deliverables for the NFCU are the Food Crime Strategic Assessment 2024, along with Control Strategy priorities, Prevention initiatives – to include an online tool, deep dive workshops, newsletter, SME focus and an FSA wide prevention plan and Investigations – complex fraud enquiries, financial investigation and asset recovery. In Wales there is a dedicated regional intelligence officer and aligned investigator team. There are two current investigations both exploring the supply chains linked to the production of ‘smokies’. The presentation then detailed some recent successes of the NFCU which have resulted in convictions and fines. Key pieces of upcoming work are the publication of the Food Crime Strategic Assessment, NFCU powers – primary and secondary legislation being sought, progress and enhance the focus of prevention work in relation to SMEs.

3.4 The committee commended the work of the unit and commented that they look forward to seeing the Food Crime Strategic Assessment.

3.5 Greg Wasinski, Team Leader Strategic Insights – The team sits within the Analysis Unit in the Science and Evidence directorate and their primary focus is horizon scanning, what the food system might look like in the future and what some of

the challenges or opportunities may be as a result. There are multiple teams across the FSA that undertake horizon scanning activities and the team can draw upon this expertise to inform their work. Greg explained that there is now a rhythm of regular horizon scanning reports, every 6 months an internal near view report is produced and every two years a Strategic Assessment is produced with a more long-term view, the last one was produced in 2023, and the team look to produce the next report in 2025. The first Strategic Assessment in 2021 highlighted some areas that needed further exploration and examples of work commissioned from this ranged from looking at emerging technologies in the food system, alternative proteins, 3D printing, impact of labour shortages and the impact of world issues.

3.6 There were discussions around gene editing and emerging technologies and the surveillance of this work and also how the team links into the teams who have developing work areas i.e. Regulated Products and the reform of that system.

4. Chair's update

4.1 The Chair gave an oral update on the June Board meeting in Llandudno and her visit to Dairy Farm, interesting to see the regulatory process at the farm which has on-site pasteurisation facilities and have diversified into vending their products - milk and ice cream.

5. Directors report (Paper 24/07/02)

5.1 The UKIA Director gave an oral update on the report which included updates on the new Government in Westminster and positive engagement with Minister Bryant in Wales.

6. Any other business

6.1 Members noted that the next themed meeting would be on 22 October.

The Chair closed the meeting.

