

Minutes of the themed meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on 6 February 2024.

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

- Rhian Hayward, Chair
- Dr Philip Hollington
- Christopher Brereton OBE
- Dr John Williams
- Helen Taylor
- Jessica Williams
- Dave Holland

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
- Peter Quigley – Deputy Director of Regulatory Services
- Brianna Halstead-Cashman – Head of Food Policy
- Chun-Han Chan – Head of Regulatory Innovation and Engagement
- Danielle Gazi – Head of Regulated Products Wales
- Kerys James-Palmer – Head of Legislative Strategy

Observers:

Representatives from:

- Elizabeth Lewis, Secretary General for the British Association of Feed Supplements and Additive Manufacturers (BAFSAM)

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council,
- Torfaen County Borough Council,
- Caerphilly County Borough Council

1.Introductions, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Georgia Taylor. The minutes of the October 2023 meeting were agreed.

2.Declaration of interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3. Regulated Products Reform

3.1 The committee received a presentation from officials which covered what regulated products are and how they are authorised, followed by an overview of the regulated products reform programme including stakeholder engagement work and what the reform is trying to achieve.

3.2 Overall, the committee were supportive of the reform programme, its aim of delivering a more streamlined and efficient system, to bring products to market faster, and content that the FSA are canvassing Wales-based stakeholders in their engagement programme. Key points of discussion were around how this is a critical piece of reform for the food system which needs to be mindful of not creating a barrier to innovation within the system. In Wales, we're encouraging innovation within the food industry and Welsh Government continue to invest in the food sector and food businesses. This leads to activity especially for SMEs and micro businesses but there is a big knowledge and capability gap to fill in this space. Many businesses are not always aware of the rules for authorisation and do not have the skills or knowledge of the process and how to produce a technical dossier.

3.3 On the proposal around pre-application support for businesses, WFAC commented that this is critical to ensure that innovation can continue as the lack of knowledge and capability causes delays and frustration. WFAC stressed the opportunities available if FSA connect to other innovation funders e.g. UKRI who can refer to regulation at an R&D stage. This guidance should not just be applicable to businesses and manufacturers but also stakeholder groups and those in the co-manufacturing sector who are sometimes less aware of the regulatory requirements around certain product types. WFAC queried whether a framework around each regime could be produced which could be very helpful not only for the innovator but for anybody supporting the innovator as this is significant reform that if done well could help the whole of the UK to progress and if not done well could hold back innovation and have a detrimental impact.

3.4 WFAC agreed broadly with the principles of removing renewals and SIs and were supportive of the team thinking boldly around the admin processes to make these more efficient. WFAC questioned whether a shorter consultation period with a

more targeted audience would save time and queried if it was possible for the consultation and risk analysis to happen simultaneously. WFAC were supportive of working internationally to benefit from risk assessments performed in other territories by trusted regulators as a time saver. WFAC agreed that the most important point is that food safety is not compromised when looking at time saving measures. Ultimately, WFAC would like to see an agile, efficient and holistic process.

3.5 Elizabeth Lewis, Secretary General for the British Association of Feed Supplements and Additive Manufacturers (BAFSAM) joined the meeting as an observer and provided some insight into how feed additives are approved in Wales. Elizabeth made some very compelling points from an industry perspective:

3.6 A clearly defined set of steps and timeframes is key – currently, the process is not working because there is no indication of timings/progress. Industry cannot plan and can't talk to investors or customers without a clear understanding of the timeframes.

3.7 At present, companies are telling BAFSAM "there is no point" submitting applications to the UK system and have members actively choosing not to market. She believes the current system must change if we are to have a functioning system.

3.8 Industry benefits the consumer – for example: more efficient feed, cheaper feed and feed with welfare benefits equals higher quality lower cost products for consumers. The current system damages all elements – industry, farmers, consumers.

3.9 Elizabeth stressed that the feed industry fully welcomes reform as it really is a critical point from an industry perspective.

4. Chair's update

4.1 The Chair gave an oral update on the December Board meeting held in Bristol and informed the committee that the June 2024 Board meeting will be held in Llandudno. The Chair also referenced her role as the Board's Regulated Products Lead and that this meeting is very timely to feed into Board discussions and the reform piece of work.

6. Director's report (Paper 23/02/02)

6.1 The Director gave an oral update on his report which included updates on the launch of the second FSA/FSS Annual report which was held at the Senedd and coincided with the 10th Anniversary of FHRS in Wales. Other topics included BTOM, Business planning and Bluetongue.

7. Any other business

7.1 Members noted that the next themed meeting would be on 23 April.

The Chair closed the meeting.