

Minutes of the themed meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on 8 April 2025

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

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

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

- Sian Bowsley – Director for FSA in Wales
- Sioned Fidler – Head of Communications, Welsh Language and Business Support
- Lucy Edwards – Senior Business Manager
- Christie O’Keefe - Business Manager
- Owen Lewis – Head of Regulatory Policy and Local Authority Partnerships
- Jonathan Davies – Head of Standards Policy and Consumer Protection

Presenters:

- Professor Robin May – Chief Scientific Adviser
- Daniel Lloyd – Team Leader Regulated Products, Risk Assessment – Cell-Cultivated Product Sandbox
- Joshua Ravenhill – Head of Cell-Cultivated Product Sandbox Programme
- Mark Bond – Senior Policy Manager – Cell-Cultivated Product Sandbox

1.Introductions, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Jessica Williams. The minutes of the February 2025 meeting were agreed.

2.Declaration of interests

- 2.1 There were no new Declarations of interest.

3. Cell Cultivated Products (CCP)

- 3.1 **Professor Robin May, Chief Scientific Adviser** - provided an overview of cell cultivated products, explaining that this is an innovative and potentially transformative technology and highlighting the differences from traditional products – grown in a lab rather than a field. Robin informed of the funding from the Department of Science Innovation Technology for developing a regime to ensure the safety of these products, emphasising the importance of a UK-wide approach, working closely with colleagues in Wales, Northern Ireland, England, and Scotland. Robin also noted the concerns around this technology such as the perceived threat to agriculture, Ultra Processed Foods and the wider debate around natural versus artificial foods.
- 3.2 **Daniel Lloyd, Team Leader for Regulated Products Risk assessment for CCP**, provided an overview of the science behind cell cultivated products, focusing on the production process and risk assessment. He explained that CCPs cover a variety of foods produced through the growth of cells in culture to produce a food product, the steps involved in sourcing production cell lines, immortalisation, cell growth in bioreactors, and cell harvesting and processing. Daniel explained that Risk assessment is a holistic process considering all elements of the final product and production process, but there are some of the key potential hazards associated with their use as foods. Daniel informed that the UK is not the only country working to regulate cell cultivated products for use in food as Singapore, USA and Israel have all approved cell cultivated products for human consumption with the EU, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand also undertaking regulatory reviews.

- 3.3 **Josh Ravenhill, Head of the CCP sandbox** – discussed the vision, scope, and deliverables of the sandbox. Explaining that the primary goal is to fast-track knowledge about hazards associated with cell cultivated products to ensure consumer safety while supporting innovation. The FSA will run the regulatory sandbox for CCPs for two years from February 2025, working on a four-nation basis. The sandbox has been funded through DSIT's Engineering Biology Sandbox Fund (EBSF), part of the government's engineering biology strategy. The mission is to ensure consumers have access to new products that are safe and what they say they are. Josh explained that the objectives are to 1. Agree approach to food safety, 2. Address essential questions and provide regulatory clarity and 3. Provide enhanced engagement with industry. To achieve these objectives the FSA will hold workshops with participants, publish bespoke scientific and regulatory guidance, enable and support the risk assessment of individual CCP applications, provide expert support to companies planning to submit a CCP dossier for approval, establish new cross government and international networks and establish a new sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes to support dossier assessment. Josh gave an overview of the companies participating in the CCP sandbox and explained that eight companies, three academic bodies, and two trade organisations were selected based on a range of criteria to ensure a diverse representation of technologies.
- 3.4 **Mark Bond, Senior Policy Manager CCP sandbox** – Mark provided an overview of the aims and objectives of the sandbox workshops. The first aim is to identify common safety hazards, and the evidence required to mitigate these risks, establishing proportionate regulatory approaches within existing regulations to progress applications and publishing guidance on these, and the second being to address the complex regulatory questions posed by this innovative technology, publishing positions to clarify to businesses on the path to market. With the objective to learn about the hazards associated with CCPs, how to mitigate them and how to resolve regulatory questions around authorisation of CCPs on the GB market, this will be achieved in 3 stages - **Inform**: Ensure participants understand the vision of the sandbox program and communicate the regulatory process, **Learn**: Gather information on participants'

practices and identify additional issues to address. **Communicate:** Foster collaboration and identify blockers and barriers faced by participants

3.5 **Committee discussion** - It was clear to WFAC members that safety remains the paramount priority throughout this work. Members discussed various elements of CCPs, focusing on:

- Integration of CCPs within existing food legislation
- Labelling requirements for novel food products
- Import and export considerations for the Welsh market
- Potential chemical and biological hazards in CCP production
- Local authority capacity to monitor and regulate these new processes
- Consumer perceptions regarding cell line selection and banking

The Committee was pleased to learn about Aberystwyth University's involvement in this work and looks forward to future updates on both the Sandbox initiative and CCP developments.

4. Chair's update

4.1 The Chair gave an oral update on the March Board meeting in Hull, where she delivered the annual report from WFAC. The report was well received, balancing retrospective achievements and forward-looking plans.

5. Directors report (Paper 24/04/02)

5.1 The Director gave an oral update on the report which included news on budgets and business planning. The report also informed of stakeholder engagement in relation to National Level Regulation and provided an update on the Welsh Government's review of the FSA in Wales.

6. Any other business

6.1 Members noted that the next themed meeting would be on 8 July 2025.

The Chair closed the meeting.