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**Meeting of the Northern
Ireland Food Advisory
Committee on Tuesday
28th June 2022, FSA Office,
Belfast and via Microsoft
Teams.**

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Agenda

- 10am Welcome & Housekeeping
- Minutes of meeting 26th April 2022
Declaration of Interests
- 10.05am Introduction to the Incidents Team – Craig Leeman
- 10.15am Incident Notifications & Incident Handling Process – Joanna Brown
- 10.45am Risk Analysis & Escalation – Craig Leeman
- 11.15am Break
- 11.25am Trending & Examples – James O’Neill
- 11.45am Changes since EU Exit / New Processes
- Receipt Management – Matthew Cooper & Anne Gravett
 - Stakeholder Engagement – Sofie Schon & Anne Gravett
- 12.45pm Director & Chair Update
- 1pm AOB
- Close
- 1.30pm Lunch at Novelli Restaurant, AC Mariott Hotel

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 26 APRIL 2022**

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 26 April 2022 NIFAC meeting.

Members are invited to:

- Agree 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 TUESDAY 26TH APRIL IN BELFAST OFFICE & VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS**

Those present:

NIFAC Members

- Colm McKenna
- Ellen Finlay
- Fiona Hanna
- Greg Irwin
- Cathal McDonnell
- Lynne McMullan
- Lorraine Crawford
- Ciaran McCartan

FSA Executive

- Maria Jennings – Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and NI
- Andy Cole, Deputy Director Northern Ireland
- Sharon Gilmore – Head of Standards and Dietary Health
- Roberta Ferson – Head of EU Relations, Assembly Liaison & Legal
- Ruth Watson – Head of Finance, Business Support & Communications

Guest Speakers

- FSA in NI Dietary Health Team: Fionnuala Close, Naomi Davidson, Kathleen Mooney, Jennifer McGonagle, Emily Boyd.
- Gary Maxwell, Department of Health

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members, presenters, and guests to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2022.

- 2.1 The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's meeting on 19 January 2022. No issues were raised.

3. Introduction to Dietary Health

3.1 The Chair invited Kathleen Mooney to present to the Committee.

3.2 Kathleen presented findings on the Eating Well, Choosing Better programme.

3.3 There then followed a discussion based on Kathleen's presentation.

- The Committee thanked Kathleen for a very detailed overview of the programme.
- The Dietary Health team was congratulated by the Committee on the many workstreams it is involved in.
- NIFAC discussed reformulation and the challenges of measuring success in industry.
- Kathleen highlighted food businesses concerns around product reformulation and the perceived impact on revenue.
- Members discussed reduction in portion size and agreed that this is a cultural challenge in Northern Ireland. Businesses can often be afraid to cut portion size as consumers want value for money.
- Kathleen highlighted that FSA and Invest NI are working together on the initiative. They are offering support to both large and small businesses; however, it is the small businesses that require extra support. The team is currently developing nutritional guidance to help.

4.0 Out of Home Sector & Food in Schools

4.1 The Chair invited Jennifer McGonagle to present to the Committee.

4.2 Jennifer provided an overview of the Out of Home & Food in Schools programme

4.3 The Committee thanked Jennifer for her detailed presentation and the work the team has done to date and discussed MenuCal in more detail.

- Members were pleased to note a spike in MenuCal users since mandatory measures were put in place in England. With a rise in users, members discussed the option of using the platform to promote other key messages.
- Jennifer agreed that this was a good idea however advised that it may be difficult to control messages as MenuCal is a tool specifically for calculating calories. The Committee discussed other ideas for reaching wider audiences including the possibility of promoting on websites.

- The Committee asked what more the FSA needs to do to get businesses on board.
- Jennifer advised many businesses are still recovering from the impact of Covid, some have less resources available and still require a lot of support to get to where they need to be but emphasised that businesses need to take ownership and move forward.
- Discussion moved to Food in Schools and the importance of schools delivering informed practical cooking skills as it is evident that these skills are lacking in young people.

5.0 Nutrition Standards in Health & Social Care and plans for councils

5.1 The Chair invited Naomi Davidson to present to the Committee.

5.2 Naomi provided an update on nutrition standards in Health & Social Care catering settings.

5.3 The Committee thanked Naomi for her informative overview.

- Members were pleased to hear about changes designed to make the food on offer for staff and visitors in hospital restaurants, cafés, vending machines and retail outlets healthier.
- The Committee was concerned about the lack of provision for nightshift staff in health and social care setting with most canteen and kitchen facilities closed.
- Naomi agreed that the nutrition of nightshift workers is of great importance to FSA and this has been raised through the steering group. This is an area of ongoing work.

6.0 Overview of nutrition surveillance data

6.1 The Chair invited Emily Boyd to present to the Committee.

6.2 Emily presented an overview of nutrition surveillance data

6.3 The Committee thanked Emily for presenting the data and noted the breadth of work the dietary health team have carried out to gather the key data.

- Members discussed the “cost of a healthy food basket” and acknowledged that this is becoming increasingly harder to afford, especially as we are in a cost-of-living crisis.

- The Committee contrasted the eating habits of those in higher and lower income groups and highlighted that processed food is more affordable than fresh produce.
- NIFAC discussed the mandatory regulations for food businesses in England to display calorie information on non-prepacked foods. Members agreed that measures are in place to help tackle obesity and to ensure people make informed and healthier choices however felt a more balanced approach may be needed in Northern Ireland.
- Members agreed that there is often negative press coverage around calorie content and consideration needs to be given to those who do not want to see the calorie content of a meal.

7.0 Dietary Health Policy Update

- 7.1 The Chair invited Fionnuala Close to bring the team's presentations to a close.
- 7.2 Fionnuala provided a synopsis of workstreams covered by the team and updated the Committee on dietary health policy.
- 7.3 The Committee thanked Fionnuala and the dietary team for their detailed and informative presentations and for the volume of work undertaken.

8.0 The Obesity Strategy for Northern Ireland

- 8.1 The Chair invited Gary Maxwell from the Department of Health to present to the Committee.
- 8.2 Gary provided an overview of the Obesity Strategy Project 2023 -2032
- 8.3 The Committee thanked Gary for his presentation and there then followed a discussion.
- The Committee had in a depth discussion around cross government collaboration and commitment in working towards tackling obesity. NIFAC highlighted the importance of building on work that is already in place like the anti-poverty strategy that that can feed into each other.
 - Gary agreed that there was work to be done and was keen to build on these findings.
 - NIFAC discussed the evaluation of key findings and questioned if the right data is being collected. The Committee highlighted that the main challenge may be the follow up and the intention to change behaviour and ways to offer long term support after interventions have been implemented.
 - Gary acknowledged that although they are in receipt of some good data, in parts it is not good enough. This is an area that needs improvement, and they

are seeking ways to better utilise data. Strong working relationships have been built with the FSA and universities and it is the intention to strengthen these further.

- Discussion turned to the involvement of local government in intervention and if it could more of a role in the project.
- Gary advised that there had been engagement, but it is area that needs to be followed up on and stronger foundations built.
- Members questioned the absence of the Department of Education in the strategy.
- Gary advised that due to Covid, the Department of Education was not on the project board but hoped there would be involvement down the line. He reiterated the importance of providing teenagers with the necessary cooking skills for adulthood.
- NIFAC discussed what more could be done around the high fat, sugar and salt and the food promotion and placement regulations in place in England. Although not in place in Northern Ireland, NIFAC noted that larger supermarkets are implementing the placement of promotional foods as they would in England.
- Gary discussed sugar tax and explained that taxation can be a challenge. Conversations are ongoing around this to determine whose powers this falls under.
- The Committee agreed that the strategy is key to tackling obesity in Northern Ireland and was pleased to note the correlation with the FSA strategy. NIFAC is keen for the FSA to continue to work closely with DoH around obesity.
- Gary thanked the FSA for its continued support and reiterated the importance of cross government working. Gary advised that it is imperative that the strategy is championed by government departments and remains at the forefront. There are many challenges ahead in the strategy, but he is optimistic that by working together improvements can be achieved and delivered.

9.0 Chair's Update & Director's Report

- 9.1 Members were surprised to note the significant rise in food businesses run from domestic kitchens in Northern Ireland. Members were pleased to hear the measures the FSA have put in place to get these businesses registered with district councils to help with hygiene and standards to keep consumers safe.
- 9.2 The Committee discussed the shortage of sunflower oil and was pleased to note the immediate food safety risk of substituting sunflower oil with refined rapeseed oil, in particular to people with a food allergy is very low.

9.3 NIFAC discussed the FSA's work on allergens and the "Speak Up for Allergies" campaign. The Committee felt that there was still some work to be done in Northern Ireland food businesses, especially restaurants, to bring them in line with their counterparts in England.

9.4 Members heard that applications were open for the FSA Board member for Northern Ireland and NIFAC Chair. Applications to close in early May, with interviews scheduled for June and successful applicant in post by September.

10.0 **Any Other Business**

10.1 No further business was raised and the meeting was closed.

PAPER FOR INFORMATION

UPDATE FROM DIRECTOR FOR REGULATORY COMPLIANCE, PEOPLE AND NI TO NIFAC 28 JUNE 2022

Executive Summary

Attached is the FSA in NI Director's update to the Committee for June 2022.

- No action by members is necessary.

FSA in Northern Ireland

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Food Is Safe

We launched two food safety campaigns during May and June. Our first campaign targeted community groups serving food for the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend and another around business standards addressing a drop in food hygiene rates. We engaged both District Councils and OGDs with correspondence and a toolkit for them to share these messages on their own channels. The Jubilee content has now ended but the business standards campaign is still live with three out of seven posts still to issue. Both campaigns have received positive engagement from social media users and council support.

Ukraine Crisis – Sunflower Oil

The FSA has downgraded the incident classification of this issue from Non-Routine Severe to Routine meaning that although the issue is still live, it is now being managed using the routine incident management plan and is considered business as usual.

Correspondence with industry and district councils is ongoing and work is being conducted in terms of industry return to compliance. FSA in NI's Consumer Protection Team and Dietary Health and Standards Team remain involved in this incident.

Further communications to district councils and industry, clarifying the requirements surrounding the use of the term 'in varying proportions' in ingredient declarations, are expected week ending 24/06/2022.

The FSA Board discussed the FSA's response to supply chain disruptions at its meeting on 15 June.

The latest FSA news stories and risk assessments can be found at:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/update-3-fsa-and-fss-issue-further-guidance-on-the-use-of-oils-as-ingredient-substitutions>

Gathering and Using Science, Evidence and Information

FSA's Kantar data supporting consumers

The Dietary Health team worked in partnership with *safe food* to help support the launch of the next phase of their [START campaign](#) in May 2022, focusing on healthy weight for children. The Dietary Health team provided data relating to 'treat foods' from our 2020 take home food and drink purchasing data by Kantar Fast Moving Consumer Goods. The data provided revealed how much is spent on average, by families in Northern Ireland on treat foods (such as cakes, chocolate, sweets, crisps,

regular soft drinks, ice-cream, and biscuits), in comparison to what is spent on fruit and vegetables. Press releases using this data was published by [The Irish News](#) and the [Belfast News Letter](#).

The UK Public's Interests, Needs and Concerns Around Food

The FSA has published a series of [reports](#) which provide a detailed 'snapshot' of people's interests, needs and concerns around food. This qualitative and quantitative research explored UK consumer views and priorities in relation to food hygiene and safety, but also around wider interests the public see critical in shaping their food choices and lives including health and nutrition; environment and ethics; price quality and convenience; consumer versus business power and potential food futures. A Northern Ireland [report](#) has also been produced which highlights Northern Ireland specific data and any regional differences in consumer experiences or views.

Local Authorities (LA) Recovery Plan

The FSA in NI received a 100% response rate from District Councils (DCs) to the 2021/22 End of Year (EOY) survey, used to monitor LAs' performance against the recovery plan. Whilst a number of flags were raised against NI DCs using the FSA's risk assessment matrix, (7/11 food hygiene flags & 10/11 with food standards flags) the majority of issues were for lower risk issues.

The issues for which flags were raised included:

- Discrepancies/inaccuracies with Full Time Equivalent figures
- Lack of Proactive sampling
- Lack of Ongoing surveillance
- The number of new businesses prioritised as high risk awaiting inspection
- Lack of enforcement action other than written warnings.

All DCs with performance management (PM) flags have been contacted and PM issues satisfactorily closed with the exception of 2 DCs from whom we are still awaiting a response. Feedback from the EOY return & subsequent follow-up communications with the DCs is positive in that they envisage they will be able to deliver Phase 2 of the recovery plan. The next interim "temperature check" survey to monitor LAs' performance against the LA recovery plan is scheduled for July 2022.

Being the Best Organisation We Can Be

FSA involvement in Ulster University videos

The Dietary Health team were invited to take part in videos produced by Ulster University to promote their BSc nutrition courses with future students. The videos are an excellent resource for prospective students with speakers ranging from current students, lecturers, and nutrition employers. The FSA feature in the video to promote

the [BSc Human Nutrition course](#). The videos have been promoted on social media by both Ulster University and the FSA in NI.

FSA presents university prizes

As part of a piece of work to develop closer working relationships with nutrition institutions in Northern Ireland, the dietary health team are awarding a series of summer prizes to undergraduate nutrition students from Ulster University, Queens University Belfast and CAFRE (The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise). A prize will also be awarded to a student at the Irish Section conference of the Nutrition Society this July for the best student presentation. Members of the Dietary Health team have been invited to each of the prize giving ceremonies and plans are in place to promote the prizes on social media.

EHAI/CIEH All-Ireland Forum

The Trade Imports and Exports team were invited to deliver a presentation at the annual Environmental Health Association of Ireland (EHAI) and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health All-Ireland Forum on the 10th June. This event was used to raise awareness of the vital work undertaken by the FSA to co-ordinate and support enforcement authorities in the delivery of official controls, whilst also highlighting the critical importance of continued cross border co-operation and partnership working to protect the consumers on the island of Ireland. The forum also presented an opportunity to establish new and further develop existing working relationships between the FSA and colleagues within competent authorities in the Republic of Ireland.

DC Engagement Tracker

The Local Authority & Policy Delivery team have introduced a new District Council (DC) engagement tracker so we can coordinate and manage the requests/asks being placed on DCs by the various teams within FSA and help manage the volume of work and burdens on DCs. The tracker will capture requests above and beyond Business as Usual and will enable FSA to identify any pressure points/periods for the DCs and facilitate the more even distribution of asks across DCs. The tracker will also be used to help inform LAPD's performance monitoring and management of DCs.

The team recently also coordinated a meeting between EHNI, NIFMG and FSA colleagues leading on the Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) work programme to provide district council environmental health /food managers with an update on the three ABC workstreams. The meeting was well received by both parties and provided an excellent opportunity to enhance our collaborative engagement with the DCs on this priority work programme.

In Country visits and trade

The team has been very busy supporting inward visits from a number of countries over the past few weeks –

- USA - remote audit at meat establishments- evaluation of Food Safety Management Systems and Competent Authority controls for pork and lamb.
- Vietnam - poultry and pork production
- A trade delegation from Mongolia interested in poultry and fish

The team, working with DAERA and industry, successfully delivered overviews of the programme of official controls that ensures that Northern Ireland/UK food is produced to the highest food safety standards.

We also hosted the US Grains Council who are interested in exporting GMOs for food and feed use and understanding the potential for Gene Editing technology in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK following the recent lifting of tariffs.

The European Commission conducted an audit of DAERA w/c 13th June 2022. The scope of the audit was the national veterinary residues sampling plan. The FSA was invited to attend the penultimate session of the audit on 16th June, during which it received questions regarding the incident handling process and provision of risk assessments in NI. The auditors left content with how the FSA in NI manages such incidents in NI.

Refreshed Approvals support

The team is refreshing support to stakeholders and delivery partners as we emerge from COVID-19. A very successful Northern Ireland Approvals seminar was held on 24th May between the FSA, DAERA and district councils which included excellent presentations on practical enforcement issues at approved establishments, on farm pasteurisation and animal by-products, including highlighting the ongoing work of the Northern Ireland Approvals Forum. The event was positively received, and it was used to promote the new online [approval service](#) set up by FSA for industry seeking approval of their establishments.

Increased request of Food Business Operators approvals:

Over the last few months, we have experienced a surge in request for approvals at meat establishments. These have covered areas such as the addition of activities to existing approvals; the expansion of business with new layouts/rooms added; and applications for new establishments. We have also received applications for approvals for other commodities: egg packing centres and dairy establishments. This has highlighted a growing interest in these priority sectors of the Northern Ireland agri-food economy.

EU Transition

NIP Bill

The UK Government has introduced primary legislation related to the Northern Ireland Protocol (NIP) with the aim of restoring the balance inherent in the objectives of the Protocol - avoiding a hard border, protecting the integrity of the UK and safeguarding the EU Single Market.

Two key elements of the Bill are of particular relevance for the FSA as a central competent authority:

- The introduction of a channelling system for goods moving into NI from Great Britain with controls applied to goods based on their intended destination. This will create a 'Green Lane' for goods staying within NI with proportionate regulatory controls being applied, and a 'Red Lane' for those goods destined for ROI or at risk of entering the EU single market, with all necessary controls being applied for those movements.
- The establishment of a Dual Regulatory Model which would allow food businesses to choose whether to place goods on the NI market in line with UK or EU rules.

The FSA is considering the proposed legislation in detail and will continue to work closely across government, with devolved administrations, enforcement partners and industry to ensure that the implementation of NIP bill maintains the high food safety standards that NI consumers currently enjoy.

Legislation

We have an ambitious legislative programme for the new Assembly mandate, including plans to seek primary legislation to secure additional powers to investigate food and feed related offences committed under the Fraud Act 2006 in NI. The programme also includes secondary legislation to: require businesses which supply consumers with food via online order to display their Food Hygiene Rating (FHR) online; update the Bread and Flour Regulations following a four country review, including mandatory folic acid fortification; provide for the enforcement of safety requirements on recycled plastic food contact materials; and provide for the enforcement of requirements on total diet replacement for weight control and food

intended for infants and young children.

Without a fully functioning Assembly and Executive, legislation cannot be progressed. Officials from the FSA in NI continue to work with officials from NI departments to prepare to deliver food and feed legislation.

On 17 June, we launched a consultation on the introduction of secondary legislation needed to implement the online display provision within the statutory food hygiene rating scheme established by the Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. It will close on 9 September. With an increasing trend for consumers to purchase food online, a key provision within the Act is for online display of food business FHRs to further increase the accessibility of this information. The significant increase in online food ordering in recent years has further boosted the need to extend transparency about hygiene standards in food outlets, made available to consumers through FHRS, to the online food ordering market. We consider a statutory approach that makes it mandatory for businesses to display their rating online in a prominent position would strengthen the scheme and continue to empower consumers to make informed choices. Making ratings more accessible in this way will provide a more integrated approach to ensuring the information is widely available and this would increase the scheme's potential to improve public health and help drive competition in the market and business growth more quickly and effectively.

Industry Engagement

Following the laying and publication of the inaugural Annual Report on Food Standards on June 23rd we have invited stakeholders from across our audience spectrum in Northern Ireland to join us for a breakfast briefing and networking event at Stormont Hotel on 27 June. FSA Chair, Professor Susan Jebb and senior leaders in FSA Northern Ireland will be engaging stakeholders about the findings and FSA's recently published strategy. *Our Food: An annual review of food standards across the UK*, is an in-depth review of whether food standards in the UK are being maintained, are falling, or improving. As the first report of its kind, it comes at a critical time with the impact of the UK's departure from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic and the current turbulence caused by the invasion of Ukraine all continuing to affect the UK's food systems.

EWCB Bulletin June issue

We issued the second edition of our Eating Well, Choosing Better bulletin in June. With 260 subscribers so far, it is already proving popular as a point of reference for stakeholders in the food manufacturing and retail industry. June's edition was a packed one, with reports on the implementation of updated nutritional standards in health and social care settings in Northern Ireland, the latest technical guidance for cheesecake reformulation, a summary of the Wave 7 Eating Well, Choosing Better

Tracking Survey 2021 and on-the-scene reports from Balmoral Show and the 2022 Northern Ireland Food and Drink Awards, the latter featuring the winner of the FSA-sponsored “Healthier Product Innovation” award.

Maria Jennings

Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and NI

NIFAC DISCUSSION

Incident Handling

Executive Summary

The theme of the meeting is incident handling and resilience.

The Committee will be hearing from the Incidents Team, who will provide an overview of the incident handling process, focussing on associated risks and emerging trends. The Incidents Team will also provide an update on changes post EU Exit and new processes in place.

There will then be a panel discussion to allow 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 impacts of incidents in Northern Ireland.

FSA in Northern Ireland

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