

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 29 NOVEMBER 2017**

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 29 November NIFAC open meeting.

Members are invited to:

- Agree minutes as a true record of proceedings.

FSA Northern Ireland

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REF NIFAC MINUTES 10/17
OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY
COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON 29 NOVEMBER 2017, 10.30AM, AT THE FSA
OFFICES, BELFAST.

Those present:	FSA Executive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Sandys – FSA Deputy Chair. <p><u>NIFAC members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colm McKenna – Chairman. • Christine Kennedy. • Elizabeth Mitchell. • Colin Reid. • Aodhan O'Donnell. • Sara McCracken. • Fiona Hanna. <p><u>Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phelim O'Neill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seth Chanas – NIFAC Secretariat. • Roberta Ferson – NI Head of Finance Business Support and Communications. • Sharon Gilmore – NI Head of Standards and Dietary Health. • Kathryn Baker – NI Head of Consumer Protection. • Michael Jackson - Head of Regulatory Standards and Assurance. <p><u>By Video/Teleconference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nina Purcell – Director Regulatory Delivery & Wales • Paul Cook – Outbreaks & Emergencies team. • Julie Pierce – Director of Openness, Data and Digital • Michelle Patel, FSA Director of Communications

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members to the meeting, explaining that were apologies had been received from NIFAC member Phelim O'Neill. The Chair also welcomed the observers who had attended this Open meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 13 September 2017.

2.1. The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's open meeting on 13 September. No changes were requested and the Secretariat agreed to publish the minute as presented.

Action Point – Secretariat to arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 13 September 2017.

3. Chair’s Report and Director’s Update

- 3.1. The Chair updated NIFAC on a number of events he had attended since the previous meeting including a dinner held by the Livestock and Meat Commission.
- 3.2. Roberta Ferson then updated the Committee on activities of the FSA in NI since the previous meeting as included in meeting papers. The following items were mentioned:
 - Campylobacter Process Hygiene Criterion.
 - Compulsory and Voluntary Meat Country of Origin Training for EHOs.
 - New Approach for Managing Shellfish Water Quality Issues.
 - Launch of Calorie Wise scheme with out of home businesses.
- 3.3. It was explained that the Campylobacter Process Hygiene Criterion will be introduced on 1 January and had emerged from the work the FSA had led on around campylobacter.
- 3.4. The Country of Origin Training for EHOs had been well attended and will be complimented with an application for checking compliance. This has been an NI led initiative.
- 3.5. It was explained that the new approach for managing shellfish water quality issues is a pilot scheme and the first one of its kind.
- 3.6. The launch of the Calorie Wise scheme with out of home businesses had been a successful event and had been chaired by the Chair of NIFAC Colm McKenna. This scheme had been worked on for some time by the FSA in NI’s Dietary Health team in partnership with the District Councils.

4. Regulating Our Future – The Food Standards Agency’s Role as a Supporting Regulator under Primary Authority.

- 4.1. The Chair welcomed Nina Purcell, the FSA’s Director Regulatory Delivery & Wales and Michael Jackson, FSA Head of Regulatory Standards & Assurance to the meeting to introduce the above paper due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. Nina Purcell joined the meeting by video conference from the FSA’s office at Southgate House in Cardiff. The paper covered:

- the FSA's role as supporting regulator under the Enterprise Act 2016;
- the proposal for the Board to limit activity;
- the primary relationship between the Local Authority and the Food Business; and
- a suggested review in 2 years.

4.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- This is a good paper on a complex issue, though not directly related to regulation in Northern Ireland, which does not operate a Primary Authority model.
- The FSA must remain clear that when operating as a supporting regulator, any advice it gives should be general and applicable across industry to avoid a perception that the role constitutes consultancy. It was reassuring to hear that this consideration was a key principle for the executive team also.
- Reassurance that the FSA can protect its ethos of independence, openness and transparency within the role of a supporting regulator are welcomed. Maintaining consumer confidence will be essential to the FSA's credibility as a regulator.
- Clarification that if the FSA assumed the role of Supporting Regulator, as recommended, this should not have a negative impact on its ability to maintain its wider responsibilities is also welcomed.

4.3. The Chair thanked Michael Jackson and Nina Purcell for bringing this paper to NIFAC for consideration and asked them to introduce the next paper.

5. Regulating Our Future – Development of the Assurance Framework for the Target Operating Model.

5.1. Nina Purcell and Michael Jackson also introduced this paper, similarly due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. The presentation covered:

- the focus on the first tier of the regulating pyramid;
- the various assurance schemes the various levels of competency within the current system;
- high level principles around eligibility;
- progress around third party assurance and inspection strategies; and
- the successful operation of models elsewhere.

5.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- NIFAC heard a very detailed introduction to this paper, which was useful in helping to tease out many of the issues. The paper itself is well constructed and the use of visual elements were valuable for illustrating concepts.
- Consideration should be given to the reasons why a Certified Regulatory Auditor couldn't add value to the subject of an audit though advice. It is acknowledged that it would not be appropriate for an auditor to provide support and guidance to a business when undertaking the audit function. Providers of audit would have to ensure that they were set up appropriately to guarantee clear separation between audit and consultancy services to support businesses but to withhold such advice could be considered a missed opportunity and NIFAC endorsed the idea of trying to make this work.
- The FSA must also ensure that those operating within this area possess the relevant competencies. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health may be able to run a course, which would count as a form of accreditation. Care must be taken, however, that a function is not being created without clear evidence of a demand.

5.3. The Chair thanked Nina Purcell and Michael Jackson for this update.

6. Update on FSA's Activities Concerning Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

6.1. The Chair welcomed Paul Cook, of the FSA Outbreaks & Emergencies team, to the meeting by video conference to introduce the above paper, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. The presentation covered:

- an update on AMR activities;
- the global nature and implications of the issue;
- key elements and attempts to slow AMR;
- recent activities; and
- the advice of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food.

6.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following comments were made:

- This is a welcome paper and the involvement of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food is also welcome.

- The logging of feeds used on farms as happens with the Farm Quality Assurance scheme is one possible model for the FSA to look at in seeking to reduce antimicrobial usage in the food chain. The Better Beef Challenge in Northern Ireland, which NIFAC saw on our October site visit, also emphasised timely interventions with vaccinations to minimise the need for antibiotic feed fortification.
- The international nature of the workstreams and how these were envisaged to continue following the UK's exit from the EU is reassuring.

6.3. The Chair thanked Paul Cook for bringing this item to the Committee.

7. Strategic Surveillance Update.

7.1. The Chair welcomed Julie Pierce, FSA Director of Openness, Data and Digital, to the meeting to introduce the above paper by video link from the FSA's office at Aviation House in London. The presentation covered:

- the new SRO for the workstream;
- the commitment to provide an update to the Board;
- progress to date;
- drivers including EU exit, climate change and AMR; and
- proposal for a review of the lab network.

7.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- While all the papers NIFAC considered at this meeting are commended in terms of their quality, this one is particularly well written. The review of the UK official control laboratories is an important piece of work. Identifying outbreaks early by detecting microbial contaminants continues to be an important capacity to maintain. The use of the hackathon event is also praised.
- It is also reassuring that there is a strong link to the FSA Communications team in this work. This link will be key to the success in identifying risks and issues across the food system.
- The use of the example of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as an exercise to identify potential risks would be worthwhile and could help to calcify much of the theoretical thinking from other departments into a clearer grasp of the issues at stake.

7.3. The Chair thanked Julie Pierce for assisting with the Committee's consideration of this paper.

8. Understanding People: Social Science in The Food Standards Agency.

8.1. Julie Pierce then remained on the video link to update the Committee on the above paper. The presentation covered:

- The proposal to align social science policy with the Communications team's segmentation work;
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8.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- The Committee congratulated the FSA on the scope and quality of the work displayed in this presentation.
- The move toward social media and online communications was supported, emphasising that a focus should also be maintained on those lacking the means to access these messages. These are frequently the most vulnerable individuals who could benefit most from information. It was acknowledged that the FSA also does good outreach and events work. The importance of education and of getting the message to the right consumers was highlighted as the key to effective communications and the evidence based way in which the FSA does its communications work was commended.

8.3. The Chair thanked Julie Pierce for bringing this item to the Committee.

Any Other Business

8.4. Comments were invited from observers on any of the items the following comments were received:

- The naming and shaming of retailers whose raw chicken contained high levels of campylobacter, while contributing effectively to campylobacter reduction, has also contributed to a scepticism among some producers about whether the FSA can be trusted with commercially sensitive data. The FSA faces a challenge in rebuilding this trust if it is to persuade businesses to share data in the future.
- The lack of a specific food-fraud offence in statute represents a lacuna in the legislation. The filling of this gap may be beneficial for the work of the National Food Crime unit.
- The link between the Food Crime Unit and the District Councils is not clearly spelled out and more detail on this would be welcome.

8.5. No further business was raised and the meeting was closed. The next Open meeting will be held on 8 March.

TABLE OF ACTION POINTS

No	Action	To be actioned by	To be completed by
1.	To make amendment to paragraph 3.4 and arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 12 September 2016.	Secretariat	08/03/2017