

**Meeting of the Northern
Ireland Food Advisory
Committee on Wednesday
26th January 2022,
via Microsoft Teams.**

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Agenda

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|--------|--|
| 2.00pm | Welcome & Housekeeping |
| 2.05pm | Minutes of meeting Wednesday 20 th October 2021
Declaration of Interests |
| 2.10pm | Chair's Update & Director's Report |
| 2.30pm | Strategy Overview & Discussion
(Ben Haden, Head of Strategy Delivery & Sam Faulkner, Head
of Strategy Unit) |
| 3.10pm | Public Affairs Update
(Stratagem - Grainne Walsh & Adam Newton) |
| 3.50pm | Break |
| 3.55pm | Committee Planning Session |
| 4.55pm | AOB |
| 5.00pm | Close |

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 20 OCTOBER 2021**

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 20 October 2021 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 20 October 2021, 10.15am AC Marriott Hotel, Belfast & via Microsoft Teams.

Those present:

NIFAC Members

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

FSA Executive

- Emily Miles – Chief Executive
- Professor Susan Jebb – Board Chair
- 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 Moreno – Head of Consumer Protection
- Ruth Watson - Head of Finance, Business Support & Communications
- Kevin Maher – Head of Food Safety Policy & Delivery
- Elvira Diez – Head of Operational Policy & Delivery
- Jayne McGlaughlin – Senior Policy Advisor
- Robyn McNeilly – NIFAC Secretariat

Guest Speakers

- Joy Alexander – Head of Future Food Policy, DAERA
- Elvira Diez & Kevin Maher, Operational Policy & Delivery Team

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

2. Minutes of the meeting of 23 June 2021.

The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's meeting on 23 June 2021. No issues were raised.

3. The Food Strategy Framework

3.1 The Chair invited Joy Alexander to present to the Committee.

3.2 The presentation covered the following:

- Aims of the framework
- Key drivers for change
- The journey so far
- Vision
- Co design process
- Overview, phase 1 March 2022
- Phase 2
- Strategic priorities 1-5
- Guiding principles
- Food systems approach
- Next steps

3.3 There then followed a discussion based on the presentation.

- The Committee thanked Joy for a very insightful presentation.
- Members referenced the vision statement outlined by Joy and debated the definition of ethics, considering how to best meet these challenges.
- NIFAC welcomed the timing of the strategy and agreed it was the perfect time to refresh changes in the UK.
- The Committee discussed ways in which the FSA could help provide a more joined up approach and add value going forward

4.0 Operational Policy & Delivery Team Update

4.1 The Chair invited Kevin and Elvira to present to the Committee.

4.2 The presentation covered the following:

- Team structure
- Responsibilities
- Northern Ireland meat establishments
- SLA management – interaction & governance
- Meat hygiene delivery – challenges & actions

- Forward plan of work

4.3 There then followed a discussion based on the update.

- The Committee thanked Elvira and Kevin for the update and agreed it was a very informative presentation.
- NIFAC agreed there is a lot of hard work going on behind the scenes to ensure that our food is safe, and this should be commended.
- Members highlighted concerns around Northern Ireland being slightly disadvantaged compared to the rest of the UK. They discussed fears around lack of involvement in the Operational Transformation Programme consultation and agreed the importance of Northern Ireland's input.
- The Committee discussed benefits of the transformation, praising the digital upgrades and continuous improvements that will benefit staff.
- Members talked about pressures on staff in meat plants, discussing the role of vets and meat inspectors.

5.0 Chair's Update & Director's Report

5.1 The Chair updated the Committee on the Global Food Incidents Conference, that took place in the 1st week of October. The Chair advised that he and Peter Price, WFAC Chair, provided opening speeches.

5.2 The Chair advised that the Board met in person in London, the first face to face meeting since the pandemic. The Board would like to visit Belfast next year.

5.3 Maria welcomed Andy Cole to the FSA and wished him well in his role as Deputy Director in Northern Ireland.

5.4 Maria touched on all the work FSA NI has been involved in over the last few months and expressed her thanks to staff for their continued hard work and support.

PAPER FOR INFORMATION

UPDATE FROM DIRECTOR FOR REGULATORY COMPLIANCE, PEOPLE AND NI TO NIFAC 26 JANUARY 2022

Executive Summary

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

- No action by members is necessary.

FSA in Northern Ireland

Contact	Robyn McNeilly
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Food is Safe

Pomana Porcului

In December, the Consumer Protection and Communications teams partnered with DAERA, district councils and community representatives to produce and run food safety messaging to Northern Ireland's Romanian community. The messaging focussed on encouraging good food safety practices and the legal acquisition of pig carcasses for the Romanian cultural celebration of Pomana Porcului, which is celebrated at Christmas and family occasions. The animated video with Romanian voiceover was published on the Inter-Ethnic Forum closed community page of 1,500 members, securing 418 views and 10 interactions including a comment 'super' in recognition. The posts across Facebook and Twitter gained 118 interactions with a reach of over 800 people.

Annual Shellfish Classification Review

The Local Authority Policy and Delivery team has completed the 2022 classification review of the 32 shellfish harvesting areas in NI. The review was completed using the recently amended FSA protocols for the investigation and consideration of anomalous results from Class A harvesting areas. The protocols were revised to include two new additional criteria when considering whether a result is to be treated as anomalous and therefore disregarded. This will allow us to exclude uncharacteristically high results (those more than three standard deviations above the mean result) and take a proportionate response to occasional results slightly above the threshold for Class A harvesting areas where monitoring data otherwise shows that the area is on track to remain within the Class A criteria. Of the 32 harvesting areas, zero have benefitted from the application of the revised FSA protocols this year.

The FSA has recently entered a new MoU with the Loughs Agency to continue to collect water and shellfish samples for the FSA's shellfish official control monitoring programmes in Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough.

COVID-19 Recovery Roadmap for Local Authority Delivery

Review of the 11 district council (DC) responses to the FSA's "temperature check" survey, issued 1 October 2021, has been completed. Initial analysis of the data, using the new risk matrix developed to assess LA performance, identified two DCs with performance issues with the COVID 19 roadmap. Following engagement with both DCs, sufficient assurances were provided that they had achieved the recent milestone (30 September 2021), were in a position to achieve the next milestone (31 March 2022) and could continue to deliver the ongoing LA recovery Plan expectations and controls. The performance management issues for the two DCs in NI have now been closed. We continue to monitor DC performance via NIFMG, intelligence reports and informal engagement. The next formal review of LA performance with COVID-19 Recovery Roadmap will be completed using the bespoke end of year survey at the end of March 2022.

Gathering and Using Science, Evidence, and Information

Report on Take Home Food and Drink Purchases (2016, 2019 and 2020)

The Dietary Health team carried out research with Kantar Fast Moving Consumer Goods Purchase Panel to monitor take home food and drink purchasing in NI (i.e. all food and drink purchased and brought into the home excluding takeaways delivered to the home and food ordered at restaurants). The data was collated into a [report](#) examining key trends and identifying food and drink categories that are of concern to dietary health. In 2020, households increased their spend on take home food and drink purchasing by 13.2% when compared to 2019. It is recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic may have influenced this purchasing, and future studies are needed to investigate this further. The report is now available on the FSA website and has been shared with the Chair of the Wider Consumer Interests working Group (Social Science team) and key stakeholders such as other government departments, enforcement officers, academia, and the food industry.

Nutrition Presentation for the Public Health Dietitians Group

The Dietary Health team created a PowerPoint resource for the Regional Public Health Dietitians Group detailing the latest findings from our nutrition surveillance data on what NI consumers are eating, purchasing and their attitudes and behaviour towards food. The resource was presented at the regional meeting on 12th October 2021 and will be used by public health dietitians across NI to inform their work on public health with a variety of patients/community groups.

Meeting with the Institute of Public Health

The Dietary Health team met with colleagues from the Institute of Public Health (IPH) on 1st November 2021 to receive an update on the evidence review that the IPH are leading on to support the development of the new obesity prevention strategy for NI. At the meeting the dietary health team also provided an update on the FSA's nutrition policy and surveillance work.

Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group

The Dietary Health team delivered a presentation at the November meeting of the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group (ROPIG) on the work of the Eating Well Choosing Better Programme and on the FSA's nutrition surveillance programmes. The presentation has been used to inform the development of the new ten-year obesity prevention strategy for Northern Ireland which will adopt a whole systems approach. ROPIG are responsible for the development and delivery of programmes contributing to the implementation of the Northern Ireland Obesity Prevention framework.

Biannual meeting with safefood

On the 23rd November the Dietary Health team attended the second information sharing meeting of the year with safefood nutrition policy colleagues. The meetings are used to update both teams on upcoming research and nutrition projects and to identify opportunities for shared learning and partnership working.

Post-EU Exit Arrangements

The Northern Ireland Trade, Imports and Exports team has been expanded further to strengthen our capability to engage with other government departments and food businesses. The FSA recently held a well received teach-in workshop for those trading in fish and fishery products on new export health certificate requirements that became applicable on 15 Jan 2022. No significant issues have arisen in relation to the use of the new fishery certificates.

With the recent appointment of Liz Truss as the lead negotiator on the Northern Ireland Protocol, there is renewed impetus behind the technical discussions that will proceed in the coming weeks. She would like to see outcomes being agreed by the end of March, so that no checks or documentation will be required for goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and staying here. The team is working closely with District Councils, DAERA and Defra on a range of matters that could potentially affect the movement of goods into Northern Ireland and making certain that NI interests are heard.

FSA NI officials met with European Commission colleagues to review current arrangements for the exchange of information on food and feed incidents, non-compliances and agri-food fraud between the EU and NI. The Commission had no issues to raise and were content with how things had worked since our original agreement in Dec 2020. The FSA highlighted areas where improvements could be made to speed up the information exchange from EU to NI. The Commission proposed some adjustments that were very welcomed as they will assist prompt incident response. A review in 6 months was agreed.

Legislation and Consultations

Policy and legal colleagues have agreed a final draft of the proposed Food Hygiene Rating Online Display Regulations 2022 for consultation. We are working on the consultation package and associated impact assessment and aim to launch the consultation in March 2022. The draft regulations must be affirmed by a resolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly before they can become law.

Consultation on Precautionary Allergen Labelling and Information

In December, a four-nation consultation on precautionary allergen labelling and information was launched. The consultation seeks feedback to assist in potential approaches for precautionary allergen labelling and precautionary allergen information, to ensure that such information is communicated more clearly and consistently in terms of format and content of the information.

In addition to the consultation and associated themed questions, targeted stakeholders will be invited to a series of workshops that will also help to inform and shape policy. This will include a broad section of stakeholders in Northern Ireland including businesses, consumers, district councils, trade organisations and allergy related organisations.

Regulated Product Authorisation Consultations

As part of the authorisation process for Regulated Products, two consultations have been launched in November and December. The consultations on GMOs and Novel Foods seeks views in relation to the risk management advice for the applications which have been submitted to the FSA's Regulated Products Approval Service. Stakeholders are being asked to consider the non-safety legal requirements and other legitimate factors relating to these applications. The responses to the consultations will be used to inform Ministerial decisions on the authorisation of individual novel foods and GMOs for use in England, Scotland, and Wales.

Maria Jennings

Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland

