

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Report by Dr Ruth Hussey, Chair of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report from the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Chair reports on the activity of the Committee in Wales for the period **November 2016 to September 2018**.
- 1.2. The WFAC acts as an advisory body to the Food Standards Agency (FSA). It is chaired by the Welsh Board member and its role is to advise the FSA on food safety and standards issues, with particular emphasis on Wales. WFAC members provide a wide range of expertise, experience and practical knowledge to the FSA. All members are recruited through open Public Appointment procedures and are appointed by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government.
- 1.3. WFAC's role as defined in the Food Standards Act 1999 is to "give advice or information to the Agency about matters connected with its statutory functions in particular matters or otherwise relating to Wales". The WFAC will consider the FSA Board's proposals for activities from a Welsh perspective and offer advice on particular Welsh food safety and standards priorities.
- 1.4. The operating budget expenditure for the WFAC for 2017/18 and the estimated budget expenditure for 2018/19 is shown in Annexe A. The dates of meetings are shown in Annexe B. The Committee has a full complement of eight members, one of whom is also an FSA Board member and acts as Chair of the Committee. The list of Committee members is shown at Annexe C. There is a wide range of expertise among the membership of WFAC with backgrounds in farming and agriculture, environmental health, public health, food and farming industry, fisheries and aquaculture industry, genetics and molecular biology, and the civil service within Wales.

2. STRATEGIC AIMS

- 2.1. The WFAC works in an open and transparent way by:

- holding meetings in public;
- listening to the views of Welsh stakeholders;
- supporting the FSA at public events and stakeholder meetings;
- agenda planning involving the early identification of subjects with Welsh specific interests; and
- producing advice which it may publish independently.

3. DISCUSSION

Retrospective Review: Briefing and Planning Sessions

- 3.1. In November 2016, the Board considered a paper (FSA 16/11/08) enhancing the contribution of the Food Advisory Committees (FACs) in Wales and Northern Ireland¹. This paper invited the respective FAC Chair to refresh their Committee's consumer engagement activities to provide wider consumer insight and to proactively explore country specific issues that exist in relation to the FSA's strategic priorities, with particular reference in Wales to the impact of The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. Mindful of this commission, the WFAC has used its briefing and planning sessions to focus on consumer insight issues, engagement opportunities and Wales specific issues as follows:

Consumer Insight

The WFAC has been building up its knowledge in relation to consumer insight issues in Wales. In its October 2017 planning session, the WFAC received a briefing from the FSA's Consumer Insight team which looked at some headline information obtained from the FSA's Biennial Food and You Survey and the FSA's Biannual Public Attitudes Tracker Results. This culminated in the WFAC commissioning further analysis of the former and at its planning session in January 2018, the WFAC discussed the findings of the secondary analysis consumer insight work which looked at food security and its relationship to food safety². This identified that food safety behaviour in Wales is similar when compared to England and Northern Ireland with the exception of people in

¹<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa161109%20%281%29.pdf>

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/research-reports/ssresearch/foodandyou>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/foodsecurityinwales.pdf#overlay-context=science/research-reports/ssresearch/foodandyou>

Wales being less likely to wash fruit and vegetables and more likely to wash raw chicken. The report found low food security issues including 20% of people in Wales worried about running out of food; 14% of people in Wales had experienced running out of food before they could afford to buy more. Further, a number of changes in shopping and eating behaviours were reported, with 87% of the people in Wales living in low food security having changed their eating or shopping behaviour for financial reasons. The most frequently reported changes relate to buying cheaper food. The outcome of this research has been shared with Heads of Government in Wales who are looking at poverty generally. The Committee will review the data from the next wave of the Food and You survey due next year.

Engagement

Members of the WFAC have been involved in several engagement opportunities during 2017-18 as follows:

- In October 2017, a development day was held for WFAC. Members of the Committee visited Baraka Foods, a food business operator specialising in the production of food for catering establishments. The day was highly informative and it was useful to see a different aspect of the food production industry.
- Committee members attended a number of public events including the Eisteddfodau, the Royal Welsh Show and the Pembrokeshire County show. These events provided an opportunity for the committee to build on its consumer insight knowledge by gathering information directly from consumers and producers on their knowledge of, and priorities for food safety.
- Committee members attended FSA consumer focus groups as observers.
- The WFAC held a networking lunch with key stakeholders in North Wales in March 2018. Representatives from two North Wales local authorities, Public Health Wales, Public Analyst Services and the Food Technology Centre at Coleg Menai attended and the occasion provided for useful discussions on a range of issues associated with EU exit.

Country specific issues

These have included:

- At the request of the FSA Chair, The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 was scheduled as a Board paper in June 2017. In preparation, the WFAC, at its January 2017 planning session, received a briefing from the executive on the work being done to map the activities

of the FSA in Wales against the goals and principles of the legislation. Further, the WFAC was briefed on the work of the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner. The WFAC highlighted to the Board, actions taken by Welsh Government, through the introduction of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. WFAC noted the positive approach adopted to date, to align and map some of the key activities of the FSA to the goals and principles of the Act³. It recognised the importance of being able to demonstrate how the FSA is contributing to the national indicators which have been set for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals⁴. Although not a named body in the Act, the Board agreed to contribute to Welsh Government's aims to create a secure, sustainable future for Wales and to support an approach which directs FSA business to make a quantifiable contribution to the requirements of the Act. The recent Board papers exploring options for the future delivery of official controls on Raw Drinking Milk made specific reference to The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- In its planning session in January 2018, the committee met with the newly appointed lead Director for Environment and Rural Affairs on key food policy issues in Welsh Government. This was a comprehensive update including how The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act is influencing policy and planning; workforce and economic aspects of the food sector; food waste and packaging; animal health; preparation for EU exit; and future farming issues.
- Two Committee members sit on the Welsh Government's Food and Drink Board for Wales and have provided updates on the Food and Drink Action Plan.
- The WFAC was updated on FSA Wales' EU exit work particularly in relation to understanding imported food and the challenge this poses for Wales. A briefing was provided on current Port Health arrangements.

3.2. The WFAC has been updated on the Regulating Our Future (ROF) Programme. It has discussed ROF several times, firstly in March 2017, again in December 2017 and again in January 2018. The WFAC has welcomed the ROF briefing

³ <https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

⁴ <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160316-national-indicators-to-be-laid-before-nafw-en.pdf>

Board Meeting – 19th September 2018

sessions to keep it informed on the direction of the programme, which has received a number of challenges from some key stakeholders within Wales.

- 3.3. At various intervals during the year the WFAC has input into the review, commissioned by the Chair of the FSA Board, to look at the FACs in Wales and Northern Ireland and to consider how the contribution of the FACs could be improved and strengthened. The WFAC welcomed the opportunity to input into the review and the recommendations emanating from it. The WFAC is positive on being able to continue to provide effective well-informed advice to the Board within a new format which will enable more meaningful contribution to policy development at its earliest stages.

Retrospective Review: Advice to Board November 2016 to September 2018

- 3.4. Since the Board's last visit to Cardiff in November 2016, the WFAC has considered and commented on over 28 papers. All of these deliberations took place in open session. A complete list of subjects, reviewed by the WFAC, on matters relevant to the remit of the FSA in Wales, is detailed in Annexe D. The briefing and planning sessions, held during the year, ensured the WFAC was able to provide well informed advice to the Board.

4. FORWARD WORK PLAN

- 4.1. The agendas for WFAC meetings will continue to be reflective of issues being discussed by the Board with attention to any possible areas which may have a special relevance to Wales. The Chair of WFAC, and Board member for Wales, will continue to provide reports of the Committee's discussions and to represent the views of WFAC at Board discussions. Following the review of FACs, the WFAC looks forward to reshaping the inter-relationship between the Board and the Committee and looks forward to implementing the recommendations. The WFAC is keen to work within a new format which will enable more meaningful contribution to policy development at an early stage.
- 4.2. As part of the review, it is expected that the Committee develops and agrees a forward work programme to ensure it considers issues pertinent to Wales. Areas which the WFAC may wish to consider over the coming year include:
- implications of the reform of local government in Wales and what it means for food regulation;
 - EU exit issues specific for Wales;

- consideration of any Wales specific consumer insight issues emanating from the results of Wave 5 of the FSA's Food and You survey;
- activities of other stakeholders, including Welsh Government, to ensure that we are in touch on work which is already underway with the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board to develop a successor Food and Drink Action plan 'Towards Sustainable Growth', which ends in December 2019;
- relevant reports on the food system in Wales;
- food industry issues specific to Wales;
- an update on public health matters in relation to food; and
- during the year, the committee will hold one of its meetings outside Cardiff and engage with local stakeholders at that time.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. The Board is asked to note this report and to comment on the proposed forward work programme for the WFAC.

ANNEXE A

Finances

	expenditure £ (thousands)	
	2017/18	2018/19 projected)
WFAC members' remuneration	30.4	33.9
Conference costs – includes: - advertising meeting costs - conference/event costs - IT costs meeting costs (sound technician and equipment hire costs)	2.9	3.0
Travel and subsistence costs	included	in members' remuneration
WFAC appointment process costs	0	10
Total costs	33.3	46.9

ANNEXE B

Meetings

2017

- 19 January (planning session)
- 9 March
- 15 June
- 14 September
- 12 October (planning session)
- 30 November

2018

- 18 January (planning session)
- 8 March
- 14 June
- 13 September
- 11 October (planning session)
- 19 November

ANNEXE C

WFAC Membership

1. During the period of this report there has been two new appointments (James Wilson and Alan Gardner) and a ministerial decision is awaited in relation to a further two appointments.
2. In the same timeframe, the WFAC has lost three members. Dr Hugh Jones, Mrs Sue Jones and Mr Derek Morgan were all highly effective contributors to discussions, greatly esteemed by their WFAC colleagues and valued members of the Committee and I thank them for the contribution they have each made to ensuring WFAC's effectiveness in informing FSA policy. The current membership of the Committee is as follows:
 - Dr Ruth Hussey – Chair of WFAC and Board member for Wales (first term of appointment ends July 2019)
 - Mr Ronnie Alexander - (second term of appointment ends 30 June 2020)
 - Dr Norma Barry - (second term of appointment ends 30 June 2020)
 - Mr David Peace - (second term of appointment ends 30 June 2020)
 - Mr James Wilson – (first term of appointment ends 31 August 2020)
 - Mr Alan Gardner – (first term of appointment ends 31 August 2020)
 - AN Other
 - AN Other
3. Biographical details of all members are detailed on the FSA's website: <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/welsh-food-advisory-committee#welsh-food-advisory-committee-me>

ANNEXE D

Retrospective review of items discussed by WFAC in open sessions - November 2016 to September 2018

WFAC Open Meeting	Agenda Items
17 Nov 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSA Science • Food and Feed Surveillance • Delivering Proportionate Controls for Risky Foods • Review of the National Crime Unit • Enhancing the Contribution of the Food Advisory Committees to FSA Insight and Decision Making
9 Mar 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulating Our Future • Stow Phase 2 Project – Sustainable Funding Model • Food Allergy and Intolerance Programme
15 June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical Contaminants Strategy • Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 • Developing Our Approach to Identifying Risks and Issues Across the Food System
14 Sept 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Exit • Animal Welfare
30 Nov 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulating Our Future – FSA Role as a Supporting Regulator under Primary Authority • Regulating Our Future – Development of the Assurance Framework for the Target Operating Model • Strategic Surveillance Update • Understanding People: Social Science in the FSA • Update on FSA’s Activities Concerning Antimicrobial Resistance • National Food Crime Unit
8 Mar 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Update • Raw Drinking Milk Programme
14 June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Exit • NFCU Business Case

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raw Drinking Milk• Cutting Plant and Cold Store Review• Regulating Our Future• International Strategy• Report of the Food Advisory Committee Review
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