

MINUTES OF THE FSA BOARD MEETING ON 17 JUNE 2020

Via Zoom from the Chair's Residence, Arncliffe, North Yorkshire

Present:

Heather Hancock, Chair; David Brooks; Margaret Gilmore; Ruth Hussey; Colm McKenna; Mary Quicke; Stuart Reid; Timothy Riley; Mark Rolfe.

Officials attending

Emily Miles	-	Chief Executive
Martin Evans	-	Acting Chief Operating Officer
Chris Hitchen	-	Director of Finance and Performance
Michael Jackson	-	Head of Regulatory Compliance Division (for FSA 20/06/04)
Maria Jennings	-	Director of Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland (NI)
Paul Morrison	-	Director of Strategy, Legal, Communications and Governance
Rick Mumford	-	Deputy Director of Science
Julie Pierce	-	Director Openness, Data, Digital, Science and Wales
Steven Pollock	-	Director of Communications
Guy Poppy	-	Chief Scientific Adviser
Rebecca Sudworth	-	Director of Policy
Colin Sullivan	-	COVID-10 Incident Director

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies had been received. She explained that this meeting was Professor Guy Poppy's last meeting as the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), and that more would be said about that during Any Other Business at the end of the Board meeting. She noted that Robin May, the new CSA, was watching the meeting and welcomed him to his new role starting in July. She asked Board Members if there was any other business they wish to add to the agenda. No further business was raised.
- 1.2 The Chair said that the Board's previous scheduled meeting took place in March, prior to the lockdown measures to mitigate the coronavirus crisis. On behalf of the Board, she expressed thanks to the hundreds of thousands of people who worked in the food and feed industries, for their determination and commitment to sustaining the supply of safe and accessible food for consumers.
- 1.3 She said the Board was also very grateful to FSA staff, who had shown remarkable resilience in switching roles, going back to different line duties and working long hours, to ensure everybody involved had the support they needed to keep food safe and trustworthy. She said the Board particularly recognised the contribution of frontline colleagues and staff of the main contractor, Eville and Jones, and those in Northern Ireland, who had played a critical role in keeping the meat sector running. She praised Local Authority (LA) officers, the

FSA's independent scientific advisers and Port Health Officials, for their urgent pragmatic decision making in coping with the uncertainties and risk caused by COVID-19. She noted that the food and feed sector was the country's largest manufacturing sector and those who worked in it, along with those in the retail sector, had done an outstanding job in keeping food on the shelves and factories running to meet the needs of consumers. She expressed thanks to all these workers on behalf of the FSA Board.

- 1.4 The Chair invited Steven Pollock to read out the questions for the Board that had been received in advance of the meeting noting that a full list of the questions received ahead of the meeting, along with answers, would be published on the FSA website. The Chair noted, in response to one of the questions, which mentioned the timelines for the publication of the responses to questions for the Board, that this had highlighted that the timeline could be shortened to allow for the earlier publication of responses.

Action 1 - Board Secretariat to update procedures for the publication of responses to questions to the Board from the public and to publish the responses accordingly.

2. Minutes of 11 March 2020 (FSA 20/06/01)

- 2.1 The Chair said that the minutes of the Board meeting of 11 March had been circulated in draft to Board Members and asked if the Board were content that they represented an accurate account of the discussions at that meeting. The Board indicated that they were content, and the minutes were approved for publication.

3. Actions Arising (FSA 20/06/02)

- 3.1 The Chair asked Board Members if they had any comments on any of the actions, noting that progress on some of the actions had been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board had no comments on the actions.

4. Chair's Report

- 4.1 The Chair announced that the appointment for a new Deputy Chair for the FSA had now been completed and that Ruth Hussey would be taking up the role from the beginning of July 2020. She said that there was a process underway to appoint a successor to the role of FSA Chair, which was being led by DHSC and that the timeline for the process to appoint a new Board Member for Wales and Chair of WFAC had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. She also said that Colm McKenna's appointment as Board Member for Northern Ireland and Chair of NIFAC had been extended to allow a process to find a successor to take place.

- 4.2 The Chair explained that, in April, the Board had held an extraordinary Board Meeting to discuss the FSA's COVID-19 Response, temporary changes to the enforcement of labelling requirements and the approach to managing risk. She explained that the minutes of the meeting and the paper that was discussed would be published following this meeting.

Action 2 - Board Secretariat to arrange for the publication of the papers and minutes of the April 2020 Extraordinary Meeting of the FSA Board.

- 4.3 The Chair explained that a full list of her engagements had been published ahead of this meeting. She highlighted meetings of the Ministerial Taskforce on Food Supplies and other Essential Supplies to the Vulnerable to which the FSA had contributed and from which the FSA had been able to source information. The Chair reported on her introductory meeting, together with Colm McKenna, with the Northern Ireland Minister of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs Edwin Poots MLA.
- 4.4 The Chair highlighted meetings with Victoria Prentis MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defra; Alex Norris MP, Shadow Minister for Public Health and Patient Safety; and a meeting with Jo Churchill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care scheduled for after this meeting.
- 4.5 The Chair also noted that in light of Parliamentary comment during the passage of the Agriculture Bill, she had written to MPs, setting out how the FSA would carry out its role throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

5. Chief Executive's Report to the Board (FSA 20/06/03)

- 5.1 The Chief Executive (CE) paid tribute to the flexibility shown by staff, noting the changes in working practices that had been instituted since the implementation of restrictions in response to COVID-19. She said she would cover the FSA's response to COVID-19, and EU Transition in the discussions of those papers. She said that reprioritisation of FSA business had been necessary to meet the challenges of COVID-19 including easements in operations to allow for working with fewer staff.
- 5.2 The CE said that there had been a decrease in the rate of food related incidents, which was commensurate with consumption patterns adopted by consumers during the lockdown.
- 5.3 The CE also addressed questions about Qurbani, explaining it was part of the Eid festival and that there was a question about direct sales to consumers, from abattoirs, of meat that was not chilled. She explained that the law was changed in 2017, and a grace period was observed until 2019 for whether un-chilled carcasses could be provided to butchers by abattoirs. She explained that this was a Chief Executive decision about how to implement the law but that she wanted the Board to be aware. She explained that the FSA had required that the meat must be chilled in business-to-business transfer. However, for direct

for sales to consumers, the FSA had been working, through the Partnership Working Group, with the meat industry and if people were not going to implement the law about chilling, they would need to apply a number of mitigations around initiation of chilling, the traceability of the purchase, and consumer advice, as well as evidence of micro-sampling in the abattoir. The Chair invited questions from Board Members.

- 5.4 Mark Rolfe asked a question about the membership of the Competency Reference Group mentioned in the report. He also mentioned the interactive dashboard mentioned in the report section on surveillance. He explained the report suggested it would be made available to FSA teams and the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU), asking whether it would also be made available to others.
- 5.5 Mark noted a timescale for the review into the NFCU in the report. He asked for assurance that the work of the NFCU would meet aspirations for the level of protection it should be offering to consumers.
- 5.6 Colm McKenna said that there had been an update at the Board Meeting in March about the National Farmers' Union's (NFU's) proposals for the establishment of a food standards commission. He asked for an update on discussions with the NFU on this. The Chair said that this could be addressed during the discussions of the EU Transition paper FSA 20/06/05.
- 5.7 The CE explained that there was an ambition for the interactive dashboard mentioned in the report section on surveillance to be made more widely available. On NFCU governance, she said that progress was being made and that the unit was building the necessary skill set, but that it still lacked the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act powers that were being sought for the NFCU. Martin Evans added that NFCU investigations could go on for a considerable length of time and that there were several ongoing cases. He said it would be an exciting time for the NFCU as many of these cases were being concluded and an impressive outcome from the current ongoing caseload was expected.
- 5.8 The Chair explained that the reason for the review was to assess whether the NFCU had the powers it needed, whether its relationship with the rest of the FSA was correct and that the review was not a substitute for scrutiny. She said that the move from intelligence to investigative powers would be an important step.
- 5.9 Maria Jennings explained that the Competency Reference Group for LA Environmental Health Officer competencies included representatives of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) along with representatives from universities.

6. FSA Response to COVID-19 (FSA 20/06/04)

- 6.1 The Chair invited the CE to introduce the paper on the FSA's response to COVID-19. The CE explained that it had been an intense period of activity for the FSA with the priority being to ensure food safety and protecting consumer interests. She said that the risk of COVID-19 infection from food was considered to be low, and mentioned communications work being undertaken with food businesses as well as easements to official controls and labelling requirements. She paid tribute to the collaborative approach that had been adopted by the meat industry and the flexibility shown by FSA staff.
- 6.2 She explained that there had been an opportunity through the outbreak to reevaluate the food system as the pressures caused by COVID-19 had shown up areas that were working well and others that were not. She then invited Colin Sullivan to give an overview of the paper.
- 6.3 Colin highlighted the structured approach adopted and that scientific assessment was a key element of the FSA response to the virus and this indicated the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through consumption or handling of food, or handling of packaging, was very low. He outlined the extensive communications and engagement undertaken by the Agency with stakeholders, including Port Health Authorities (PHAs) and LAs, food industry representatives and Food Standards Scotland. He pointed to the web portal developed by the Agency to provide advice to consumers and food businesses and the significant take up with one page receiving 190,000 unique views. Colin also outlined the contingency plan for meat operations and that the number of absent staff was fortunately relatively low and this number was staying stable. He noted the range of temporary easements that had been introduced and how the Agency was now progressing a Forward Plan to move to the new normal, drawing upon lessons learned.
- 6.4 Colin then asked Michael Jackson to explain proposals for further temporary deviations from the statutory food law code of practice. Michael said that the deviations introduced in April had been made to allow LAs to reprioritise their limited resources to target new risk in the food system and contribute to the wider public health response to the pandemic. He explained that the current deviations, which applied until 17 July, had been agreed by Ministers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and it had been agreed that the FSA would keep them under review. He explained that the FSA was proposing further deviation to reflect the imminent easing of lockdown for the hospitality sector and the proposed new direction would involve a return to physical inspection, but remote assessment would continue to be used to inform what was considered during onsite inspections. He said that the deviations allowed for a more risk-based approach for LAs to be able to better target their resources to businesses that would be re-opening after lengthy closure following the pandemic. The Chair invited questions from Board Members.
- 6.5 Colm McKenna asked if Michael could give a description of the remote assessment tools. He also noted the variation in Government responses to

COVID-19 across the three countries the FSA operated in and whether the remote assessment tools were suitable for all stages of the response. Michael explained that the proposed directions had been designed to be flexible and accommodate the hospitality industry in each country coming out of lockdown at different times. He said that, subject to Ministerial approval, the reviewed direction would be circulated to LAs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by 22 June to ensure their readiness.

- 6.6 Michael explained that remote assessment tools enabled consideration of evidence that could be obtained without being on the premises by food business operators making records available that were held digitally. He said that telephone conversations were encouraged as was the use of video.
- 6.7 The CE explained that there were pressures in LAs on Environmental Health and Trading Standards and that as steps were taken to encourage economic recovery, such as the reopening of the hospitality sector, this would further impact upon those service areas.
- 6.8 The Chair asked Rick Mumford to explain further about the risks of transmission of COVID-19 from food, mentioning that there had been press reports from China about the risk of contamination in relation to fish. Rick explained that a full risk assessment had been carried out in relation to the transmission of COVID-19 through food, food packaging and the food supply chain and that this had been published in the interests of openness and transparency. He said that at the present time there was no evidence to suggest any significant risk from food and that there was no evidence that fish, shellfish or livestock could become infected. The assessment said that the risk from food remained very low.
- 6.9 The Chair then invited Guy Poppy to give more detail about the FSA's response to COVID-19 from the CSA's perspective. Guy said that the proportionality of the response needed to be considered and that he had been working with CSAs from other government departments enabling the FSA to feature in those discussions. He added that the FSA now also had a team member on the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).
- 6.10 Mark Rolfe noted that the report said that there had been no significant safety issues evidenced by the surveillance. He asked whether there was information available on how the evidence was being gathered by local authorities where there was no physical presence to make the assessments. He also asked about food legislation flexibilities mentioned in the report and specifically, allowing the suspension of lower priority activities. He asked whether some of those lower priority activities could be shown to add any value and should be subject to a wider review of how business was conducted following a return to business as usual.
- 6.11 Mark also noted a comment in the report about planned work being deferred. He said that deferring food standards work could impact on the work of the official control laboratories and that work would be needed to ensure unintended consequences could be mitigated.

- 6.12 Margaret Gilmore asked about the extent to which the national risk register was considered in the FSA's strategic analysis. She also asked about how robust contingency measure would be in the event of a second global event that disrupted the food supply, citing the lorry drivers' strike which had had an impact on food imports. Thirdly, she asked about individuals who had started selling food during the lockdown and whether communications work was being undertaken to ensure that they were aware of the need to register as food businesses.
- 6.13 Ruth Hussey declared an interest, noting a role in the early stages of the pandemic with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. She explained that she no longer held this position. She asked a question about next steps and the possibility of a second wave of COVID-19 infections. She welcomed the reflectiveness of the report and said that, at a recent meeting, the members of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) had raised the increased importance of on-line display for Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) scores during a period where more people were using internet orders for food.
- 6.14 The CE said that the FSA was plugged into the civil contingency secretariat and the National Risk Register and the FSA's corporate risk register took the latter into account. She said that the FSA also participated in contingency secretariat exercises where there was a food element. She agreed that there was the potential for further crises to occur, mentioning the possibility of a climate related food crisis where consecutive harvests were impacted by climate change. She explained that in the autumn the Executive Management Team would be beginning a process to ensure those scenarios had been considered to deepen thinking about uncertainty and risk.
- 6.15 On Colm's point about the difference in the pace of change with regard to restrictions across the countries of the UK, the CE acknowledged that there were difficulties in maintaining a joined up approach which arose from this, highlighting the way in which labelling responsibilities were held by different departments across the jurisdictions. This had impacted on the FSA's approach to labelling easements.
- 6.16 Colin said that the FSA continued to derive intelligence from a range of different sources, which he outlined, and we were working to identify weaknesses in our intelligence on the food supply chain and that this should continue to improve. In terms of unintended consequences, Colin accepted that some of the easements had to be undertaken quickly and that the forward plan would be developed with decisions made about restoring the previous position or retaining the changes. Longer term consequences would be considered and examined thoroughly as the forward plan was progressed.
- 6.17 The Chair added that it was right that not everything that was suspended might need to be reinstated, there were likely to be practices that had developed over time or had derived from rule making systems within the EU that were no longer necessary to achieve at least the same public health protection.

- 6.18 Julie Pierce noted that it would also be possible for measures that were being implemented to have positive unintended consequences, such as a reduction in rates of food-borne disease arising from an increase in hand-washing to prevent COVID-19 transmission as well as from the increase in home and from-scratch cooking, which had the possibility to impact positively on health through improved nutrition.
- 6.19 Timothy Riley asked whether there were plans to keep records of instances where labelling had diverged from the usual standard. He also said that where there were moves to implement track and trace in meat processing facilities, this was a positive step for contingency planning and staff continuity but asked whether there was a possibility of a resultant increase in the number of self-isolations.
- 6.20 Stuart Reid asked about consideration of consumers' risk appetite along with that of the FSA and wider government. Mary Quicke said that the guidance for the food industry was welcome as labelling easements could, without vigilance, give rise to a similar kind of incident that led to undeclared horsemeat entering the food chain. Colin acknowledged this point and said that it was an issue the FSA was alive to and was keeping abreast of through intelligence from the NFCU.
- 6.21 The CE explained that records of temporary divergences in controls were being collected and monitored. She said that the possibility of lower staff numbers in LAs resulting from the introduction of track and trace in meat processing facilities was being factored into contingency planning and considered on a localised basis. She said that there were staff who could not necessarily travel long distances to a different plant, so quite complex arrangements were necessary in some cases.
- 6.22 On consumers' risk appetite, she explained that the FSA was operating within the risk appetite set by the Board. This meant on food we can trust, the FSA would be averse to material risks that had potentially significant impacts on public health; cautious where benefits outweighed the risk; open to considered innovation where the best interests for consumers were demonstrated; and hungry for effective partnerships on improving nutrition of food and consumer eating patterns. On operational work the Board had said the FSA should be hungry to consider innovation where improvement could protect and deliver consumer benefits; hungry to ensure colleagues were supported and well led; and averse where safety could be compromised. This direction had held up well through this crisis. The Chair added that she and the CE met weekly to consider if any of the work across the Executive's responsibilities might touch on the Board's risk appetite or the position the Board might take. The CE also noted the work of the Social Science team in assessing public attitudes to food and consumers' risk appetite including rapid consumer polling, focus groups and the use of expert panels.
- 6.23 On the mandation of online FHRS display, it was an established FSA position for several years that this should be mandatory and officials were in

conversation with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) about this. In response to Margaret's point regarding communications about the registering of food businesses the CE said that a lot of communication was being done around that.

7. EU Transition and Trade Deal Update (FSA 20/06/05)

- 7.1 The Chair invited Paul Morrison to introduce the paper on EU Transition. Paul explained that the Government had indicated there would be no extension to the transition period and that this had been reinforced at a meeting the Prime Minister recently had with the Presidents of the European Commission, the Council and Parliament. Paul outlined the principles set out in the paper and explained that trade negotiations were now moving into an intense period.
- 7.2 Paul gave an overview of the paper including detail on the arrangements around the Northern Ireland protocol and giving clarification around the import controls after the end of the transition period. He explained that the implications of import controls for the application of the Northern Ireland protocol and for other government departments and other Governments in the UK was being considered.
- 7.3 The CE said that it was apparent that the role of the FSA in relation to the consumers' wider interest in food was not as widely understood by some key officials, Ministers and stakeholders as it could be. She explained that responsibility for risk analysis would be taken on by the FSA from January and that judgments on different aspects of food, including highly regulated products such as novel foods would have a bearing on future trade discussions. She noted that the CSA had published a paper about the FSA's risk analysis process, which was included in the papers as an annex to his report. She explained that the science team had been significantly expanded to carry out these new functions and the FSA now had 50 scientists in the risk assessment team and we had expanded the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) to draw on the best expertise available.
- 7.4 David Brooks commented that there was an apparent compromise to the principles the Board had established in previous discussions, caused by the Northern Ireland protocol. He said the Board would need to consider how to manage that compromise as it could cause consumer confusion and create a loophole for EU regulated foods to get into the UK where the UK had chosen not to allow those goods. He asked how the FSA would manage the communications message and ensure that the team and its partners in Northern Ireland had the capacity and capability to deal with the protocol.
- 7.5 The Chair added that the Northern Ireland protocol represented a material change for the FSA since undertaking No Deal planning. She said the protocol would be an additional factor to consider but should not be the determining factor in how judgments were formed about the safety and the acceptability of food.

7.6 The Chair said that the FSA operated in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and should continue to apply the tests and approaches developed by the Board over the whole period of EU Exit planning to determine appropriate risk management measures, which should:

- be at least as effective, or more effective, in protecting public health;
- maintain or increase confidence in food safety, and in the regulatory regime; and
- minimise disruption for consumers and industry.

7.7 The Chair added that as unified a system as possible, in the consumer interest, respecting devolution arrangements would be sought.

7.8 In Northern Ireland, the approach would then be adjusted, openly, for the provisions of the Northern Ireland protocol and considering whether the protocol demanded any further adjustments that may then be required in England and Wales.

7.9 The Chair highlighted the importance of forming a view based on principles driven by the FSA's core remit to protect public health and consumer interests as a starting point before adjusting that to the political realities of the protocol. This would ensure a clear audit trail in decision making which resulted in any variation across the three countries. She added that ability to influence the EU's standard setting processes to ensure that the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland were understood was also desirable but that all cases should be driven by science and evidence and the consumer interest.

7.10 The CE said that the risk of EU-regulated goods that had not been authorised by the FSA coming into the UK through Northern Ireland, would be low at the start as the EU and UK will be harmonised on 1 January. The propensity for divergence after time would depend on the trade deal agreed. As an example of where there might be different judgements reached by the EU regime or a UK regime on a particular foodstuff, she cited orange cordial as an example of a product regarded as a sports drink in most EU countries but as a children's drink in the UK. She agreed with the Chair's assessment that this must be considered on a three-country basis to allow decision making on particular ingredients and how they related to consumption patterns within the relevant parts of the UK.

7.11 Colm McKenna agreed that the process should start based on the principles the Board had agreed to date and adjusted afterwards by working through on a three-country basis to manage necessary variation across the UK. He stressed the need to act quickly on Northern Ireland Qualified Goods and to achieve the definitions required to be able to effectively communicate to consumers in Northern Ireland before the build up to the Christmas retail period began.

7.12 The Board confirmed that it would retain its planned three-country approach, applying agreed principles to reach a risk analysis conclusion and only then assessing any variation which was required in one or more

of the three nations as a result of the requirements of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

- 7.13 The Chair noted that Maria Jennings had good relationships with departments in Northern Ireland and the broader food network. She emphasised that the FSA intended to operate to protect consumers in Northern Ireland to the same extent that it would in England and Wales, maintaining an equal approach to the populations for which the FSA has responsibility.
- 7.14 Maria Jennings added that the FSA had a science capability but that it was for the whole organisation and not contained in the Northern Ireland team who relied on that science capability for work around the Northern Ireland protocol.
- 7.15 Margaret Gilmore asked what the mechanism would be for dealing with situations where there was divergence with Northern Ireland having a ruling from the EU where the FSA had made a contrary decision about its advice to Ministers. Timothy Riley added that the FSA had an important role in respect of consumer confidence, and he noted the importance of maintaining this in the light of the NFU petition.
- 7.16 The CE explained that engagement with other departments had slowed for a period due to the COVID-19 outbreak but had started to shift back towards transition with the Northern Ireland protocol being a major focus of attention. She said that on the issue of divergence, work had been taking place on a UK framework for food and feed and this would attend to questions around the single market within the UK to provide a mechanism for the four countries of the UK to communicate to resolve disagreements. She mentioned there were complexities involved regarding highly regulated products where the EU may come to a different view to the FSA. In those instances, products in Northern Ireland would be subject to the EU arrangements and there would be a joint committee between the EU and the UK, set up by the EU Withdrawal Act to oversee the entire relationship, not just on food. She acknowledged the complexity and endorsed the position that the Chair had outlined of taking a starting position of applying agreed principles to all three countries, working closely with Food Standards Scotland (FSS).
- 7.17 Paul added that the governance of how to manage some of the scenarios outlined would be discussed in September when the Board considered risk assessment again. On Northern Ireland Qualifying Goods, he said that the importance of the movement of goods between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK had been made clear across government departments.
- 7.18 The Chair said that assurance had been received from Defra that the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS) would be operating as required within a few weeks of the transition period ending. The CE confirmed this adding that it was expected to meet FSA requirements around pre-notification of products of animal origin from within the EU from April 2021.

7.19 The Chair thanked the CE and noted the growing importance of the impact on food of anti-microbial resistance (AMR), and that this issue would be discussed at the next meeting of the Board.

7.20 The Board confirmed that it would retain its planned three-country approach, applying agreed principles to reach a risk analysis, conclusion and only then assessing any variation which was required in one or more of the three nations as a result of the requirements of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

8. Annual Science Update from FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser (FSA 20/06/06)

8.1 The Chair invited the CSA to introduce his annual report to the Board. The CSA gave an overview of the report and of his time as CSA to the FSA. He covered challenges and opportunities for the FSA; the central role of science in the FSA; the need to be agile and consider the risk appetite; the use of the SACs; and challenges within the next 20 years.

8.2 The Chair thanked the CSA for his report, noting that his point about making best use of the SACs was well made. She invited comments and questions from the Board.

8.3 Mary Quicke paid tribute to the insight provided by the CSA over the period of his tenure with the FSA. She noted that among the SACs, there was no committee considering the economic basis for advice and whether that could be considered a gap in the advice that the FSA received from the SACs. Margaret Gilmore noted achievements on tackling AMR and asked if there was a risk of this work being reversed depending on the content of whatever trade deals the UK finally agreed after transition.

8.4 Ruth Hussey said that it would be important to demonstrate robust mechanisms for asking the right questions of the system and asked whether further consideration needed to be given to whether the right questions were being asked of the SACs to account for the interests of individuals and communities.

8.5 The CSA explained that there was no advisory committee on economics but that there were economists who sat on the Social Science Advisory Committee as well as an economists' team within the FSA. He added that the FSA had good links with other institutions to guide thinking in this area, such as the London School of Economics. He said that, on AMR, COVID-19 had demonstrated what a world without vaccination or effective treatment for infection would look like, highlighting the value of antimicrobial medicines. In terms of how this could be impacted by future trade arrangements, he said that the FSA had played a key role through Steve Wearne's Vice Presidency of Codex Alimentarius, setting global standards including in this area.

8.6 In terms of ensuring that the right questions were being asked of the SACs, the CSA said that the FSA had a wide range of stakeholder groups to consult and work with, representing industry and consumer groups as well as several

thousand individuals who were part of a consumer panel that the FSA worked with and consulted regularly.

- 8.7 The Chair mentioned a letter from the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, sent to Permanent Secretaries across government about the CSA role. She said that the letter drew attention to the importance of the relationship between Chief Scientific Advisers and the science system and the analytical function in a department. The need to be able to access, rapidly, diverse external sources of science and expertise and how important it was that interactions were built across the CSA Network and with national laboratories, so that Chief Scientific Advisers could collectively tackle strategic cross-cutting challenges.
- 8.8 The Chair said that as the FSA's CSA, Professor Guy Poppy had done an exemplary job in not being only about the pure science but across the whole remit of the FSA. She paid tribute to his work in strengthening the role of the SACs and positioning the FSA in the wider Government CSA Network.

9. The Food Standards Agency's Approach to Managing the Interests of Advisory Committee Members (FSA 20/06/07)

- 9.1 The Chair invited Colm McKenna to introduce a report on managing the interests of our Food Advisory Committee (FAC) members. Colm explained that following an exercise carried out by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) in 2019 on scientific advisers, the Board wanted other, non-scientific, advisory committees to be given similar consideration. This, in practice, meant the membership of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) and WFAC. He explained that the paper formalised a process that had been in practise for a number of years.
- 9.2 The Chair noted that the Board were happy to accept the advice of ARAC in terms of adopting this guidance on managing interests for the FSA external non-scientific advisers.

10. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 10.1 The Chair invited Colm McKenna, as Chair of ARAC to introduce his report on the work of that Committee since the previous Board meeting. Colm explained that ARAC had met twice since the previous Board meeting and the focus of the meetings had been the Annual Reports and Accounts (ARAs). He explained that the Westminster and Consolidated Accounts would be delayed due to third party assurance from the London Pensions Authority, which affected the FSA in a small way.
- 10.2 Heather congratulated the Committee Members and the team responsible for the preparation of the ARAs. She noted that the issue with the London Pensions Authority also occurred the previous year. She stressed that it was

not an FSA issue but a wider one relating to the audit and assurance of that pension fund.

11. Reports from the Chairs of the Food Advisory Committees (FACs)

- 11.1 The Chair asked Ruth Hussey and Colm McKenna to deliver updates from WFAC and NIFAC respectively. Ruth explained that WFAC had met, virtually, the previous week and discussed the Board papers that were being discussed by the Board. She said WFAC would continue to modify how it worked to enable that role to continue. She said that WFAC had been working on a report on the food landscape in Wales but that restrictions related to COVID-19 meant that WFAC did not receive final contributions in April as previously planned. She explained that the intention was to complete the work as it stood adding that it would be interesting to reevaluate the issue in some months' time to see how the system has adapted and modified since the initial work.
- 11.2 Colm explained that NIFAC had a meeting planned for 3 July to look at EU Exit, particularly from the Northern Ireland protocol perspective. He said that the next open meeting was planned for October but would likely be held virtually. He explained that, in a similar way to WFAC, NIFAC had produced a paper on the Northern Ireland Food Landscape and that Board Members would have an opportunity to see that report. Again, like Wales, he explained a session had been planned for April but was not able to go ahead.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 The Chair asked Board Members if they had any other business they wished to raise. No business was raised by Board Members. The Chair said that she wanted to use the opportunity to express her thanks and appreciation to the CSA, Professor Guy Poppy. She explained that on behalf of the Board, his contribution to public health, to confidence and trust in the FSA, had been excellent. She paid tribute to his work on AMR, the proof point on FHRS ratings and connections to food-borne disease, and the work on data and risk. She also praised the influence he had had on the O'Neill report on AMR to ensure and recognise that food was an important component of that area of research.
- 12.2 The CSA thanked the Chair and said he was grateful to the FSA for the opportunity.
- 12.3 No further business was raised, and the meeting was closed. The next meeting was scheduled for the 26 August 2020.