

GENERAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

1. Since the last Board meeting, I have continued to build on our strong working relationships with government departments, regulators and other stakeholders. I have met with representatives from the Advertising Standards Authority, Defra, Department of Health and Social Care (including the Chief Medical Officer), HMRC, Public Health England, Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority, the Institute of Food Science and Technology and the Whitehall and Industry Group.
2. I have met a range of key industry stakeholders including Moy Park, Dairy UK and Asda.
3. I also accompanied the Chairman to a meeting with the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency in January 2018.

JOINT EXECUTIVE MEETING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND

4. The FSA Executive Management Team held a joint executive meeting with Public Health England on 30th January 2018.
5. It was agreed that we should remain closely linked on matters of mutual interest including EU Exit, local government delivery, antimicrobial resistance and incident management.
6. A further joint executive meeting will be held in late 2018.

REVIEW OF MEAT CUTTING PLANTS AND COLD STORES

7. Following the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) joint announcement of the review of meat cutting premises and cold stores, we published the review terms of reference¹ on 2nd March 2018, with emerging findings to be reported to the Board in June and final recommendations in September. The Senior Responsible Owner for the review will be Colin Sullivan (along with Ian McWatt, the FSS Director of Operations). It will assess how today's meat industry operates across the whole supply chain, including the cause and effects of shifts in the economics of the industry, and how it might continue to change, to ensure that the future regulatory direction keeps pace with and anticipates sector changes.
8. All meat establishments are in scope, including those under Local Authority enforcement responsibility. The review will look to strengthen the arrangements for delivery of official controls and identify any other measures that help build consumer confidence in meat production. It will be governed by a sub-group of the FSA/FSS Executive Teams, with regular updates to the FSA/FSS Board Chairs. External scrutiny will be provided through a 'Challenge Group' appointed from across the meat, veterinary, audit and regulatory sectors.

SCIENCE COUNCIL UPDATE

¹ https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/reviewofcuttingplantsandcoldstores_0.pdf

9. The Science Council held its second meeting on 13 December 2017². FSA Chairman Heather Hancock and Deputy Chair Laura Sandys took part alongside Guy Poppy, FSA Chief Scientific Adviser. The Council discussed the draft outcomes from the first phase of the work of its three Working Groups, which are addressing the three questions set for the Council by Heather Hancock.
10. The Working Groups are now taking forward the second phases of their tasks, unpacking the key issues and identifying the outputs to deliver back to the FSA
The Science Council's next plenary meetings are on 27 June and 12 December.

OUR INTERNATIONAL WORK

Codex

11. An important element of our international work, and contributor to our wider reputation, is the contribution we make to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the pre-eminent global food standards setting body. Codex is important as, in the case of trade disputes adjudicated by the WTO, Codex standards and guidelines are used as reference texts.
12. Last year saw FSA Director Steve Wearne elected for a three-year term as one of three Vice-Chairs of Codex. Steve's responsibilities within the bureau of Chair and Vice-Chairs include chairing the group drafting the Codex Strategic Plan for the period 2020 – 2025. FSA, on behalf of the UK Government, is also leading new work in Codex to develop guidelines on the use by competent authorities of third party assurance.
13. Mike O'Neill of the FSA chaired a meeting in Santiago, Chile, in December supported by co-chairs from Canada and Mexico which progressed a first draft of these guidelines. This work is sparking international interest, with around 70 Codex member countries and observers engaged in further consultation on the draft guidelines, which will be the subject of a further meeting in Edinburgh in the week commencing 28 May that we will co-host with Food Standards Scotland. This work on third party assurance will support work domestically as part of the Regulating our Future (RoF) programme.

Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) 2018 Global Food Safety Conference

14. The GFSI's annual Global Food Safety Conference (GFSC) brings together over 1000 top food safety professionals from over 50 countries to advance food safety globally.

² <https://science-council.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sciencecouncil2ndmeetingdraftminutes13dec17.pdf>

15. A strong Director-led FSA team attended the GFSC 2017 in Houston, Texas, with our Director of Regulatory and Legal Strategy participating in a panel discussion during a breakout session dealing with the changing role of the regulator.
16. Building on prior attendance at GFSC over the last two years, the GFSC 2018 was identified as an opportunity for us to renew and further strengthen senior level international relations and promote our international presence and role as a world leader in food safety and approaches to regulatory modernisation. In this context, we successfully secured invitations for four UK expert speakers and panellists at the GFSC covering a range of topics and sessions and combining high-level speakers from around the world from both regulators and industry.
17. I will lead the FSA delegation in providing strong input in several areas including GFSI's ongoing benchmarking work on third party assurance schemes, building networks with key international partners and enhancing regulatory partnership on food safety.

PROGRESS ON NATIONAL FOOD CRIME UNIT (NFCU) PHASE 2

18. We submitted a funding bid to HM Treasury for 2018/19 EU Exit related activities which included a request to fund Phase 2 of the NFCU. The funding is required to build investigative and related capabilities in readiness for the additional risks and opportunities presented by EU Exit. We are currently preparing a business case to support this additional investment. The funding bid followed our success in securing cross-Whitehall Ministerial endorsement of our proposals to expand the unit and its remit.

SOCIAL SCIENCE UPDATE

19. Following the Board's endorsement of the proposed direction of travel for social science in December 17, the existing Social Science team and the Insight team have been merged as part of Analytics within Science, Evidence and Research Division. Interviews for the new Advisory Committee are complete and we expect to announce its membership later this month.
20. Meanwhile, work is underway on a range of projects supporting Regulating our Future and preparations for EU Exit, including a new regular tracking survey of small food businesses which fills that gap in our listening, and a multi-method exploration of trust in the food system which we hope to bring to the Board in the Autumn.