



Heather Hancock
Chair
Food Standards Agency
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6NH

19 June 2017

Dear Heather

REPORT FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CHAIR OF THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY ON ISSUES DISCUSSED BY THE COMMITTEE: JUNE 2017

The key role of the Food Advisory Committees is to advise the Board of the Food Standards Agency. To that end, the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) met in open session on 14 June to discuss the following papers, due to be considered at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board.

- Chemical Contaminants Strategy.
- Horizon Scanning.
- Food and You a consumer trends survey on food-safety behaviour.

Discussions on these items were led by presentations from Steve Wearne, the FSA's Director of Policy and Charlotte Owens and Helen Atkinson of the FSA Analytics Unit's Social Science Team and I am grateful to them for assisting NIFAC's consideration of these topics and include the key points of NIFAC's discussions below:

Chemical Contaminants Strategy

Steve Wearne, the FSA's Director of Policy, joined the meeting by video link from the FSA's office at Aviation House in London to introduce this item on a paper due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. He also introduced Stuart Armstrong, Head of Food Chemical Safety Policy Unit, and Mark Willis, Head of Chemical Contaminants and Residues Branch who joined him for the session. The

10 A-C Clarendon Road
Belfast BT1 3BG
T 028 9041 7700
E infofsani@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

FOOD HYGIENERATING

food.gov.uk/ratings



paper explained the FSA's approach to managing chemical contaminant risks in food, including the current control framework.

NIFAC members affirmed there was much to be learned from work being done in this area on the island of Ireland, such as the work of the Institute of Global Food Security, and expressed concern about progress in this area both during and after the EU exit process. The committee also expressed concern about the level of engagement at a regional level with both stakeholders in the devolved regions and industry. Members also questioned the current spending on research and were satisfied that it was being given adequate resources. They welcomed the clear articulation of the roles of the executive and the board in this area.

Horizon Scanning

Steve Wearne then remained on the video link to introduce the item on Horizon Scanning due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. He also introduced Patrick Millar, Joint Head of Science Strategy and Governance, who joined him for the session. The paper outlined the current and developing capabilities in the areas of surveillance and horizon scanning, and the complexities associated with this area of work.

NIFAC members welcomed the opportunity to be able to feed into this area during the development stage. They expressed particular interest in the work of the newly-formed Science Council. Members stressed the need for the devolved regions and industry to be adequately represented within the council and for it to encourage partnerships and working relationships with organisations outside of the public sector. They also encouraged the wider executive team to engage with the council as early as possible.

Food and You a consumer trends survey on food-safety behaviour

Charlotte Owen and Helen Atkinson of the FSA Analytics Unit's Social Science Team delivered an update on the findings of the Food and You consumer trends survey, the FSA's principal source of evidence on consumers' self-reported food-related activities and attitudes.

The Committee affirmed their interest in the content of the presentation and expressed surprise over some of the figures in relation to food security and food hygiene practices in the home. They identified food security in Northern Ireland as an area that would benefit from more focus and suggested that the data could be utilised with existing Kantar and NDNS data to develop our understanding of consumer attitudes in key work areas.

NIFAC members endorsed the need to make sure the data is used to drive policy change and shared with all relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

I am copying this letter to the Chief Executive.



pp. Colm McKenna (approved by Colm McKenna and signed in his absence)
Chair, Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee