

Meeting of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee on 24 July at the FSA Offices, Belfast

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1. 9.30am – Welcome and Housekeeping
2. 9.35am – Minutes of the meeting of 10 April 2019
3. 9.45am – Chair's Update and Director's Report
4. 10.00am – Food Industry in Northern Ireland – John Hood and Gráinne Moody
5. 10.20am – Food Strategy in Northern Ireland – Joy Alexander
6. 10.40am – Food Borne Illnesses, Disease Patterns and Emerging Trends – Paul Cabrey
7. 11.00am – Questions and discussion of the future FSA Strategy
8. 12.00pm – AoB
9. 12.05pm – Close/Lunch

Paper for Discussion
Minutes of open meeting on 10 April 2019

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 10 April NIFAC meeting

Members are invited to:

- Agree minutes as a true record of proceedings

FSA Northern Ireland

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Ref NIFAC Minutes 1/19

Open meeting of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) on 10 April 2019, 10:30 am, at the FSA Offices, Belfast

Those present:

NIFAC Members

- Colm McKenna – Chairman
- Lorraine Crawford
- Sara McCracken
- Fiona Hanna
- Phelim O'Neill
- Aodhan O'Donnell
- Greg Irwin

FSA Executive

- Maria Jennings – Director of Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland (NI)
- Sharon Gilmore – Head of Standards and Dietary Health
- Louise Connolly – FSA in NI Senior Advisor for Food Standards
- Ross Yarham – Senior Scientific Officer – Allergy and Intolerance
- Seth Chanas – NIFAC Secretariat

Guest Speakers

- Michael Walker – Chartered Chemist
- Paula O'Neill – Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council
- Helen Morrissey – Belfast City Council

Apologies

- Elizabeth Mitchell

1 Welcome and introductions

- 1.1** The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members to the meeting, especially noting that this was the first meeting for new NIFAC member Greg Irwin. He explained the theme for the meeting, revolving around the topic of allergens and noted that an extraordinary meeting of the FSA Board around the same topic will take place on 8 May. The paper being prepared for that meeting would be circulated to NIFAC members and they would be given an opportunity to pass their comments on it to the Chair ahead of that meeting.

2 Minutes of the meeting of 6 March 2019

- 2.1** The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's meeting on 6 March. The minutes of NIFAC's 29 November meeting were also included, which, though circulated previously to NIFAC members had been omitted from the papers for the March 6 meeting. One issue had been identified ahead of the meeting relating to the inclusion of a departed NIFAC member among the attendees. The Secretariat had agreed to rectify this. No further issues were raised, and the Secretariat agreed to publish the minutes.

Action Point 1 - Secretariat to remove the name of the departed NIFAC member from the minutes of the 6 March and arrange for their publication.

3 Chair's Report and Director's Update

- 3.1** The Chair noted the appointment of new NIFAC member Greg Irwin and welcomed him again to his first NIFAC meeting. He explained that the field applying for the position had been exceptionally strong and expressed his gratitude to the Permanent Secretary for Health for expediting the process and allowing for the appointment to be made promptly.
- 3.2** NIFAC were then apprised of the ongoing process to appoint a new Chief Executive (CE) to the FSA with the current CE having announced their retirement, noting that 6 candidates had been shortlisted.
- 3.3** Maria Jennings explained that her update had been included in the papers and covered a shorter period of time than highlighted the following items:
- Contingency planning for EU Exit
 - Repatriation of Legislation
 - CalorieWise
- 3.4** On Contingency planning for EU Exit, Maria explained that whatever the outcome of EU Exit negotiations, the FSA is better prepared than ever to deal with potential emergency situations due to recruitment that had taken place to prepare for EU Exit, noting that the FSA in NI staff count was higher than it had ever been.

3.5 On the repatriation of legislation, she noted that there were a very small number of Statutory Instruments that are unlikely to be passed ahead of EU Exit but that there would only be a short gap where enforcement colleagues may need to reassess the proportionality of actions in light of this.

3.6 On CalorieWise, it was explained that the Dietary Health team was working with the FSA Social Science team to encourage wider uptake of the award among caterers and that the FSA in NI has provided support to 15 businesses and five District Councils since January 2019 with good progression made towards compliance with scheme criteria.

4 Allergens

4.1 The Chair introduced the discussion on allergens, and invited Sharon Gilmore, FSA in NI Head of Standards and Dietary Health, to outline the issues and introduce the speakers. Sharon explained that there were 14 allergens listed that businesses need to inform customers about. She highlighted the seriousness of the issue and the life changing consequences for those effected. She explained that NIFAC would be hearing presentations from Ross Yarham (FSA Food Allergy & Intolerance Research Programme Manager) on FSA funded Food Allergy and Intolerance Research; Michael Walker (Chartered Chemist) on a patients perspective of the issues, as well as from Paula O'Neill (Principal Environmental Health Officer with Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Council) and Helen Morrissey (Belfast City Council) on Local Authority Allergen Strategy. She first introduced Louise Connolly (FSA in NI Senior Advisor on Food Standards) to give an update on FSA Work on Food Allergens. The presentation covered:

- current legislative requirements
- the number of allergy related incidents
- UK food alerts 2018 – Jan – Dec
- the Consultation on amending allergen information provisions contained within domestic food information legislation for food prepacked for direct sale
- the role of the FSA
- FSA allergen strategy 2020-2030
- activity specific to NI
- MenuCal
- next steps

4.2 The Chair thanked Louise for this introduction and invited Paula O'Neill and Helen Morrissey to deliver their presentation giving an Environmental Health Officer's view on issues related to allergens. The presentation covered:

- the strategy to improve compliance with allergen requirements
- pre-packed and loose foods
- resources
- numbers of visits and business seminars undertaken

- concerns
- alleged causes of allergic reactions
- formal action
- current on-going serious investigations

4.3 The Chair thanked Paula and Helen for this viewpoint and invited Michael Walker (Chartered Chemist) to conclude the presentations. His presentation covered:

- the development of quality control materials for food allergen analysis funded by FSA
- definitions of food allergy and hypersensitivity
- sensitisation
- fatal food anaphylaxis
- quality of life for allergic consumers, their families and carers
- diagnosis, management, intervention, prevention
- avoidance, prevention and the possibility of cure
- food law, precautionary allergen labelling and thresholds
- proposed reference doses
- factors influencing the severity of allergic reaction
- problems with allergen analysis
- patient support in Northern Ireland
- the biannual public attitudes tracker

4.4 The Chair thanked Michael for this viewpoint and invited Ross Yarham (FSA Food Allergy & Intolerance Research Programme Manager) to conclude the presentations. His presentation covered:

- the FSA approach to the use of science and evidence
- the impact of food allergy
- the purpose of research
- the reach of FSA funded research
- aims of the food allergy and intolerance research programme
- current FSA funded research
- key FSA research impacts
- upcoming FSA research

4.5 There then followed a discussion with the three presenters where the following points were made:

- It was cautioned about the need for proportionality, noting the low statistics of a fatality occurring as the result of anaphylaxis but taking account of quality of life issues and the worrying increase in incidents. It was acknowledged that the reason for that increase, whether from an increase in hypersensitivity, higher reporting rates, or an increasing use of allergenic ingredients, was unknown and that a better understanding of the causes would be key.

- NIFAC received a recommendation from Vice President of the Institute of Food Science and Technology, Michael Bell, that working collaboratively with the Institute would be advantageous to both organisations as the Institute represents people with control over the contents of a high number of daily meals.
- The encouraging statistic from the presentations that consumers generally (and in NI in particular) are confident about asking about the allergen content of a food if they are uncertain were noted. This was welcomed, and it was suggested the FSA should consider what might help these figures to become higher still, but a distinction should also be made about between having the confidence to ask and having confidence in the answer received. Encouraging allergy sufferers to ask in cases where suppliers have imperfect information could have unintended consequences.
- The principle that it was the Food Business Operator's responsibility to ensure that the food it produced was safe was endorsed but several accounts of businesses being afraid to serve customers with allergies were also acknowledged. It was suggested that there was work to do in communicating to businesses that what was being asked of them was to provide information and for that information to be correct.
- It was also noted at the meeting that many consumers may not have understood that, where a business had a high Food Hygiene Rating, food standards and allergen issues would not have been considered in awarding that rating. There was a suggestion that where allergens were concerned, it should cease to be considered a standards issue and be viewed in terms of food safety, which would bring it into the scope of the scheme. Given the original intention of FHRS, however, it was proposed that a parallel scheme for allergens, which could be practically assessed and rated at the same time, would be a preferable model.
- It was also noted that the NHS Guidance to allergy sufferers that "If you or your child have a severe food allergy, you need to be careful when you eat out" appeared at odds with FSA's message of "food you can trust".
- The profile of businesses in Northern Ireland and the good relationships between the FSA and the Councils, makes Northern Ireland an ideal place to pilot initiatives with an increased probability of effective buy-in from the relevant stakeholders.
- An observer to the meeting also noted the importance to the NI economy that egg allergy had one of the lowest thresholds, egg consumption represented one of the UK's fastest growing protein sources and that NI was a significant supplier of egg to the UK.

- It was noted that there were several features of the way in which allergen issues were dealt with in Northern Ireland that were positive including the good cooperation between FSA in NI and Environmental Health Officers; good cross border relationships with FSAI and Saferood; District Council support for food standards work; good allergen awareness; local expertise; and good local allergy doctors and services. This was balanced against various negative factors such as the lack of local patient support following the closure of Allergy NI and Anaphylaxis Ireland; a lack of dialogue around the impact of physical activity levels and thresholds; and the possibility of further divergence in standards and labelling following EU Exit. Nevertheless, it was considered that the overall situation was a positive one that, were it to be replicated across England and Wales would see improvements there for allergy sufferers.

Any Other Business

4.6 No further business was raised, and the meeting was closed. The next Open meeting will be held on 24 July 2019.

ACTION POINTS

Action Point 1 - Secretariat to remove the name of the departed NIFAC member from the minutes of the 6 March and arrange for their publication.

PAPER FOR INFORMATION

Update from Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and NI to NIFAC
24 July 2019

Executive Summary

Attached is the FSA in NI Director's update to the Committee for July 2019. This report covers the period from 10 April 2019 to 17 July 2019.

- No action by members is necessary.

FSA Northern Ireland

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Food Is Safe

Biotoxin Monitoring Programme - Consultation

We have initiated a consultation on our risk-based approach to monitoring biotoxins in live bivalve molluscs. The consultation will run between 4th July to 15th August. The approach being proposed is that sampling frequencies will no longer be set at regular monthly intervals but will be influenced by variables such as location, past exceedance and toxin type. This proposed risk-based approach aims to achieve compliance with requirements laid out in Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, reduce risk of a toxin event going undetected, ensure biotoxin monitoring programmes are risk based and subsequently increase confidence and assurance in Northern Ireland's live bivalve mollusc industry.

Key stakeholders include:

- District Councils
- Loughs Agency
- DAERA Marine and Fisheries
- Private sampling contractor for Belfast and Larne Lough
- Shellfish industry representative – Aquaculture Initiative and Seafish
- Shellfish harvesters
- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)

Publication of support package on Root Cause Analysis and Quick Reference Guide for Traceability, Withdrawals and Recalls

The FSA and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) published a Quick Reference Guide for the guidance: Traceability, Withdrawals and Recalls within the UK Food Industry, and a support package on Root Cause Analysis (RCA) on 13 June 2019.

- The Quick Reference Guide compliments the main guidance and was developed to assist in particular small food businesses. The guide has been designed using infographics and images to facilitate ease of use for businesses and includes links to further, more in depth information contained within the main guidance.
- The RCA package has been developed by a multi-stakeholder working group to help businesses understand the theory and practice of RCA, and how its use and reporting could reduce the number of recurring food safety incidents. The package consists of a new introductory level e-learning course for businesses and enforcement authorities, a best practice example of a completed RCA, and a report form that can help businesses record their learnings and share with FSA/FSS via their enforcement authority. FSA and FSS are asking businesses to share learnings from food incidents that result in a recall, and for all incidents that are allergen related. This is part of the FSA's and FSS' work towards developing a philosophy of continuous improvement amongst all stakeholders within the withdrawal and recalls system.

The full suite of tools developed under the Efficacy of Recalls and Withdrawals project can be found on the FSA website at <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-incidents-product-recalls-and-withdrawals>.

2019/20 National Enforcement Priorities

The 2019/20 National Enforcement Priorities (NEPs) for Animal Feed and Food Hygiene at the level of Primary Production were issued to DAERA on 17 April. The NEPs for NI are amended to reflect the enforcement situation in NI, however the priorities are consistent throughout the UK.

The NEPs were informed by the Strategic Animal Feed Threat Assessment and were developed in consultation with the feed industry and Enforcement Authority representatives.

The objectives of the NEPs include driving an intelligence led approach to official controls, focusing resources on higher risk and non-compliant business and placing an increased focus on outcomes.

Feed Sampling and Analysis Programme

Funding for a Feed Sampling and Analysis Programme in NI has been secured for the next three financial years. DAERA have submitted a sampling plan for 2019/20 and this has been approved by FSA.

This programme will assist in delivering the Agency's strategic plan outcome that food produced or sold in the UK is safe to eat and specifically aims to deliver the following associated main priority, "increase horizon scanning and improve forensic knowledge, and intelligence on, global feed chains to identify and reduce the impact of new and re-emerging risks – particularly around chemical and aflatoxin contamination."

Safe Catering

We published an updated Safe Catering guide on 17 May. The Safe Catering guide is an FSA in NI publication that enables food businesses in the service sector, such as caterers, restaurants and take away food businesses to produce safe food. The revised guide contains a new section on acrylamide. The newly revised guide was promoted to businesses using the FSA's social media channels.

The new section is available as part of an updated pack and also as an independent section. FBOs can download the new section and integrate into their current packs.

We would acknowledge the Safe Catering Guide Consultation Group for their input, including Riona Flynn (Belfast City Council), Lara Nelson (Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council) and Pauline Thompson (Education Authority Northern Ireland).

Review of approvals

I updated the Committee previously that FSA in NI and district councils commenced a review of the approval process for food establishments to ensure there was consistency of application across the eleven council areas and, if

necessary, to agree an action plan for continuous improvement. The review has now been completed and a series of recommendations have been made and agreed with the NI food managers group and Environmental Health NI. Work is now commencing with a task and finish group to implement the recommendations which include the following:

- Implement methods and procedures to ensure approval timeframes are met
- Build resilience in relation to approval official control delivery and
- Utilise and share expertise across NI

I would like to thank the councils for their commitment to this project.

Gathering and Using Science, Evidence and Information

Developing an Assurance Scheme for Shellfish and Human Health (DASSHH)

The DASSHH project is being led by shellfish industry representatives and will improve our understanding of contamination sources and how uptake by shellfish varies with a range of environmental factors (e.g. rainfall or tidal surge). The ultimate goal of this pan-UK project is the development of a risk-based decision support framework that will complement the current classification system and at the same time add a new dimension to management interventions for producers. Phase one of three is now well under way and Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) presented the NI Phase one report at a DASSHH project meeting in Cornwall on 11th July. Bangor University and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology will present equivalent reports for England and Wales.

The FSA in NI continues to support and contribute to this project and would like to acknowledge the contribution of sampling data from C-Fresh Mussels Ltd. This sampling data was fundamental in enabling the NI phase one report.

Ice Cream Technical Workshop

The FSA in partnership with the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) and Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute hosted the Eating Well Choosing Better (EWCB) 'Formulating for a Healthier Future' event on the 29th May 2019. This was the second event to focus specifically on ice cream reformulation in Northern Ireland. The 44 delegates represented Northern Ireland ice cream businesses, knowledge providers and other Government Departments.

Presentations provided insight to the latest FSA data on Northern Ireland consumer food consumption, purchasing habits and the innovative techniques that can be utilised to reformulate ice cream.

Evaluations completed by delegates at the end of the event demonstrated 91% of ice cream manufacturers would consider reformulating ice cream products to make them healthier. 36% of ice cream manufacturers would consider reducing the portion size of ice cream products and 64% of ice cream manufacturers would also consider promoting healthier ice cream products to customers.

The ice cream manufacturers will continue to have available the one to one mentoring technical support with CAFRE staff, with further progress on reformulation to be reported on in five months' time.

Scone Reformulation

The FSA has agreed a plan of work with CAFRE to create technical guidance for the NI bakery sector to reduce the calorie, sugar, fat and/or salt content of scones and to host a workshop to showcase the proposed guidance. This project was initiated as a result of findings of the FSA NI Scone Report:

https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/nutritional-content-of-scones-report_0.pdf)

National Diet and Nutrition Survey

The Northern Ireland NDNS Report: Results for Years 5 to 9 (2012/13 - 2016/17) (combined) and time trend and income analysis Years 1 to 9 (2008/09 - 2016/17) was published as an official statistic on 9th April 2019.

This report presents descriptive statistics on food consumption, nutrient intakes and urinary iodine for adults and children in Northern Ireland based on data collected in years 5-9 (2012/13-2016/17). It also includes time trend analyses over 9 years (2008/09-2016/17) and equivalised household income analyses based on data collected from years 5-9 (2012/13-2016/17) using linear regression models for a range of public health-relevant foods and nutrients. The statistical methods used are the same as for the UK report. Comparisons of trends with the UK is included.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/research/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-ndns/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-ndns-report-for-northern-ireland>

Food and You – Wave 5

The Food and You consumer survey collects information about the public's reported behaviours, attitudes and knowledge relating to food safety and food issues. This involves food purchasing, storage, preparation, consumption and factors that may affect these.

The survey provides data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since 2014, results from Food and You have been published as an Official Statistic, reflecting the robust methodology of the survey. The Food and You survey Wave 5 was published on 27th June 2019.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you/food-and-you-wave-five>

FHRS Display Rates Research

The FSA has completed and published the latest research in to FHRS display rates 'Display of food hygiene ratings in England, Northern Ireland and Wales'. In NI, 87% of businesses are displaying their food hygiene rating which is up from 64% at the start of the statutory scheme. Broken down into rating groups, five and four rated businesses have a 90% display rate with three, two, one, and zero-rated food businesses having a display rate of below 60%.

90% of businesses claim positive attitudes towards mandatory display with 74% claiming positive attitudes towards statutory display online.

Empowering Consumers

Balmoral Show Evaluation

More than 2,300 people visited the FSA's stand at Balmoral Show in May, based on giveaway quantities. The social media competition saw an average organic reach of 938 over three organic posts and saw a total of 87 likes, 123 comments and 17 shares.

579 people responded to the Quick Tap survey (461 female and 118 male) about portion sizes when eating out, the availability of calorie information and if that impact a person's meal choice. The results provided a good rationale for Calorie Wise.

Calorie Wise

The FSA and the 11 District Councils in Northern Ireland presented the Calorie Wise Gold Award to Mc Donald's restaurants for displaying energy information on all menu items in their NI outlets. Mc Donald's present energy information in both kilojoules and calories on all their menu boards, their website and on their mobile phone app. Each of the 30 Mc Donald's restaurants in NI will now display the Calorie Wise Gold window sticker beside the FHS rating. The display of the window sticker is aimed at increasing awareness and consumer engagement with the energy information when making their choices. A Calorie Wise Gold and Silver tiered system has been introduced, where Gold is awarded to food businesses which display the calories of all food and drink menu items and Silver recognises those which display the calories of 30% of their menu items.

Making Life Better

The FSA attended a regional event organised by the Department of Health to update health professionals, Government Departments and NGOs on progress with the ten-year strategic framework for public health 'Making Life Better'. The framework seeks to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and move towards a vision of NI where all people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and wellbeing potential and to reduce inequalities in health. The FSA is a named delivery partner for two outcomes and are working to drive a focus on nutrition and health inequalities within the framework with other key partners during 19/20.

Aligning Incentives

Regulating our Future Programme

Register a Food Business Service

Work has been continuing to develop the register for a food business service that will provide online food business registration across England, Wales and NI. Two councils in NI (Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council) have been heavily involved in the pilot and development of the digital service. Colleagues from FSA London and the NI LA policy and delivery team attended the NI Food managers group meeting in early May to discuss all councils in NI connecting to the new digital service. At the meeting all councils agreed to connect to the service and this work is now underway, with all

councils expected to be onboard in the early Autumn. The next phase will be to work with external partners, such as Invest NI and OGDs to ensure new food businesses are signposted to the new digital service.

Competency Framework

FSA is developing a single competency framework for people undertaking food assurance activities, that will include all relevant roles in the public and private sector and takes account of future requirements and supports sustainability of the delivery system.

A Competency Reference Group has been established to support the development of the FSA framework and includes representatives from enforcement authorities including a representative from NI, businesses and FSA Operations. Since April, work has been ongoing to agree functional competency headings for specific control activities, where those undertaking them need to display a defined competency – in line with what happens in other countries. Once finalised, FSA will consider the detail of the competencies required (the knowledge and skills) for each of the headings.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)

The table below provides a breakdown of NI FHRS Profile on 8 July, demonstrating that 99% of NI businesses achieved a rating of between 3 and 5 (Broadly compliant) and 79% achieved a rating of 5 (very good).

Council	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Antrim & Newtownabbey	0	5	6	58	154	743	966
Ards and North Down	0	6	7	57	163	890	1123
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	0	5	7	52	228	1205	1497
Belfast City	1	9	20	217	558	1990	2795
Causeway Coast and Glens	0	2	21	35	175	1118	1351
Derry City and Strabane	0	3	1	59	214	898	1175
Fermanagh & Omagh	0	0	11	66	213	943	1233
Lisburn and Castlereagh City	0	3	8	14	84	674	783
Mid & East Antrim	0	4	1	36	155	793	989
Mid Ulster	0	1	6	32	169	1000	1208
Newry Mourne & Down	0	10	3	39	188	1213	1453
Total	1	48	91	665	2301	11467	14573

FHRS Consistency Exercise

Consistent operation of the FHRS is critical to enabling consumers and other users to make meaningful comparisons of hygiene ratings for establishments within and across different local authority areas. The FSA has a role in monitoring consistency and the and statutory guidance that applies in Northern Ireland (and Wales) and the FHRS Brand Standard in England highlight that this may include the development and organisation of national consistency exercises. The FSA conducted the fourth national consistency exercise at the end of 2018 and the report was published in June this year. Councils in NI demonstrated a high level of consistency in scoring with nine of the councils providing a rating of five in the

exercise and the and remaining two providing a rating of four.

FHRS On-line display

FSA in NI plan to introduce regulations in NI that will require food business operators in the scope of the scheme to provide ratings online, where they sell food through an online platform. These regulations will be progressed once the NI Assembly is operating again. In the interim period we have been working with key industry stakeholders to promote the voluntary display of food hygiene ratings online. One of these stakeholders has been Just Eat (who provide an online platform for takeaway food sales). This work has led to Just Eat piloting online rating display on their platform in NI and now includes all NI food businesses selling through the platform displaying their food hygiene rating. This pilot programme has allowed Just Eat and the FSA to gather valuable data and will be extended to the rest of the UK.

FHRS three-year review of the mandatory scheme

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme became mandatory in Northern Ireland in October 2016 under the Food Hygiene Rating Act (NI) 2016 (the Act). The Act places a duty on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to conduct a review of the scheme throughout Northern Ireland within three years of its commencement. The review report, which must be provided to the Department of Health and published, will be required to set out any recommendations for change to the scheme, along with supporting evidence. We have commenced the review of the scheme, which includes commissioning bespoke research in NI to gather views from food businesses and we are analysing this alongside existing evidence that has been gathered since the scheme became mandatory. The review will be completed, and a report provided to the Department later this year.

Being the Best Organisation We Can Be

Food Industry Liaison Group (FILG) meeting

The FILG met on 5th July for its second formal meeting of the year. The meeting was chaired by Maria Jennings and was well attended by industry trade bodies.

The FSA presented to the group on the following topics:

- The work of the FSA's Strategic Surveillance Unit
- The role of the FSA's new Stakeholder Engagement and Receipt and Management Team
- The outcomes associated with the FSA's Efficacy of Recall Project

Environmental Health NI

We attended the Environmental Health NI group, representing the heads of the Environmental Health services in the 11 district councils on the 18 April to discuss and agree the annual audit plan for councils, FSA funding for the period 2019-20 and to provide an update on developments within the Regulating our Future programme and upcoming work for the year.

Legislation

Raw Drinking Milk Labelling Regulations

Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 came into operation on 29th June 2019.

These Regulations will amend the current labelling provisions for Northern Ireland to inform vulnerable consumers of the potential risks associated with consumption of raw drinking milk.

Currently in Northern Ireland, raw drinking milk (except from buffalo) requires to be labelled with the warning; "This milk has not been heat-treated and may therefore contain organisms harmful to health." The Regulations amend the current labelling rules so that the following statement is also required on the labelling of raw drinking milk from all species (including from buffalos) : "The Food Standards Agency strongly advises that it should not be consumed by children, pregnant women, older people and those who are unwell or have chronic illness."

In January 2014, the FSA undertook a public consultation on the review of the controls governing the sale and marketing of unpasteurised or raw drinking milk and raw cream in Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

In July 2015, the FSA Board discussed the conclusions of the review and accepted its recommendations that:

- The level of risk associated with raw drinking milk consumption is acceptable when appropriate hygiene controls are applied, except for vulnerable consumers
- Risk communication, particularly to vulnerable consumers, should be improved, including revisions to labelling requirements in Northern Ireland and England to mirror that used in Wales and
- Current restrictions on sale should remain in place to ensure that the same level of consumer protection could be maintained.

The sale of raw drinking milk is banned in Scotland.

Unpasteurised, or 'raw', milk and cream may contain harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. Vulnerable consumers, with a weakened immune system, are particularly susceptible to food poisoning and should not consume unpasteurised milk and cream. Vulnerable consumers include older people, pregnant women, infants and children.

The costs to Northern Ireland industry are likely to be cost neutral, as the changes will be phased in to allow industry a transitional period to use up existing labelling and to change their labelling to comply with the new labelling requirements.

Official Controls Regulations (OCR) 2017/625

The FSA and DEFRA are currently considering the impact that the extension of Article 50 will have on the application of the new Official Controls Regulation (OCR) 2017/625 and its tertiary legislation. OCR was published in 2017, with

negotiations spanning several years before this point. Some tertiary legislation is still under discussion at EU level and FSA and DEFRA officials are involved in the negotiation process. FSA is working closely with DEFRA in areas where we have common ground, such as imports of products of animal origin.

Withdrawal from the EU under a negotiated deal would include an implementation period during which the UK would be subject to EU law, including the OCR. To prepare for this we are starting work to implement the regulation across government. This legislation and its tertiary legislation are directly applicable and will apply in all Member States from 14 December 2019. The OCR will affect all four countries of the UK. It will need to be implemented otherwise the UK would be at risk of infraction procedures for under-implementation of EU legislation.

To properly implement all relevant provisions of the OCR package the FSA will undertake a small programme of introducing secondary legislation. As part of the process of introducing new SIs, the FSA will be producing an Impact Assessment which we currently intend to publish over the summer.

The consultation period is set to last for 8 weeks and will begin in July. The consultation will focus on the impact assessment which examine the effect of the OCR on businesses and regulators.

EU Exit

EU Exit Legislation

FSA in NI continues to work with FSA colleagues and other Government Departments, including DEFRA, DHSC, DAERA and the Department of Health to ensure the retained EU law (UK Acquis) and the Northern Ireland domestic legislation remain fully operable after the UK's exit from the EU.

Good progress is continuing in relation to the legislation required with many of the necessary amendments having been made. An update on the remaining legislation required is detailed below.

- The Food Additives, Flavourings, Enzymes and Extraction Solvents (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 amending retained EU law has now passed through Parliament, was made on 10th April and will come into force on exit day.
- The Food and Feed Hygiene and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, the last of the planned sixteen FSA UK-wide EU Exit Statutory Instruments (SIs) amending retained EU law, was made on 10th June and will come into force on exit day.
- Further UK-wide EU Exit SI(s) containing transitional and miscellaneous amendments are planned to account for subsequent changes to EU law since April and before the UK exits the EU. These SIs will also include other issues identified which have not been addressed in the sixteen earlier UK-wide EU exit SIs.

Export

Milk inward visit

FSA was involved in an inward visit in June for milk buyers from China, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. The visit was overseen by the Dairy Council for NI and officials from the food safety policy and delivery team presented to the visitors on the work of the FSA and delivery partners (DAERA and district councils) regarding the official control programmes operating in NI.

Beef to China

FSA was involved in the opening meeting for the Chinese delegation visiting the UK, where they visited 2 meat processing premises in NI (9056- W D Meats and a Stand-alone cold store) on the 7th – 10th of June;

DEFRA announced on 17th June 2019 that China had agreed a UK-China Beef protocol that will allow for exports of beef to take place.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/230m-boost-for-british-beef-as-china-agrees-market-access>

USDA Beef

Visit scheduled to take place to NI on the 17th – 20th of July 2019.

M Jennings

Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland

NIFAC discussion on FSA Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

This is the third of NIFAC's themed meetings to take place in the Committee's new way of considering issues and advising the FSA.

This themed meeting will be looking at the topic of the FSA Strategy and future Strategic Plan. The [current](#) FSA Strategic Plan covers the period 2015-2020 and this themed meeting will be considering the Strategic Plan from 2020 and issues that are important from a Northern Ireland perspective.

To provide background and an industry perspective, John Hood (Director of Food, Drink and Tourism at Invest NI) and Gráinne Moody (Invest NI) will be giving a presentation on the issues that are impacting the food industry in Northern Ireland and reflecting on some of the important issues that should be considered in the FSA Strategic Plan.

The Committee will also hear from Joy Alexander (Head of Future food Policy in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) regarding the current development of a Food Strategy in Northern Ireland. Joy will reflect on the work that is being carried out on the Food Strategy and how this might feed into the wider FSA Strategy from a Northern Ireland perspective.

Members are invited to:

- Consider the content of the presentations and;
- Comment on and consider what issues and topics are important to be considered by the Future FSA Strategy from a Northern Ireland perspective.

FSA Northern Ireland

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