

MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2019 AT ST GEORGE'S HOTEL, THE PROMENADE, LLANDUDNO, LL30 2LG

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

Dr R Hussey, Chair
Dr N Barry
Mr J Wilson
Mr A Gardner
Dr P Hollington
Mr R Alexander

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

Nathan Barnhouse – Director, FSA in Wales
Alice Teague – Head of Policy and Regulatory Partnerships, FSA in Wales
Lucy Edwards - Secretariat
Helen George – Secretariat

Stakeholders Attending:

Representatives from the following:

NFU Cymru
North Wales Resilience Forum
Betsi Cadwallader University Health Board
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Farmers Union Wales
Anglesey County Council
Conwy Kombucha Ltd
Powys County Council
Pennotec (Pennog Ltd)
British Association for Shooting and Conservation
North Wales Fire and Rescue
Conwy County Borough Council

Presentations from:

Michelle Patel and Rebecca Gillespie, FSA Social Science.
Alice Teague, Head of Policy and Regulatory Partnerships, FSA in Wales
Ann Marie Flinn – Technical Manager, Food Technology Centre, Coleg Menai

1. Introductions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and informed that the meeting was the second to be held following the review undertaken in 2018 on the operations of the Food Advisory Committees (FACs) in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Chair reminded that, following the review, the WFAC had moved towards a more forward looking way of working and, in line with recommendations made in the review, would focus its attention on developing its own intelligence/insight which might usefully contribute to forthcoming issues to be considered by the Board. The Chair said that the WFAC intelligence would be supplementary to information already provided for the FSA from a wide range of other sources, including advice from expert advisory groups, scientific advice, data from social science and consumer insight programmes and incident management. The Chair informed that the new way of working would be monitored and reviewed and commented that she would welcome feedback from stakeholders on the day's proceedings.
- 1.2. Apologies were noted from Julie Pierce, Mr D Peace and Mrs B Lyne-Pirkis.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1. Committee members advised the following declarations of interest:
 - Norma Barry advised that she works on consultancy assignments for food businesses which involve drafting HR policies and business plans. Norma also advised that she is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board.
 - Ruth Hussey advised that she is the Governor of The Health Foundation, Commissioner, LSE/Lancet Commission on the 'Future of the NHS' and an Advisory Board Member for the School of Public Health Research. Ruth also has family members who are farmers.
 - James Wilson advised that he is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and owns a shellfish business.
 - Philip Hollington advised that he is a member of the British Grassland Society and the Tropical Agricultural Association.
 - Ronnie Alexander advised that he is a member of the Vale of Glamorgan Standards Committee.
- 2.2. All declarations were noted.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July were agreed as a true record.
Action: Secretariat. Minutes to be translated and posted to the website.

4. Report from Chairman (Paper FSAW 19/10/02)

- 4.1. The Chair presented her written report which summarised discussions at the last Board meeting and covered discussions she had held with the Board Chair, and Chair of the FAC in NI, in relation to the review of FACs. It was noted that the new arrangements for meetings were working well and would continue to be reviewed in order to best inform the strategic approach of the FSA. The Chair thanked the committee members who took part in the summer engagement opportunities at the National Eisteddfod and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show. The Chair asked members to note the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy recently published by Welsh Government which gives reference to the food environment in Wales that may be of relevance. There were no matters arising from the report.

5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 19/10/03)

- 5.1. The WFAC received the regular report from the Director in Wales, which stated that meetings had been held with a range of stakeholders. The report advised of a recent consultation on Official Controls Regulations, the reinstatement of the UK FHRS Focus Group, an update on EU Exit and the ESRC Social Science Festival. In a further oral update, the Director advised of the inaugural meeting of the Food Law Enforcement Liaison committee within Wales. There were no matters arising from the report.

6. The Food System in Wales – Open discussion

- 6.1. The Chair opened the discussions reiterating that the purpose of the open discussions was to assist the WFAC in developing its own insight and intelligence that might usefully contribute to issues which are likely to be the feature of forthcoming Board discussions. The Chair commented that she was particularly interested in opportunities for the WFAC to explore any country specific aspects of an issue. The Chair added that she would welcome inclusive dialogue and invited stakeholders present to participate throughout the discussions.
- 6.2 To set the scene, and to help facilitate discussions, presentations were delivered by Michelle Patel, Rebecca Gillespie, Alice Teague and Ann Marie Flinn.

7. The Food System in Wales: A Review of available evidence – Michelle Patel and Rebecca Gillespie, FSA Social Science

- 7.1 The presentation provided an overview of the paper produced by the FSA Analytics team, in collaboration with colleagues in FSA Wales (with economic data provided by Welsh Government's Food and Agricultural Department). The paper presented was based around a definition of the components of the food system as detailed in recent academic work undertaken in this field. The approach broke down the food system in terms of components of the food chain including Farming input, Agricultural production, Distribution, transport and trade, Processing, Food retail/service and Eating and other elements of the system including economy. The paper provided to the Committee reviewed the evidence available against each component and identified a number of evidence gaps for consideration. The paper presented was an initial paper which would continue to be populated.
- 7.2 The committee welcomed the introductory paper and acknowledged that this is a vast subject matter that would require further exploration. Recognising the complexity of the food system, and the evidence available the Chair informed that it was important to explore what the evidence means for the FSA and the consumer. The need to understand any evidence gaps and to establish if there are any risks that the FSA is unaware of was highlighted, together with the need to have a better understanding of some parts of the dynamic food system. In terms of evidence gaps, the following areas were highlighted:
- What is the consumer understanding of food security and is food security of more of a concern in Wales given the higher levels of food poverty?
 - What work is being undertaken by academia in Wales?
 - Is access to and availability of affordable food an issue and are there potential food fraud risks associated with this?
- 7.3 In terms of opportunities, the changing landscape was highlighted and the possibility of eating increased marine based proteins and insect proteins was discussed as well as the novel use of food waste/ by products. The committee noted that the forthcoming Wales Real Food and Farming conference in Aberystwyth would be useful in informing the FSA's understanding of sustainable food chains.
- 7.4 The need to have a greater understanding of the distribution of food from primary production to retail/hospitality in Wales was discussed. It was noted that Ireland is a substantial export market but less is known about food distribution and transport internally between Wales and England where most food is distributed. It was thought that the committee could look at a particular food product to explore where the ingredients come from and where the product is distributed as a means of understand the dynamics of the system. Also, the paper could be further developed, from the evidence gathered so far, to focus on the question of 'what do people in Wales eat?'. This approach could help to identify groups of the population where risks might be cumulative and thus inform the FSA strategy. Another area for potential future discussion and exploration included how the policy environment in Wales is influencing the trends in the food system e.g. novel foods or some choices being made to support elements of policies i.e. Wellbeing of future generations and

environmental policies.

7.5 Observations made by stakeholders attending the meeting included the increased risk of risk of food fraud, also human trafficking and possible cross contamination issues associated with this. The food system workforce was highlighted including the skills needed for the future and the role played by migrant workers in the food industry. Also highlighted was the number of SMEs in Wales and an increase in food being sourced from local markets and food festivals.

7.6 It was agreed given the complexity of the food system and the matters raised during the discussion that further reflection was required to inform the next steps in mapping and exploring the food system in Wales.

8. Imports and Exports in Wales - Alice Teague, FSA in Wales

8.1 The presentation gave an overview of Imports and Exports in Wales detailing the role of Defra as the Central Competent Authority (CCA) for International Trade and FSA's role in ensuring that food and drink exported from the UK to third countries has been produced in accordance with EU requirements. The presentation demonstrated the monetary value of both imports and exports by product and destination countries.

8.2 The WFAC noted the presentation and will look to reflect this information into the ongoing work on the Food system in Wales.

9. Food Technology Centre – Ann Marie Flinn, Coleg Menai

9.1 The presentation gave an overview of the work of the Food Technology Centre and detailed the facilities and services available to support food businesses in Wales. The committee noted the comprehensive work of the Food Technology Centre and commented that it was useful to understand how the Food Technology Centre works in partnership with Zero 2 Five and Food Centre Wales to become Food Innovation Wales, supporting new product development, sharing scientific knowledge and information to support Welsh Government's ambition to further develop the food and drink industry within Wales. Two stakeholders present at the meeting commented that they had previously worked with the Food Technology Centre and highly commended the support provided.

10. Question and Answer Session

10.1 There were no issues raised.

11. Any other Business

11.1 The Committee noted that the next meeting would be a business meeting on 28 November 2019 and the next open meeting on 9 January in Llandudno.

Update: Due to the pre-election period the WFAC business meeting and next open meeting are now taking place on 16 January.