

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION  
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 8 MARCH 2017**

**Executive Summary**

Attached are the minutes of the 8 March 2017 NIFAC open meeting.

Members are invited to:

- Agree minutes as a true record of proceedings.

FSA Northern Ireland

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**REF NIFAC MINUTES 1/17**  
**OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY**  
**COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON 8 MARCH 2017, 1.30PM, AT THE GLENAVON**  
**HOTEL, COOKSTOWN.**

<b>Those present:</b>	<b>FSA</b>
<p><u>NIFAC members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colm McKenna – Chairman.</li> <li>• Aodhan O’Donnell.</li> <li>• Christine Kennedy.</li> <li>• Phelim O’Neill.</li> <li>• Elizabeth Mitchell.</li> <li>• Brian Smyth.</li> </ul> <p><u>Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colin Reid.</li> </ul> <p><b>Guest Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damian Connolly – Chief Environmental Health Officer. Belfast City Council.</li> <li>• Fiona McClements – Chief Environmental Health Officer. Mid-Ulster Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maria Jennings – Director for Northern Ireland and Organisational Development.</li> <li>• Roberta Ferson – NI Head of Finance Business Support and Communications.</li> <li>• Seth Chanas – NIFAC Secretariat.</li> <li>• Michael Jackson – Regulating Our Future.</li> </ul> <p><u>By Teleconference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nina Purcell – Director for Regulating Our Future.</li> <li>• Bill Stow – Independent Chair of the FSA’s Steering Group on Meat Charging.</li> <li>• Chris Hitchen – Head of Finance – Charging.</li> <li>• Richard Collier – Director of Finance and Performance.</li> <li>• Steve Wearne – Director of Policy.</li> <li>• Paul Tossell – Allergy and Intolerance Team Leader.</li> <li>• Chun-han Chan – Allergy and Novel Foods team.</li> </ul>

**1. Welcome and introductions**

1.1. The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members to the meeting, explaining that there was one apology from NIFAC member Colin Reid. The Chair also welcomed the observers who had attended this Open meeting. It had been agreed, in order to allow speakers for other commitments, the item on Regulating Our

Future would now be taken before the updates from the Chair and Director, contrary to the agenda circulated in the papers.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting of 16 November 2016.**

- 2.1. The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's open meeting on 16 November. An error was pointed out in the heading on page 1 of the minutes. The secretariat undertook to amend the paragraph and arrange for the publication of the minutes.

**Action Point – Secretariat to make amendment and arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 16 November 2016.**

## **3. Regulating Our Future Programme Update.**

- 3.1. The Chair welcomed Michael Jackson to the meeting and Nina Purcell, who was attending the meeting by teleconference. Nina Purcell introduced the paper, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. Fiona McClements of Mid Ulster Council and Damian Connolly of Belfast City Council also gave a presentation on the District Councils' perspective of the programme. The update covered:

- engagement undertaken with consumers, professionals and representatives of the food industry;
- the high level plan for 2017-19; and
- potential risks associated with the programme and proposals for mitigation.

- 3.2. The presentation from Damian Connolly and Fiona McClements then covered:

- drivers for change in the business, technological and cultural environments;
- the need for a modern, fit-for-purpose system;
- factors inhibiting positive change elsewhere;
- the performance profile of Northern Ireland's District Councils;
- concerns; and
- the best models for Northern Ireland;

- 3.3. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- This is a good paper and the recommendations are supported by the Committee. It will be important not to lose sight of the regulatory co-dependencies between the UK and other EU member states following

the UK's departure from the EU as this will have an impact both on imports from and exports to the EU.

- The concept of a permit to trade is also supported. However, when implementing a change of this sort, where primary legislation is likely to be required, the legislative process is likely to be protracted and it will be important to begin the process as soon as possible. Sound evidence will be required in order for any such Bill to pass the Regulatory Reform Committee and the gathering of this evidence should be done quickly and started as soon as possible to minimise delays.
- It was reassuring to hear of the willingness to share data found through pilot feasibility studies with various key industry stakeholders the FSA has undertaken. Access to and handling of data will have a bearing on the success of the programme and persuading businesses that sharing information is in their interest could be difficult. It will be important to get this right.
- It was also reassuring to hear about the strength of the relationship with Food Standards Scotland to ensure that consistency is maintained across jurisdictions.
- The inclusion of this programme among the FSA's strategic priorities is welcome as the scale of the task will require substantial resource and making sure that this is available will be key.
- The presentation from Damian Connolly and Fiona McClements was very useful in highlighting some of concerns and ambitions for the programme among the FSA's enforcement colleagues. Concerns included a perception that the FSA is "agnostic" about independent enforcement of regulation and that earned autonomy could amount to a "hands-off" approach. It was encouraging to hear their hopes that the programme could lead to better risk assessment and better targeting of resources while giving greater flexibility and support to innovatively improve compliance and change behaviours.

3.4. The Chair thanked Michael Jackson, Nina Purcell, Damian Connolly and Fiona McClements for helping NIFAC's consideration of this subject.

#### **4. Chair's Report and Director's Update**

4.1. The Chair updated members on progress with the ongoing recruitment process for new NIFAC members, explaining that the position was currently being advertised and would remain open for applications until 16 March.

4.2. Maria Jennings updated the Committee on items from the Director's report contained in the meeting papers, including:

- Shigella sonnei Outbreak in NI and ROI.

- Operation Rosetta.
  - OPSON VI – Food Supplements.
  - Feed Stakeholder Meeting.
  - Menucal.
- 4.3. It was explained that good work had been done by the team in the FSA's NI office in dealing with the shigella sonnei outbreak. The incident had been investigated in a cooperative and successful manner and effectively closed down.
- 4.4. The arrest made as a result of Operation Rosetta around the illegal sale of DNP would be going to trial and is intended to commence at the end of April.
- 4.5. Opson VI was an exercise being undertaken around the regulating of food supplements. This is an area that has historically proven difficult to regulate and the main issues observed relate to non-compliant labelling.
- 4.6. NIFAC were informed that serious concerns around the Brexit process had emerged recently during the Feed Stakeholder meeting, particularly regarding trade flows. The minutes of this meeting would be circulated to NIFAC members for their information.

**Action Point – Secretariat to circulate the minutes of the Feed Stakeholder Meeting to NIFAC.**

- 4.7. The success of the Menucal was also highlighted, emphasising the high user count accrued since its launch in September 2015.

**5. Stow Phase 2 – Sustainable Funding Model.**

- 5.1. The Chair welcomed Bill Stow, Chris Hitchen and Richard Collier to the meeting by teleconference to introduce this paper, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. The presentation covered:
- initial period assessing discount system;
  - the request to examine a new funding model;
  - difficulties in agreeing overhead costs to industry; and
  - the proposal to suspend.
- 5.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:
- The recommendations, given the circumstances, are accepted. It is acknowledged that the EU subsidy will be lost following the UK's exit from the EU and there is a question of whether there could be the potential for a benefit from the UK's exit from the EU in terms of charging.

- Care should be taken that the special measures for small and medium businesses do not come at the expense of larger businesses which will have invested heavily in state of the art equipment to ensure the effectiveness of their processes in complying with regulations. There was also a question raised over whether the FSA was the appropriate organisation to be providing support in these cases.
- The recommendation that the Steering Group should suspend its work on the development of a Sustainable Funding Model for now is supported but greater clarity over the circumstances that would act as a trigger to precipitate a resumption of this work would be welcome.
- There is a question over the ease with which this group, which had made notable progress to date, could be reconvened in the event of a prolonged suspension.

5.3. The Chair thanked Bill Stow, Chris Hitchen and Richard Collier for this update.

## **6. Food Allergy and Intolerance Programme.**

6.1. The Chair welcomed Steve Wearne, Paul Tossell and Chun-Han Chan to the meeting by teleconference to introduce this paper, which is due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. The presentation covered:

- The scale of the issue for consumers;
- The programme of scientific research;
- Activities undertaken to raise awareness; and
- Collaborative work.

6.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following comments were made:

- This was an enjoyable paper with many, very interesting research findings. There is a concern over the abuse of the precautionary allergen labelling (PAL) statements and that ubiquity of 'May Contain' warnings could lead some allergy sufferers to become dismissive of the notice resulting in risky eating behaviour.
- It was reassuring to hear that teenagers, who are referred to frequently in the paper, will be included as work increases to focus on adults. Caution was urged, however, to ensure that the work on children was not unduly overlooked in refocussing on adults.
- It was disappointing not to see Menucal referred to in the paper. This is a significant tool for businesses to ensure that appropriate allergy information can be provided to consumers.

6.3. The Chair thanked Steve Wearne, Paul Tossell and Chun-Han Chan for bringing this item to the Committee.

## **7. Dietary Health Update.**

7.1. The Chair invited Maria Jennings to introduce the above paper due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. The presentation covered:

- the time gap since the Board received a previous update on this subject;
- the FSA's strategic aims, Fitter Future for All and the Programme for Government;
- evidence underlining the importance of the work;
- aligning the direction of travel with Public Health England (PHE);
- the extent of PHE's reach with small businesses;
- support from key partners;
- Front of Pack Labelling and takeaways; and
- recommendations to the Board.

7.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- This paper presents a very good and logical analysis of a complex subject and is welcomed by the Committee. The Committee fully support the approach and look forward to seeing how it will be taken up.

7.3. The Chair thanked Maria Jennings for assisting with the Committee's consideration of this paper.

## **8. Any Other Business**

8.1. No further business was raised and the meeting was closed. The next Open meeting will be held on 14 June.

### **TABLE OF ACTION POINTS**

<b>No</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>To be actioned by</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>
1.	<b>To make amendment and arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 16 November 2016.</b>	<b>Secretariat</b>	24 April 2017
2.	<b>To circulate the minutes of the Feed Stakeholder Meeting to NIFAC.</b>	<b>Secretariat</b>	24 April 2017