

## NIFAC MINUTES

### OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON 14 JUNE 2017, 10:30AM, AT THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY, BELFAST.

Those present:	FSA
<p data-bbox="180 577 421 611"><u>NIFAC members</u></p> <ul data-bbox="180 651 627 1128" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="180 651 627 685">• Colm McKenna – Chairman.</li><li data-bbox="180 725 491 759">• Aodhan O’Donnell.</li><li data-bbox="180 799 491 833">• Christine Kennedy.</li><li data-bbox="180 873 432 907">• Phelim O’Neill.</li><li data-bbox="180 947 480 981">• Elizabeth Mitchell.</li><li data-bbox="180 1021 405 1055">• Brian Smyth.</li><li data-bbox="180 1095 379 1128">• Colin Reid.</li></ul> <p data-bbox="180 1169 325 1202"><u>Apologies</u></p> <ul data-bbox="180 1243 440 1352" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="180 1243 440 1276">• Maria Jennings</li><li data-bbox="180 1317 408 1350">• Seth Chanas</li></ul> <p data-bbox="180 1393 437 1426"><b>Guest Speakers:</b></p> <ul data-bbox="180 1467 639 1543" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="180 1467 639 1543">• Charlotte Owen – FSA Social Science Team</li></ul>	<ul data-bbox="767 595 1485 853" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="767 595 1485 669">• Kirsten Dunbar – NI Head of Food Hygiene Policy and Operations.</li><li data-bbox="767 710 1485 784">• Roberta Ferson – NI Head of Finance Business Support and Communications.</li><li data-bbox="767 824 1278 857">• Lisa Nelson – NIFAC Secretariat.</li></ul> <p data-bbox="767 898 1038 931"><u>By Teleconference</u></p> <ul data-bbox="767 972 1461 1453" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="767 972 1297 1005">• Steve Wearne – Director of Policy.</li><li data-bbox="767 1046 1425 1120">• Stuart Armstrong – Head of Food Chemical Safety Policy Unit.</li><li data-bbox="767 1160 1461 1234">• Mark Willis – Head of Chemical Contaminants and Residues Branch.</li><li data-bbox="767 1274 1342 1348">• Patrick Miller – Joint Head of Science Strategy and Governance.</li><li data-bbox="767 1388 1406 1453">• Helen Atkinson – Principal Social Science Research Officer.</li></ul>

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members to the meeting, noting apologies from Maria Jennings and Seth Chanas.

#### 2. Minutes of the meeting of 8 March 2017.

2.1. The members were content with the minutes from the previous meeting and it was noted that the actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

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

3.1. The Chair updated the members on the recruitment process for two new Committee members: of the seven applicants that were interviewed, five were appointable. He noted that there were more applications than in previous trawls and most of the applicants were female. The appointments are currently with the Private Office at the Department of Health awaiting ratification from the new Health Minister when appointed.

3.2. The Chair informed the members that the Chair of the FSA Board would be visiting the Belfast office on the 15 June and would also be meeting the permanent secretaries of the Department of Health and DAERA, as well as a number of industry representatives.

3.3. The members were updated on the latest Audit Committee meeting and informed that the accounts had been signed off.

3.4. The Chair concluded with an update on recruitment for posts within the FSA executive management team and FSA Board.

3.5. Kirsten Dunbar updated the Committee on behalf of Maria Jennings on items from the Director's report contained in the meeting papers, including:

- The successful conclusion of Operation Rosetta
- Work on EU Exit legislation trawl
- Online display of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)
- A new initiative on dietary health
- A Chinese delegation competent authority preliminary visit on BSE

3.6. The defendant in the Operation Rosetta case was found guilty and given a 14-month suspended sentence and the district council was awarded costs of £8000.

3.7. It was explained that the FSA in Northern Ireland were now fully engaged in the NICS EU legislation trawl. A project team had been set up and was being led by the FSA's solicitor.

3.8. The online display of the FHRS was out to consultation and due to close in July 2017. The FHRS team and council were commended on their work and it was noted that Northern Ireland compares favorably to England and Wales in this area.

3.9. The dietary health team is holding a Food Product Improvement Event on the 27 June. There is an exceptional line up of experts in the field of sugar reduction and reformulation with case studies and industry experts presenting the latest evidence and joining a panel for a Q&A session. NIFAC were cordially invited to attend.

3.10. FSA staff accompanied a delegation from China on tours of a feed mill and abattoir

during a competent authority preliminary visit on BSE. The Agency was commended on the low incident status achieved and encouraged to continue working to get the Chinese BSE ban lifted.

3.11. A question was asked about progress on the smarter communications project. The Committee was informed that the project was currently progressing through phase two and scoping for phase 3 about to commence..

3.12. The Committee commended the work of the Food Fraud Liaison Officer on the joint initiative with the PSNI on deer poaching and asked about the resources provided to the Food Crime Unit. They were assured the FSA Board was considering the issue.

#### **4. Chemical Contaminants Principles**

4.1. The Chair welcomed Steve Wearne, Mark Willis and Stuart Armstrong to the meeting by video-conference from Aviation House to introduce this paper, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board. The presentation covered:

- The Agency's approach to managing chemical contaminant risks in food
- What chemical contaminants are and the main risks to businesses and consumers
- How risks are communicated to consumers
- Board responsibilities and the current risk framework

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

- The paper was welcomed, particularly the clear articulation of the roles of the Executive and the Board in this area.
- There is much to be learned from work being done in this area on the island of Ireland, such as the Feed Fortress initiative as developed by the animal feed sector and led by NIGTA. The model used in the animal feed sector was put forward as a useful template for others in the UK. It was unclear if this work had been properly investigated and considered by the FSA Board. It was recommended that this work should be considered and, if appropriate, replicated within the UK.
- There is also a concern about the level of engagement at a regional level with both stakeholders in the devolved regions and industry. The Agency was encouraged to engage and collaborate fully with others doing similar research.
- Concern was also expressed over the progress in this area during and after the EU exit process and it was suggested that reference to EU exit issues should be included.
- Current spending on research and funding on projects to increase consumer knowledge was questioned but the Committee was satisfied that this area was being given adequate resources.

4.3. The Chair thanked Steve Wearne, Mark Willis and Stuart Armstrong for their update.

## **5. Developing Our Approach to Identifying Risks and Issues Across the Food System**

5.1. Steve Wearne introduced this paper via video-conference, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board, and was joined by Patrick Millar. The presentation covered:

- Developing approaches to surveillance and horizon scanning
- The role of the new Science Council
- The complexities associated with this area of work

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

- The opportunity to feed into this area during the development stage was welcomed and it was requested that this approach be applied to other areas of the Agency's work so that the Committee and Board can have sight of plans and proposals at an earlier stage.
- Particular interest was expressed in the work of the newly-formed Science Council. While the role of the council was endorsed, the need for the devolved regions and industry to be adequately represented within the council was highlighted. NIFAC's assistance was offered if help was needed to identify partners of interest within Northern Ireland.
- The council was also encouraged to form partnerships and working relationships with organisations outside of the public sector.
- They also encouraged the wider executive management team to engage with the council as early as possible.
- Concerns were reiterated about a perceived lack of awareness within the FSA of relevant work going on at a regional level. It was recommended that the Agency engage more meaningfully with stakeholders, both within the public and private sectors, on areas of interest.

5.3. The Chair thanked Steve Wearne and Patrick Miller for their update.

## **6. Food and You – a Consumer Trends Survey on Food Safety Behaviour.**

6.1. The Chair welcomed Helen Atkinson to the meeting by video conference to introduce the presentation. Charlotte Owen was also welcomed to the meeting to deliver the presentation. The presentation covered:

- Key findings from Wave 4 of the Food and You survey for Northern Ireland
- Comparisons with corresponding data from England and Wales
- Additional findings on healthy eating which were not included in the survey for

## England and Wales

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

- Great interest was expressed in the content of the presentation, as well as surprise over some of the figures in relation to food security and food hygiene practices in the home.
- Food security in Northern Ireland was identified as an area that would benefit from more focus. Members were assured that work in this area was being undertaken by the dietary health team, who were working with other stakeholders such as Safefood and the Food Poverty Network.
- It was suggested that the Food and You data could be utilised with existing Kantar and NDNS data to develop our understanding of consumer attitudes in key work areas.
- Interest was expressed in the choice of indicators used for the research and the drivers behind the statistics. It was acknowledged that the data was still relatively new, with more scope for analysis and identifying trends.
- The need to make sure the data is used to drive policy change and inform audience profiling was stressed. It was also recommended that the data be shared with all relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors to maximize its value.
- Questions were asked about how the data was being used to inform the Agency's marketing activity and consumer messaging. It was noted that data suggested the food safety message within the home, as well as basic information on food poisoning, needed to be pushed. The members were assured that the data was already being used to inform consumer activity around Food Safety Week.

6.3. The Chair thanked Helen Atkinson and Charlotte Owen for the presentation.

## 7. Any Other Business (AOB)

7.1. The Chair made Committee members aware of upcoming appraisals and briefly explained the appraisal process which was due to be completed by the end of July. No further business was raised and the meeting was closed. The next open meeting will be held on 20 September.

## TABLE OF ACTION POINTS

No	Action	To be actioned by	To be completed by
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1.	<b>Appraisal forms to be distributed to all Committee members</b>		23 June
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## **ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

<b>No</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target owner</b>	<b>Target completion date</b>	<b>Position</b>
1.	14 June 2017	<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	<i>Completed</i>
2.	14 June 2017	<b>To circulate the minutes of the Feed Stakeholder Meeting to NIFAC.</b>	<b>Secretariat</b>	24 April	<i>Completed</i>