

**Meeting of the Northern  
Ireland Food Advisory  
Committee On 15 January  
2020 at the FSA Offices,  
Belfast**

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## **Agenda**

1. 9.30am - Welcome and Housekeeping
2. 9.35am - Minutes of the Meeting of 24 October 2019
3. 9.40am - Chair's Update and Director's Report
4. 9.55am - Wesley Aston and Ivor Ferguson (Ulster Farmers' Union) – Agriculture and Agri-food
5. 10.25am - Alastair Higgins (Invest NI) and Eamon Hardy (FSA in NI) – Bakery Sector
6. 11.00am - Mark O'Neill (FSA in NI) – Imports and Exports
7. 11.30am - Discussion
8. 12.30pm - AoB
9. 12.35pm - Close/Lunch

**Paper for discussion  
Minutes of Open Meeting on 24 October 2019**

**Executive Summary**

Attached are the minutes of the 24 October NIFAC meeting.

Members are invited to:

- Agree minutes as a true record of proceedings.

**FSA Northern Ireland**

Contact      Jayne McGlaughlin  
Tel            028 9041 7737  
Email         [jayne.mcgloughlin@food.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.mcgloughlin@food.gov.uk)

## **REF NIFAC Minutes 1/19**

**Open meeting of the Northern Ireland food advisory committee (NIFAC) on 24 October 2019, 9.00 AM, at Corr's Corner Hotel, 315 Ballyclare Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 4TQ.**

### **Those present:**

#### **NIFAC Members**

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

#### **FSA Executive**

- Maria Jennings – Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and NI
- Kathryn Baker – Head of Food Safety, Policy and Delivery
- Roberta Ferson – Head of Finance, Business Support and Communications
- Ruth Perez-Moreno – Head of Consumer Protection
- Helen Smyth – Senior Communications Manager
- Fionnuala Close – Dietary Health Lead
- Emily Chan – Senior Scientific Advisor
- Jennifer McGonagle – Senior Policy Advisor
- Jayne McGlaughlin – NIFAC Secretariat

#### **Guest Speakers**

- Conall Donnelly – Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association (NIMEA)
- Seamus Leheny – Freight Transport Association
- Aodhán Connolly – Northern Ireland Retail Consortium (NIRC)

#### **Apologies**

- Sara McCracken

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members, observers and presenters to the meeting, noting apologies from NIFAC member Sara McCracken.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting of 24 July 2019**

- 2.1 The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's meeting on 24 July 2019. No issues were raised, and the Secretariat agreed to publish the minutes.

***Action Point 1 - Secretariat to arrange for the publication of the minutes of the 24 July NIFAC Open meeting.***

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

- 3.1 The Chair updated the Committee on meetings that he had attended since the previous NIFAC meeting in July. He mentioned the September meeting of the Board which was held in Belfast. The Chair informed the Committee that the September Board meeting had gone well and thanked members for attending various engagements with the Board during the visit. He also thanked NIFAC members for their comments which they had provided on the September Board papers.
- 3.2 The Chair informed the Committee that the new Chief Executive, Emily Miles, started in her role in September.
- 3.3 He updated the Committee that the annual FSA annual Parliamentary Reception had taken place on 22 October 2019 and it was well attended.
- 3.4 The Committee were then apprised of the ongoing process of appointing new members to the FSA Board. The Chair explained that new members had not been appointed yet, but work was being done to appoint new members and a Deputy Chair.
- 3.5 The Director explained that her report had been included with the papers and highlighted the following items:
- EU Exit work
  - All-Island Food Poverty Network
  - UK-wide Consultation on the Fortification of Flour with Folic Acid
  - Food Allergen Review
- 3.6 On EU Exit, she explained that a lot of work has been done to prepare for EU Exit and emergency planning arrangements had been well rehearsed, including no deal exit training. Maria explained that the team is confident that all resources are in place to cover EU Exit.
- 3.7 Regarding the All-Island Food Poverty Network, she noted that the All-Island Food Poverty Network Conference which took place in Dublin on 24 September was an extremely successful and interesting event. She also highlighted the close working between the FSA in NI and Saferood.
- 3.8 Maria noted that the UK-wide Consultation on Fortification of Flour with Folic Acid closed on 9 September and over 1,400 responses were received from

members of the public, the industry and charities. NIFAC members asked when a decision regarding the fortification of flour with folic acid would be made and Maria explained that the FSA is hopeful for 2020 and it should be able to be completed by negative resolution. She added that the four countries will want to move together and have coordination.

- 3.9 She explained that a huge programme of work is being developed around food allergens and the Committee will continue to be updated.
- 3.10 Maria updated members on research on the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland which was published in September 2019. Members emphasised that this was interesting work and asked if there were any actions that came out of the research for the FSA in NI and Safefood. Maria stated that the FSA is committed to working with industry and stakeholders and a multi-agency approach is required but the network is strong and getting good traction.
- 3.11 She highlighted the information in her report on the Regulating Our Future engagement event in Northern Ireland. Maria noted that the event was part of the wider conversation and was a good opportunity to discuss regulations and how they will work post EU Exit.
- 3.12 The Chair thanked Maria for this update.

#### **4. The Structure and Characteristics of the Food Retail, Wholesale and Production Sectors in Northern Ireland**

- 4.1 The Chair introduced the topic and explained that as the theme is vast, it will also be explored at the NIFAC Open Meeting in January 2020. The Chair noted that this topic will also help to feed into the wider FSA Strategy, and it is important to understand the specific nature of the food landscape in Northern Ireland and to provide a Northern Ireland perspective. He added the importance of this given some of the additional responsibilities of the FSA in NI, including dietary health.
- 4.2 The Chair explained that the presentations would be heard firstly from Conall Donnelly from NIMEA, followed by presentations from Seamus Leheny from the Freight Transport Association and Aodhán Connolly from the NIRC.
- 4.3 He invited Conall Donnelly to deliver his presentation which covered:
- Overview of the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association
  - Current situation in Northern Ireland
  - Output of sheep and cattle
  - Procurement, operations, sales and the supply chain
  - Welfare and specifications
  - Processing and primary production in the red meat industry in Northern Ireland
  - Farm Quality Assurance
  - EU Exit.

4.4 The Chair thanked Conall for his presentation and the overview of the production and processing of red meat in Northern Ireland. He then invited Seamus Leheny from the Freight Transport Association to deliver his presentation on logistics. The presentation covered:

- Overview of the Freight Transport Association
- Live monitoring in transit
- Seven steps of managing food in transit (Collect and receipt, transit, handling intake, storage in chill, despatch and outbound loading, transit, delivery)
- Evolving logistics
- Three main issues – safety, congestion, emissions
- Safer vehicles for urban deliveries
- Changes
- EU Exit
- Exports of products of animal origin and plant products
- Sanitary and phytosanitary checks.

4.5 The Chair thanked Seamus for his presentation and invited Aodhán Connolly from the NIRC to deliver his presentation on retail. The presentation covered:

- The retail market and consumers in Northern Ireland
- Retail in Northern Ireland now
- Northern Ireland's volatile market – footfall monthly year on year and vacancy
- Business rates
- Online shopping
- Net changes in shops
- The challenges
- Shopping habits
- Discretionary income
- The grocery market
- Diet and nutrition.

4.6 The Chair invited members to ask any questions following the presentation from Aodhán.

4.7 Members asked about the impact of online shopping on consumer spending. Aodhán explained that although there has been a rise in consumers completing their grocery shopping online, many consumers still enjoy the experience of going to a shop. Members acknowledged the growth of shops such as Lidl where consumers go for their grocery shopping as well as added purchases.

4.8 Aodhán explained that consumer choice has expanded in recent years, with consumers being faced with increased choices in food items, as well as where they can purchase them.



- 4.9 In relation to consumer spending, Aodhán explained that between 65 – 67% of consumers in Northern Ireland still do a weekly or fortnightly grocery shop, compared to the rest of the UK where 70% of consumers do convenience or small shops.
- 4.10 When asked about diet and nutrition, Aodhán noted that any reformulation must be evidence based and it is important to help people to make informed choices. He added that the traffic light system on the front of packaging has helped people to understand more about what they are consuming.
- 4.11 The Chair thanked Aodhán for his presentation and moved to the presentation from Michelle Patel and Rebecca Gillespie from the FSA Social Sciences team on the Food Landscape Paper which the team developed.
- 4.12 Michelle and Rebecca joined the meeting via Skype and the presentation covered:
- The background to the research
  - The food system in Northern Ireland – Review of available evidence
  - Rationale and approach
  - Key findings
  - Overview of available evidence
  - Next steps.
- 4.13 The Chair thanked Michelle and Rebecca for their presentation and the research that they had conducted and invited questions from the Committee.
- 4.14 Michelle explained that the report was the basis for a more in-depth piece of research and the team wanted to understand more about what the Committee wanted the end result to be.
- 4.15 NIFAC noted the importance of both agriculture and the agri-food industry in Northern Ireland and the key role that it plays and agreed that this should be reflected in the research. Members also emphasised that it is important to acknowledge the specific context in Northern Ireland. For example, the number of farming families and the extent of the agri-food industry.
- 4.16 Members emphasised that they would be keen to have more information in the paper regarding imports and exports.
- 4.17 Members agreed that they are keen to learn and understand more about waste and disposal and technology in the food system in Northern Ireland as well as surveillance and traceability.
- 4.18 Looking at developing the report, NIFAC members agreed that they would consult and engage with their networks to explore if there is any available data or information that could be provided to further inform the paper.

- 4.19 Members also agreed that it would be helpful for the FSA Social Sciences team to speak with the policy teams in Northern Ireland to share learning and feed into the paper.
- 4.20 NIFAC agreed that the end result of the paper should be a clear, holistic picture of what the food system in Northern Ireland looks like.
- 4.21 The Chair emphasised that the onus is on NIFAC members to work within their networks to see if there is any information that can be given to the Social Sciences team to inform the next stage of the research.

## **5. Discussion**

- 5.1 There then followed a discussion regarding the theme 'The Structure and Characteristics of the Food Retail, Wholesale and Production Sectors in Northern Ireland,' where the following points were made:
- Commenting on the food landscape in Northern Ireland, Members noted that it is important to understand how each of the aspects of the food system work together to create a holistic system which delivers for consumers.
  - Members agreed that food safety and food standards must underpin everything, and these must be robust. Members emphasised that these must be considered when future trade deals are being developed.
  - NIFAC members noted with interest the information that Seamus Leheny provided regarding the logistics and steps involved in managing food in transit and the technology that is required to ensure that food is delivered safely and on time. This includes live monitoring in transit, fridge temperatures, thermograph readings and continuous monitoring.
  - When considering diet and nutrition, NIFAC agreed that a multi-faceted approach is needed, including cross-government and industry working, with all parts of the food industry doing their part. Members also emphasised the importance of helping consumers make informed choices and providing education.
  - NIFAC heard from the external presenters that if there is a lot of divergence between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK following EU Exit, there are concerns for industry that Northern Ireland could suffer from competitive disadvantage. NIFAC members cautioned that it is important to future proof as far as possible to deal with any divergence and the FSA 3 country model must continue as best as possible to try and mitigate the impact of any divergence following EU Exit.
  - Conall Donnelly explained to the Committee that officials and politicians have had to undertake a lot of learning regarding the situation in Northern Ireland in relation to EU Exit.

- Members discussed issues around consumer messaging and emphasised that such messaging is key, especially with the context of Northern Ireland and EU Exit. Members agreed that social media can impact what people think about food and their confidence in the food system. Therefore, it is important that the FSA is focused on this to try and mitigate concerns.
- Members agreed that at the January NIFAC meeting it will be important to look the topic of non-primary production such as bakeries in Northern Ireland.

## **6. Any Other Business**

6.1 No further business was raised, and the meeting was closed.

### **Action points**

***Action Point 1 – Secretariat to arrange for the publication of the minutes of the 24 July NIFAC Open meeting.***

**Paper for information**  
**Update from Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and NI to NIFAC**  
**15 January 2020.**

**Executive Summary**

Attached is the FSA in NI Director's update to the Committee for January 2020. This report covers the period from 24 October 2019 to 6 January 2020.

- No action by members is necessary.

**FSA Northern Ireland**

Contact      Jayne McGlaughlin  
Tel            028 9041 7737  
Email        [jayne.mcgloughlin@food.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.mcgloughlin@food.gov.uk)

## **Food Is Safe**

### **Less than thoroughly cooked beef burgers**

As part of the internal review of the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) guidance on less than thoroughly (LTTTC) cooked beef burgers (The safe production of beef burgers in catering establishments: advice for food business operators and Local Authority officers), the LTTTC working group has drafted revised guidance. This amended draft guidance will be subject to consultation in January 2020, following a delay due to the recent general election.

### **Shellfish Sanitary Surveys and Survey Reviews**

The FSA launched an open tender on 14 November 2019 for services for delivery of sanitary surveys and sanitary survey reviews for new and existing shellfish harvesting areas in England, Wales and NI. Tenders were accepted until the end of December 2019. If successful, a contract will be awarded commencing April 2020, enabling the FSA to fulfil its legal obligations under Official Controls Regulations.

### **Implementation of a revised, risk-based shellfish toxin monitoring programme in NI**

Following an eight-week public consultation in July 2019 on a revised, risk-based shellfish biotoxin monitoring programme in NI, the FSA has been working with key stakeholders to address consultation responses and challenges. We are now in a position to implement the revised monitoring regime phased in from January 2020. Work continues to explore options for future delivery in shared waters to facilitate the implementation of the programme.

## **Gathering and Using Science, Evidence and Information**

### **Scone Reformulation Guidance**

Following the publication of the Scone Nutritional Analysis Report in February 2019, the FSA commissioned CAFRE to undertake reformulation trials with scones to lower the levels of sugar, fat, salt and/or calories and produce guidance for coffee shops and bakeries on how to produce healthier scones. This work has now been completed and the scone reformulation guidance will be launched at an event in CAFRE on 16 January 2020. The guidance will be distributed to relevant businesses by Environmental Health Officers.

### **All-Island Food Poverty Network Meeting**

The FSA in NI hosted the 35<sup>th</sup> All Island Food Poverty Network meeting on 4 December in partnership with Safefood. Representatives attended from NI and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) government departments, voluntary, community and consumer organisations with a remit in food poverty. Proposals for 2020/21 action plans for NI and ROI were discussed including the repetition of research by Safefood and the FSA on the cost of a healthy food basket in NI and ROI. It was agreed that a subgroup will monitor the effects of EU Exit on food poverty levels, food prices and

food availability/accessibility. The mitigation of welfare reforms in NI were discussed and the possible effects on food poverty during 2020 if mitigation measures are not extended in the absence of a NI Executive.

### **All Island Obesity Action Forum Workshop**

Members of the Dietary Health Team attended an All-Island Obesity Action Forum event in Dublin on 12 November which explored the future direction of nutritional labelling. The event included research on health and numerical literacy levels in Ireland and tools for more effective communication on health. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) discussed recent research on breakfast cereals, yoghurts and baby foods and misleading claims. An official from the Ministry of Solidarities and Health in France shared insights on their new front-of-pack labelling system, Nutri-score.

### **Consumer Surveillance Data**

The FSA is in the process of sharing information on the following key datasets with our stakeholders including the Retail Forum, the Eating Well Choosing Better Steering Group, the Knowledge Provider Working group, Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group and the Food In Schools Forum;

- National Diet and Nutrition Survey - Years 5-9 report (information on consumers' diet, nutrient intake & nutritional status)
- Kantar Worldpanel (Take home food and drink purchasing data)
- Food and You Survey Wave 5 (consumer behaviour, attitudes and knowledge relating to food safety and food issues)
- FSA Consumer Tracker Survey Wave 4 (consumer insights in relation to the FSA Eating Well Choosing Better programme).

### **Food Standards Delivery review – LA Pilot Evaluation**

As part of the FSA's ongoing programme of work to review the food standards delivery model we are exploring a new delivery framework and food standards risk assessment scheme. The FSA is working to establish a formalised approach to the use of intelligence for identifying risk and directing interventions within the revised framework. One District Council in NI will be part of a pilot to evaluate the new proposals and inform development of any future delivery model. A total of 10 Local Authorities in England, Wales and NI will run this pilot for 12 months from April 2020 – March 2021.

### **Audits of the Delivery of Official Controls**

The draft summary report for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme audit programme carried out in July and August has been issued to District Councils. The report is due to be issued in January 2020. In December, one of two audits were carried out on DAERA regarding Food Chain Information and Collection and Communication of inspection results.

## **Empowering Consumers**

### **Illegal Meat (Smokies) conviction**

On 2 December two people were successfully convicted of food safety and food hygiene offences. This related to a multi-agency investigation into the illegal sale of goat meat, known as 'smokies,' due to the manner in which the fleece is burned post illegal slaughter. PSNI officers discovered 8 butchered goat carcasses in the rear of a van. The meat was in a poor condition. Colleagues in FSAI, DAFM, DAERA, AFBI, PSNI and EHOs from Armagh and County Louth all provided evidence in this case. The investigating officer was from Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and it was coordinated by Consumer Protection and policy officials in the FSA in NI. The suspects were convicted in their absence with a bench warrant issued for their arrest. They will be sentenced when the warrant is executed.

### **Calorie Wise**

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust successfully completed the Calorie Wise audit at five hospital sites during December 2019 including The Royal, The Mater, The City, Musgrave Park and Knockbracken Health Care Park. They will be presented with the Calorie Wise gold award at an event on 22 January 2020 at Knockbracken Health Care Park. The Western Health and Social Care Trust are also making steady progress towards the gold award with audits planned for January and February 2020.

### **Allergen campaign**

A March 2020 phased campaign targeting food business owners, managers and decision makers is in development. The campaign is designed to reinforce that they must comply with the law and there is easy access to information, training and tools they require on the FSA's website to assist compliance.

### **Consumer nutrition campaign (NI only): Did You Know?**

As part of our Eating Well Choosing Better programme, an integrated communications campaign is in development to help the FSA educate and motivate consumers in NI to make healthier food choices. The activity is planned for 17 February – 13 March 2020 (timing could vary by 1-2 weeks) and is in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA). For this 2020 phase, we wish to complement PHA's Choose to Live Better public health campaign to tackle obesity by directing people to check the label to help make better choices to prevent weight gain.

This phase, 'Did You Know?' is designed to draw attention to decisions in the shopping environment, using specific 'treat' foods, and focuses on driving behavioural change through a clear call to action to check the label. We are focusing on foods with high calories (biscuits/chocolate) and highlighting the contribution a portion makes to daily calorie intake.

This campaign is primarily targeted at women in lower socio-economic groups with limited nutritional literacy. Activity will be weighted to reach communities with poorest

dietary intake, indicated by their urban village status with the NI Department for Communities. The campaign will be implemented across NI with a focus on North Belfast, Lisnaskea, Creggan and Ballycastle.

## **Being the Best Organisation We Can Be**

### **Menu Cal Improvements**

Representatives from the FSA's Dietary Health Team met with counterparts in FSAI and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in December to discuss improvements to the online tool MenuCal. As calorie and allergen labelling have become more important issues for food businesses, it is essential that the tool is operating to maximum efficiency and accuracy. Feedback from NI users proved to be extremely valuable to discussions around necessary improvements. The number of MenuCal users continues to grow in all three countries with an increase in the number of recipes inputted.

### **Review of Minimum Nutritional Standards**

The Minimum Nutritional Standards for Health and Social Care and Local Government catering were reviewed during 2019 and were officially signed off by the three partner organisations (FSA, Safefood and PHA) in December 2019. The reviewed standards will now be presented to the Department of Health at a workshop in February 2020 with a view to introducing the standards to wider public sector catering. The workshop will explore the learning from implementation of the standards in Health and Social Care and local government and the plans in place to overcome various challenges.

## **Legislation**

### **New Rules on Allergen Labelling for Pre-packed for Direct Sale Foods**

The FSA in NI proposes to introduce The Food Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019, which will introduce full ingredient labelling of allergens in all prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods. These new rules will come into force in October 2021. Equivalent legislation has been progressed in England by DEFRA, in Wales by the FSA and Scotland by FSS.

### **Consultation on New Domestic Legislation Relating to Food for Specific Groups**

The FSA in NI launched a four-week consultation on 14 November 2019, proposing to introduce domestic legislation, in the form of a Statutory Rule, so that two directly applicable EU Regulations will apply and be enforceable in NI. Delegated Regulations (EU) 2016/128 and (EU) 2016/127 contain rules relating to the advertisement, labelling and composition of Food for Specific Groups, including infant formula. England, Scotland and Wales are making similar Statutory Instruments to implement the EU provisions.



## **Amendment of the Food Hygiene Rating (NI) Act 2016**

The FSA has written to the Permanent Secretary in NI to request an Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to amend the Food Hygiene Rating (NI) Act 2016. The amendment will replace reference to Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 (now repealed), within the Act, with Regulation (EU) 2017/625. Until such times as an amendment to the Act can be made, an interim approach to the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in NI has been agreed and communicated to the district councils in NI to ensure the continued operation of the scheme in NI.

M Jennings

**Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and NI**

## **NIFAC Discussion The Structure and Characteristics of the Food Retail, Wholesale and Production Sectors in Northern Ireland**

### **Executive Summary**

Following on from the NIFAC meeting in October 2019, the theme of the meeting is 'The Structure and Characteristics of the Food, Retail, Wholesale and Production Sectors,' with the view to exploring and understanding more about the food system and structures in Northern Ireland.

To understand more about the food system and landscape in Northern Ireland the Committee will be hearing from a number of presenters. A presentation will be given by Wesley Aston and Ivor Ferguson from the Ulster Farmers' Union looking at Agriculture and Agri-Food in Northern Ireland. This will be followed by a presentation by Alastair Higgins from Invest NI about the Bakery Sector in Northern Ireland and a presentation from Eamon Hardy (Food Technologist, FSA in NI) regarding the bakery reformulation project. Mark O'Neill (Senior Advisor, FSA in NI) will then give a presentation on imports and exports in Northern Ireland. There will then be a panel discussion to allow NIFAC members to ask questions of the presenters to help inform the Committee's advice and information to the FSA on this topic.

Members are invited to:

- Consider the content of the presentations and;
- Comment on and consider the characteristics and processes that work together to create the food landscape in Northern Ireland and the impact that this has.

### **FSA Northern Ireland**

Contact      Jayne McGlaughlin  
Tel            028 9041 7737  
Email        [jayne.mcgloughlin@food.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.mcgloughlin@food.gov.uk)