

Open Meeting Of The Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee On 20 January 2016 at the FSA Offices, Belfast.



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**OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY
COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY – FSA OFFICES, BELFAST.**

Agenda

1. 10.30 am – Welcome and introductions
2. 10.40 am – Minutes of the meeting of 11 November 2015
3. 10.45 am – Chair's report and Director's update
4. 11.00 am – **A Data Driven FSA - Julie Pierce**
5. 11.30 am – **UK Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Annual Report 2014/15 -
Nina Purcell**
6. 12.00 pm – **Delivering the Food Standards Agency's Regulatory Strategy - Nina
Purcell**
7. 12.30 pm – AoB
8. 12.35 pm – **Close**

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 11 NOVEMBER 2015**

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 11 November 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 5/15
OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY
COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON 11 NOVEMBER AT 1.30PM, AT THE FSA IN NI,
BELFAST.

Those present:	FSA
<p><u>NIFAC members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henrietta Campbell – Chairman • Brian Smyth • Colin Reid • Aodhan O’Donnell • Christine Kennedy • Phelim O’Neill • David Lindsay • Elizabeth Mitchell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Jennings – Director for Northern Ireland and Organisational Development • Michael Jackson –NI Head of Local Authority Policy and Delivery • Kirsten Dunbar – NI Head of Operational Policy and Delivery • Kathryn Baker – NI Head of Consumer Protection • Roberta Ferson – NI Head of Finance, Business Support and Communications • Seth Chanas – NIFAC Secretariat <p><u>By Teleconference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick Miller – Science, Evidence and Research Division • Steve Wearne – Director of Policy

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting Due to a delayed starting time for the meeting, the Chair suggested that the substantive items on the agenda, due to be presented remotely by teleconference, should be addressed first, returning to deal with standing agenda items afterwards.

2. FSA Science, Evidence and Information Strategy 2015-20 Delivery Plan

2.1. The Chair welcomed Patrick Miller of the FSA’s Science, Evidence and Research Division to the meeting to deliver a presentation, by teleconference, on the Science, Evidence and Information Strategy Delivery Plan. The presentation covered:

- the purpose of the delivery plan;
- drivers for the plan in the wider environment;
- the framework for the strategy agreed at the March meeting of the FSA Board;
- linkages to partnership organisations; and
- consultation and input from external sources.

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

- The paper refers to the potential for the FSA to run pilots in devolved regions, which may be better placed to progress with various policies. This is strongly supported. It is good to hear a clear expression of the FSA's understanding that this need not relate only to issues perceived as being Northern Ireland specific but should apply to all areas with the FSA's remit in NI, including those areas in common with England and Wales.
- It is recognised that strategic partnerships with other organisations are necessary and the FSA is to be congratulated in developing these links. Care must be taken, however, in the trade-off associated with the benefits of these partnerships and maintaining the FSA's reputation as a strong independent voice for consumers. Currently, it is not felt that this is in any way problematic but is something to which the FSA must stay alert. Ensuring the integrity of scientific data will be key to maintaining the reputation of the FSA.
- Earlier papers on the Science and Evidence Strategy were felt to have given a stronger emphasis on consumer engagement. References to 'understanding' consumers rather than engaging with them could be strengthened by referencing how the FSA intends to engage with consumers. With regard to developing strategic partnerships in Northern Ireland, it was suggested that the team engages with Professor Ian Young, newly appointed as the Chief Scientific Advisor to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Director of Health and Social Care (HSC) Research and Development.

2.3. Maria Jennings, FSA Director for Northern Ireland and Operational Delivery mentioned that a showcase for the work around the delivery plan was being scheduled for a Science Day to be hosted by Guy Poppy on 26 November. Pamela Byrne, the recently appointed Chief Executive of FSAI will be invited to attend to allow opportunities for knowledge sharing and cooperation across the island of Ireland.

Action Point – Maria Jennings to invite FSAI Chief Executive to the FSA Science Day.

2.4. The Chair thanked Patrick Miller for bringing this update to the Committee.

3. Annual Report and Forward Look From The General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

3.1. Patrick Miller also delivered a presentation giving an update on progress with the introduction of the Food Crime Unit. The presentation covered:

- the delay in publication to coincide with the paper on the Science, Evidence and Information Strategy Delivery Plan;
- changes in GACS membership;
- GACS input to the Science, Evidence and Information Strategy Delivery Plan; and
- the new working groups on Risk and on Skills and Capabilities.

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

- The paper clearly demonstrates the challenge function that GACS undertakes. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) Chair's interaction with GACS is also welcomed.
- The priorities set for the GACS work programme in 2015/16 are welcomed, particularly implementing advice from the new working group on Risk to support evidence-based approaches to risk and decision making. Recent board discussions on raw milk and rare burgers have shown the importance of further work in supporting this evidence-informed approach.

3.3. The Chair thanked Patrick Miller for assisting the Committee's consideration of this subject also.

4. Adulteration of Food – Thresholds For Action and For Reporting

4.1. The Chair welcomed Steve Wearne, the FSA's Director of Policy, by teleconference, to deliver a presentation on developing an approach to how the FSA works with food businesses and enforcement agencies in response to food adulteration incidents, and in particular, identifying thresholds for action. The presentation covered:

- the horsemeat incident;
- the proportion of incidents that involve adulteration;
- the need for pragmatism;
- the 1% threshold and the reasons for its establishment; and
- agreements with Food Standards Scotland, enabling UK wide practice.

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

- This paper is a good development of work carried out following the horsemeat incident. It is encouraging to see those principles expanded to areas beyond meat adulteration. It is also encouraging to see that a number of potential hazards, such as prions, have been considered.
- While it may not be feasible to prevent every instance of low level food adulteration, it will be necessary for the FSA's response to be proportionate and in that regard, instances of adulteration where there is a potential risk to health must take priority. Ensuring that claims made on labelling do not have the potential to mislead consumers is also important. However, there should be caution that an accumulation of numerous incidents where adulteration causes a lack of consumer confidence would have the capacity to inflict reputational damage on the FSA as a regulator.

4.3. The Chair thanked Steve Wearne for assisting the Committee's consideration of this subject.

5. Minutes of the meeting of 2 September.

5.1. The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC's open meeting on 2 September. No comments were received and the Secretariat agreed to arrange for the publication of the minutes.

Action Point – Secretariat to make arrangements for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 2 September 2015.

6. Chair's Report and Director's Update

6.1. Maria Jennings then updated the Committee on items from her report contained in the meeting papers, including:

- the review of official auxiliaries;
- Operation OPSON;
- STEC; and
- the Menucal launch event;

6.2. It was explained that a final agreement on the review of official auxiliaries is due in January and that there could be significant savings for the FSA.

6.3. Operation OPSON has now moved into the delivery phase. Adverts on social media to accompany the campaign have been published and the FSA Facebook page has received a large number of messages relating to illegal alcohol.

6.4. On STEC, it was explained that the FSA was facilitating industry to export, primarily to the USA .

6.5. The Menucal launch was widely regarded as a success. The Director expressed her gratitude to NIFAC members for their assistance with the event.

Any Other Business

6.6. The next meeting will be on 20 January 2016 and will be held at the FSA in NI offices in Belfast. No further business was raised and the meeting was closed.

TABLE OF ACTION POINTS

No	Action	To be actioned by	To be completed by
1.	To invite FSAI Chief Executive to the FSA Science Day.	Director for NI and operational Delivery	26/11/2015
2.	To arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 2 September 2015.	Secretariat	20/01/2016

ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

No.	Date of meeting	Action	Target Owner	Target Completion Date	Position	Complete
1.	11/11/2015	To invite FSAI Chief Executive to the FSA Science Day.	Maria Jennings	26/11/2015	Pamela Byrne invited to and attended FSA Science day.	Complete
2.	11/11/2015	To arrange for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 2 September 2015.	Secretariat	20/01/2016	Minutes published on food.gov.uk	Complete

PAPER FOR INFORMATION

**UPDATE FROM DIRECTOR FOR NI AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
TO NIFAC 20 JANUARY 2016**

Executive Summary

Attached is the FSA in NI Director's update to the Committee for January 2016.
This report covers the period from 13 November to 13 January.

- No action by members is necessary.

FSA Northern Ireland

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Food is Safe

Workshop on Microbiological Analysis of Food

FSA in NI, in conjunction with the **safefood** Microbiological Knowledge Networks and CAFRE, held an event on the 18th November to explore issues for the Commercial Microbiological Analysis of Food for Food Business Operators and Laboratories. The event was held in the Food Innovation Centre at CAFRE, Loughry Campus and was developed to educate Food Business Operators on the requirements to test food and what microbiological tests are required. The workshop was also designed to advise industry on actions to be taken if there are non-compliances as a result of microbiological testing.

In addition, the event had a number of laboratories in attendance to aid understanding of the interpretation of microbiological analysis based on Regulation (EC) 2073/2005 and relevant microbiological guidelines, and appropriate analytical methodologies to use for analysis. Dr Susanne Boyd of FSA in NI chaired the workshop and gave a presentation on the Implementation of Microbiological Criteria in Food Business Operations. Adrienne Shaw, Technical Manager of the Northern Ireland Public Health Laboratory presented on the Challenges in relation to Microbiological Criteria from a Regulatory perspective, and Una Farrell from Enva Laboratory in County Cork gave a presentation on the challenges facing a Commercial Laboratory from a microbiological perspective.

The presentations were then followed by a facilitated Q & A session on issues in relation to microbiological analysis of food: the panel consisting of the speakers and the safefood microbiological network co-ordinators.

This event was an initial pilot, and will be evaluated with a view to rolling out future workshops in this subject area.

Food is What it Says it is

Operation OPSON V

Enforcement partners in NI implemented a 'month of action' in November 2015 to target suspicious alcohol trading in Northern Ireland under the auspices of Operation OPSON V. Planned inspections were conducted by all 11 District Councils, Trading Standards Service and HMRC, and included a number of joint operations between the partners. A number of interventions were made, and seized products have been shown to be unsatisfactory, being not of the nature demanded by the purchaser within the meaning of Section 13 of the Food Safety Order 1991. A number of similarities were observed across the seizures, most notably concerning vodka products. Details of the seizures were shared with the OPSON V steering group to facilitate intelligence sharing. The FSA in NI is now collating the OPSON V Northern Ireland results and will feed in to the wider UK report.

The month of action was the culmination of several months' preparation by all partners, facilitated by FSA in NI. The OPSON V NI steering group included representation from the above mentioned bodies, the PSNI and industry groups.

Preparation included co-ordination meetings, provision of support materials (including financial support for sampling provided by FSA in NI) and a focussed training event on how to spot counterfeit product. An NI media campaign also ran to raise awareness of the dangers of consuming counterfeit alcohol, and to encourage consumer reporting of suspicious alcohol. This was the first time Operation OPSON has been implemented in NI in this manner. The FSA in NI is keen to recognise successes and capture learnings from the exercise, and will convene a wash-up session with partners in due course.

Gathering and Using Science, Evidence and Information

Food Basket Research

FSA in NI in conjunction with safefood, Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice and the Consumer Council NI are expanding work on socially acceptable food baskets (which meet healthy eating guidelines and nutritional needs) in 2016 to cover 2 more household types to provide valuable data relevant to food poverty. The new household types included are 2 parent, 2 child (primary and post-primary aged children); and lone parent with 2 children (preschool and primary school ages). Work started on phase 2 in January.

National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS)

A Northern Ireland NDNS committee meeting was held on 3 December to agree specifications for the year 6-9 report. It is intended that an academic workshop will be held in early 2016 to explore possibilities with NI data set.

All Island Surveillance

FSA in NI, DHSSPS, Public Health Agency have all been active members in a **safefood** facilitated and hosted Working Group to consider All Island surveillance. The recommended Framework of the Working Group is being finalised before decisions are made on appropriate future surveillance.

Empowering Consumers

Country of Origin Labelling Training

The FSA in NI facilitated a half day training event for district council EHOs on 25th November 2015. The training focused on the new country of origin labelling requirements for fresh, chilled and frozen prepacked meat from pigs, sheep, goats and poultry. The training also provided a refresher on compulsory beef labelling. Over 60 EHOs were in attendance and speakers included FSA in NI and DARD officials, and representation from district councils and the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC). Positive feedback was received from delegates, who reflected the importance of being kept up to date with changes in regulations, and highlighted the value this training will bring to them 'in the field'.

Food Hygiene Rating Bill

The Final Stage of the Food Hygiene Rating Bill took place in the NI Assembly on 8 December with all MLAs present supporting the passing of the Bill. The Bill has therefore completed its passage through the NI Assembly and will now be sent for Royal Assent, which we anticipate will take 4-6 weeks to receive.

The majority of MLAs who spoke during the debate were members of the Health Committee who undertook detailed scrutiny of the Bill. Their comments focused on the amendments brought forward at Committee Stage, in particular welcoming those regarding the introduction of time periods for district councils to notify ratings to the FSA and for FSA to publish these online and the amendment to specify in regulations the requirement for those businesses that sell food online to publish their rating on their website, or to provide a link to it on the FSA's website. MLAs referred to lengthy debates with FSA officials on the latter amendment but complimented officials for listening to their concerns and working with them to address these throughout the process.

Once the Bill has received Royal Assent and become an Act we will proceed to public consultation on the regulations and orders that are required to bring the statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme into operation in NI and give effect to the provisions of the Act. The new requirement for businesses in scope that sell food online to publish their ratings will be included in a separate set of regulations and we are currently undertaking consumer research in NI through TNS to establish how this information can best be presented online.

At present we are provisionally working towards introduction of the statutory scheme in October 2016 and have agreed a programme of work with district councils that will facilitate a "big bang" transition to the new scheme in which the majority of establishments within scope will receive a statutory rating as soon as the legislation comes into operation.

Revision of Eatwell Plate

Staff from FSA in NI's Standards and Dietary Health team have been contributing to work on the final draft of the revised version of the new Eatwell Plate. Following the 2011 machinery of government changes, this work is being led by PHE with FSA input from the team in NI. Updates based on recent evidence and some new messaging is expected to be included. The revised Eatwell plate is expected to be launched soon and NIFAC members will be advised of the launch date.

Aligning Incentives

Audit of DARD Agri-food Inspection Branch (AfIB) Feed Inspectorate

An audit of AfIB feed inspectorate was carried out by the FSA in NI Consumer Protection team between 16 and 24 November. DARD AfIB is the competent authority for the delivery of feed official controls in Northern Ireland. The audit involved three days based in at DARD headquarters and three reality check visits to approved feed establishments. DARD AfIB were well organised with a comprehensive array of procedures and forms. Officers were correctly authorised and had sufficient training. A number of recommendations were made in the areas of approving establishments, sampling, ID marks, communicating audit findings with approved feed establishments and the issue of detention notices.

Nutritional Standards for HSC catering

FSA in NI's Standards and Dietary Health Team are currently working in partnership with the Public Health Agency and **safefood** to agree draft minimum nutritional standards, for consultation with, and use by, caterers in Health and Social Care organisations. A workshop has been arranged for 25 February and NIFAC will receive further updates on this work as it progresses.

M Jennings

Director for NI and Organisational Development.

PAPER FOR DISCUSSION

A DATA DRIVEN FSA

Executive Summary

Julie Pierce, the FSA's Director of Openness, Data & Digital will deliver a presentation by video conference from the FSA's office at Southgate House in Cardiff, giving a proposed approach to systematically make the best use of data.

The full paper and annex can be found on the FSA website through the links below:

[A Data Driven FSA](#)

[Annex A](#)

Members are invited to:

- Consider the presentation.
- Comment and give advice.

Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland

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PAPER FOR DISCUSSION

UK Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Annual Report 2014/15

Executive Summary

Nina Purcell, the FSA Director for Wales will deliver a presentation, by video conference, from Southgate House in Cardiff outlining the above paper, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board.

The full paper can be found on the FSA website through the links below:

[UK Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Annual Report 2014/15](#)

Members are invited to:

- Consider the presentation.
- Comment and give advice.

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PAPER FOR DISCUSSION

Delivering the Food Standards Agency's Regulatory Strategy

Executive Summary

Nina Purcell, the FSA Director for Wales will deliver a presentation, by video conference, from Southgate House in Cardiff outlining the above paper, due to be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the FSA Board.

The full paper and annex can be found on the FSA website through the links below:

[Delivering the Food Standards Agency's Regulatory Strategy](#)

[Annex A](#)

Members are invited to:

- Consider the presentation.
- Comment and give advice.

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