
**Minutes of the open meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee
On 29 November 2018 At FSA Wales Offices, Southgate House, Cardiff.**

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

Ruth Hussey
Julie Pierce
Ronnie Alexander
David Peace
Norma Barry
Alan Gardner
James Wilson
Rebecca Lyne-Pirkis
Philip Hollington

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

Richard Bowen, Director (Interim) FSA in Wales
Helen George - Secretariat
Elora Elphick – Secretariat
Rod Ainsworth (via Skype) for a verbal EU exit update
Philip Randles (via Skype) for paper FSAW 18/11/04
Jesus Alvarez-Pinera (via Skype) and Julie Pierce for paper FSAW
18/11/05 Michael Jackson (via Skype) for Paper FSAW 18/11/06
Patrick Miller (via Skype) for papers FSAW 18/11/07 and FSAW 18/11/08
Michael Wight (via Skype) for paper FSAW 18/11/09
Michelle Patel (via Skype) for paper FSAW 18/11/10
Kevin Hargin (via Skype) for paper FSAW 18/11/11
Andy Morling (via Skype) for paper FSAW 18/11/12

1. Introduction and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed existing members to the open meeting and introduced the two new members of the committee. Guest speakers who would be presenting papers were identified.

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 and is also a Wine Ambassador for Wales as part of this role.

- 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.
- Ronnie Alexander advised that he is a member of the National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board.
- David Peace advised that he is non-executive Chairman of Hall Mark Veterinary Compliance Services, Chairman and shareholder of Vorenta Ltd, Chairman of Probita Solutions Ltd, Director of Umentas Ltd. David also has a daughter with a challenged immune system.
- Alan Gardner advised that he is a livestock keeper with a small flock of sheep.
- James Wilson advised that he is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and owns a shellfish business. He is also undertaking a short-term project at Bangor university.
- Philip Hollington advised that he currently teaches food security at Bangor University. He is also a member of the Agri-Food Training Partnership Management Board, the British Grassland Society, and the Tropical Agricultural Association.

2.2 All declarations were noted.

3. Minutes of the Last Open Meeting (Paper FSAW 18/09/01)

- 3.1. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2018 were accepted as a true record of discussions. It was agreed that the final minutes should be translated and placed on the website.
- 3.2. Both new members of the WFAC agreed that they had difficulty understanding the acronyms used in the minutes from the last meeting and asked to see a glossary of FSA terms.
- 3.3. Relating to an outstanding action, the Interim Director explained that that an invitation had not been received from the Food Industry Board to attend their meetings.

ACTION: Secretariat to arrange translation and upload.

ACTION: Secretariat to arrange a glossary for new WFAC members and add this to the WFAC member induction pack.

4. Report from Chairman (Paper FSAW 18/11/02)

- 4.1. The Chair presented her written report which summarised discussions at the last Board meeting and commented that the Board appreciated the committee's efforts to synthesise their advice at its last meeting. The Chair's report included reference to her attendance at the Cutting Plant Review discussions with Food Standards Scotland and formal confirmation of the two new members to the WFAC committee.

5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 18/11/03)

- 5.1. The WFAC received the regular report from the interim Director in Wales, who informed the Committee of the recent Symposium of Social Science and thanked James Wilson, WFAC member, for his attendance.
- 5.2. In an oral update, the interim Director highlighted the Agency's progress on stakeholder engagement and attendance at summer engagement shows. The evaluation of the summer shows evidences a significant improvement in engagement levels. WFAC members who attended the FSA stand commented positively on the interactive elements of the stand.
- 5.3. The interim Director confirmed that the Agency has been successful in its bid for a stand at the Taste Wales event in 2019. The WFAC was also informed that the agency would be hosting an industry roundtable in early 2019 to update industry representatives on preparation for EU exit. WFAC members would appreciate a more detailed discussion on engagement and engagement events in early 2019.

ACTION: Secretariat to add a discussion on engagement to a future closed meeting agenda.

- 5.4. The interim Director informed attendees that the food law code of practice consultation had ended, and the Agency would now collate the 16 responses from stakeholders in Wales and summarise the findings.
- 5.5. Relating to local authority performance, although there have been some improvements in Wales the interim Director confirmed that there are some concerns surrounding the performance of three authorities and the Agency is working with these to address the issues.

6. EU Exit Update (verbal update)

- 6.1. The WFAC welcomed the update on progress on EU exit work and was pleased to hear that work is progressing in accordance with plans. Members noted the contingency planning work underway, including the building of new data systems, to manage imports of high risk foods and highlighted that continued engagement and co-operation amongst a wide range of government departments was needed.

- 6.2. Members noted that the first batch of EU exit Statutory Instruments had been approved and would be laid next week.
- 6.3. Discussions were held on the impact on ports, including ports in Wales, and the WFAC noted the work that has already been undertaken with ports in Wales. Members were advised that additional resources were being made available to local authorities in Wales in 18/19 in support of their EU exit work.
- 6.4. In querying engagement work being done in Wales to keep stakeholders informed, the WFAC welcomed news that the FSA in Wales will be hosting a roundtable for industry stakeholders, on 17 January, to provide an update on our EU exit preparations. This would be supplemented by a separate series of engagement visits with local authorities in Wales and a range of other key stakeholders.

7. Incident Management Post EU Exit (Paper FSAW 18/11/04)

- 7.1. The WFAC considered the paper which detailed the work of the Incidents and Resilience Unit (IRU) to strengthen the FSA's resilience, capability and capacity, to ensure that the FSA maintains, and continues to improve upon, the UK's high standards of incident handling post EU Exit. The committee welcomed the update report and noted the progress being made to strengthen the FSA's resilience, capability and capacity in relation to incident handling post EU Exit.
- 7.2. Discussions were held surrounding the systems the FSA may not have access to following EU exit and members raised concerns regarding the impact of loss of access. The WFAC welcomed confirmation of the contingencies being put in place, including increased levels of engagement with the International Food Safety Authorities Network, should the UK not have access to data systems including access to the Rapid Alert System for Food (RASFF).
- 7.3. Looking at resilience, one committee member noted that Public Health Wales had been included in resilience planning and the committee would welcome the involvement of Welsh local authorities in exercises and drills to be commissioned in 2019. The same committee member raised that local authorities' resources are often stretched and welcomed confirmation that local authority capability and capacity will be explored prior to the 2019 resilience command and control exercises.
- 7.4. In discussing the intention to develop an eLearning course to support local authorities and food businesses undertaking root cause assessments, the WFAC commented on the need to ensure accessibility for small businesses. The WFAC was encouraged to learn that work was underway to ensure that any digital support would be supplemented by transcripts.

8. Annual Surveillance Report (Paper FSAW 18/11/05)

- 8.1. The WFAC considered the paper which provided a description of the new overall surveillance approach and how the components fit together, an update on the progress in the design and delivery of those components, an update on the progress of the laboratory capacity and capability review and identification of the need for a new sampling strategy.
- 8.2. Concerns were raised in relation to an over-reliance on modelling to take a longer-term view of new and emerging food system risks. The committee was reassured to learn that modelling is only one surveillance tool used in the FSA and it is supplemented by both current and historical data, by horizon scanning and by consumer intelligence.
- 8.3. Discussions were held regarding the prevalence of data within the paper and the committee questioned the integrity of freely available data. WFAC was informed that the FSA had confidence in the open data which was being shared and noted that the FSA's surveillance strategy would also be informed by other data sets.
- 8.4. The importance of effective communication and business processes to support the FSA's surveillance approach was discussed and the WFAC welcomed additional information on how the process of communicating with teams within the FSA will work in practice.
- 8.5. The WFAC discussed the FSA's approach to strategic surveillance and agreed this should also align with the Regulating Our Future Programme. The WFAC was pleased to hear that surveillance capability and resources will be made available to the ROF programme.
- 8.6. It was agreed that the paper reflected sustained progress and the inclusion of schematics and data was very informative and effective.

9. Regulating Our Future Programme – Review of Food Standards Delivery (Paper FSAW 18/11/06)

- 9.1. The WFAC considered the paper which provided a summary of the findings of the Food Standards Delivery review undertaken by the FSA, which has provided a baseline assessment of the delivery of food standards official controls across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The evidence from this survey will help to inform the development of a new approach to these controls and the next steps to be taken within the Regulating Our Future (ROF) programme.
- 9.2. Concern in relation to the need to ensure that Environmental Health Practitioners (EHP) receive adequate support to undertake their functions in interventions was raised. The WFAC observed that local authorities in Wales

had generally provided a more positive response to their ability to undertake the delivery of food standards official controls than their counterparts in England.

- 9.3. The WFAC enquired whether the findings of the report had been discussed with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). It was confirmed that discussions were held with CIEH and there was a continued programme of engagement with the CIEH, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and a wide range of other stakeholders on the ROF programme.
- 9.4. Discussions were held surrounding the inconsistencies in local authority approaches to the provision of business advice and guidance across the three countries. One WFAC member noted that some authorities charge businesses for their services, while others don't and highlighted concerns that this may hinder the impact the Agency's efforts to change business behaviours. The committee noted that the local authorities offer these additional services voluntarily and under legislation that empowers them at local authority level. The WFAC welcomed confirmation that the Agency is looking into creating a more level playing field as part of the ROF work.
- 9.5. The committee noted that the National Inspection Strategies pathfinder trials were conducted in food hygiene official controls. Trials did not extend to food standards delivery, as it was agreed that it would be easier to develop the concepts in food hygiene first.
- 9.6. The WFAC raised concerns that the findings of the report would be considered in isolation and that there was separate data available from both the Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System and from audits that have been undertaken on local authorities which would provide a more informed picture. A CIEH representative attending the open meeting expressed concern about a number of statements made in the report which might not be factual if all available evidence was considered. The representative informed the meeting that while CIEH welcomed the review, which was considered long overdue, they did have some concerns relating to its findings and that they would be writing separately to the FSA on the matter.
- 9.7. The committee learned that the review was a fact-finding review and that options to take forward its findings would be drawn up that would look at the four distinct areas of people, reporting and oversight, intelligence led working and changing business behaviour.

10. Report from Science Council Working Group 1 (Capability And Assurance) (Paper FSAW 18/11/07)

- 10.1. The WFAC considered the paper which presented the final report from the FSA Science Council's Working Group on Capability and Assurance and set out the Executive's analysis of the Working Group's recommendations and its proposed response. The committee welcomed the recommendations within the report and the inclusion of detailed annexes.

- 10.2. While discussing the recommendations in the working group report, the WFAC welcomed the intention to create a more detailed implementation / action plan which will map the proposed actions against timescales.
- 10.3. WFAC members raised the lack of detail relating to the use of science within the paper. This evolved into a discussion on the decline in expenditure on science within the FSA, with members querying why this fall happened. Members were reassured to learn that the expenditure data in the report was from 2017 and that a Science Update paper presented to the Board in September 2018 included more recent data on science expenditure.
- 10.4. WFAC questioned a recommendation within the paper stating that the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser's should use personal contacts to identify centres of excellence and partnerships to inform the direction of work. The committee welcomed confirmation that this will be UK wide and will include contacts in Wales.
- 10.5. Regarding the schematic at annex 2, a committee member raised concerns that including FSA Wales and FSA Northern Ireland as separate within the graphic could give the impression that the needs of the devolved countries were considered separately during this process and not as central and core to the Agency's work. The WFAC was reassured that this was not the case.

11. Report from Science Council Working Group 2 (Risk and Uncertainty) (Paper FSAW 18/11/08)

- 11.1. Members considered the paper which presented the final report and recommendations from the FSA Science Council's Working Group on Risk and Uncertainty and set out the Executive's analysis of the Working Group's recommendations, including which actions are priorities. The WFAC noted that implementation of many of the recommendations is included in the Agency's work on risk analysis and this is reflected in the Risk Analysis Process paper.
- 11.2. Discussions were held on how risk management work would consider the legislative requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, particularly in relation to being preventative and making decisions which benefit in the longer term. The WFAC noted that this would be beyond the scope of this report but would be relevant to the separate Risk Analysis paper which was to be considered by the Board. However, as this work evolves, the committee concluded that there will need to be cognisant of interactions with Welsh legislation such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation.

12. Risk Analysis Process (Paper FSAW 18/11/09)

- 12.1. The WFAC discussed the paper (a follow up to the Risk Analysis and Governance papers presented to the Board in September 2018) which outlined the process and principles that should be used at the different stages of risk analysis. It also set out the plans to strengthen capacity and structures of FSA Scientific Advisory Committees for EU Exit and for establishing the Advisory Forum on Food and Feed (AFFF).
- 12.2. In agreement that risk is a very important issue for the FSA, the WFAC commented on the need for timescales within the paper as this is a critical element when looking at risks. The WFAC welcomed confirmation that the timeliness of work will be embedded in the framework and there will be a specific, balanced timescale set for every separate issue that arises.
- 12.3. Discussions surrounding the establishment of the AFFF and the forum's terms of reference were held. The committee welcomed the introduction of the AFFF and noted that its aim as a risk management policy committee will be to agree common approaches across the four countries of the UK on recommendations to respective Ministers. It was acknowledged that the AFFF's primary role will be as a risk management body and will facilitate joint working between the 4 countries of the UK and WFAC noted the rationale behind why the forum's membership is primarily FSA and FSS staff.
- 12.4. The WFAC welcomed detail on the intention to develop a common approach within the UK to food and feed safety and hygiene and noted that this was still under negotiation. The committee commented that it would appreciate an update on the joint-working processes when agreed in April 2019.
- 12.5. After a query from a member regarding the lack of timescales within the paper, the WFAC noted that timescales for some issues are laid down in legislation (e.g. regulated products), while the timescales for other issues will be dependent on the severity of the public health risk and the priority.
- 12.6. Following a question regarding recruitment to the committees, the WFAC welcomed news that a campaign is about to launch to recruit experts to the four Scientific Advisory Committees.

13. Social Science (Paper FSAW 18/11/10)

- 13.1. The WFAC considered the paper which updated on the work undertaken to date to implement the 2017 Review of Social Science and proposed priorities for the social science function over the coming year, including priorities for the Advisory Committee for Social Science and the planned review of Food and You. The committee was pleased to see the emphasis on Social Science.
- 13.2. One committee member raised the social media elements within the paper and requested more detail on what work was being done to capture Welsh language content. Although the scope of the project doesn't currently capture Welsh language content on social media, the committee would like to see this considered in the future.

13.3. The WFAC noted that respondents selected to complete both Food & You and the Public Attitudes Tracker were targeted using census data to ensure a representative sample of respondent from Wales. Members welcomed the offer of an opportunity to feed into the development of topics for the next wave of Food & You to ensure Wales specific nuances are captured. Members also noted that work is underway on researching the prevalence of adult allergies.

13.4. During discussion regarding the big data sets being used by the agency, WFAC welcomed news that the social media data was anonymised where necessary and adhered fully to privacy and data protection rules.

14. RDM Triggers and Thresholds (Paper FSAW 18/11/11)

14.1. The WFAC considered the paper which updated on progress on the actions arising from the last Board discussion on RDM in June 2018 paper and presented recommendations for data-enabled “triggers” that would prompt the Executive to review the control strategy. The committee welcomed the progress made and the recommendations on triggers for review of RDM controls.

14.2. During discussions regarding the Raw Milk Producers Association, one WFAC member questioned what was being done to encourage membership. Although it isn't for the FSA to promote membership of producer organisations, the committee welcomed confirmation that the Agency is maintaining close contact with the Raw Milk Producers Association, which is growing in membership, and is continuing to emphasise to the Association that their work should concentrate on ensuring that member producers provide a safe product for their customers.

14.3. While querying why only raw drinking cows' milk was discussed within the paper, the committee noted that RDM from other species such as sheep, goats and buffalo are not subject to the same legislative controls/sales restrictions as raw cows' drinking milk. The WFAC welcomed that it is envisaged that the enhanced controls that will be introduced for raw cows' drinking milk production would also be applied to the production of RDM from other species.

14.4. The introduction of a monthly dashboard to allow measurement of progress was welcomed and the committee agreed that it would be good to see this dashboard more widely available and published. The WFAC also welcomed the datasets which have been identified for monitoring change and for prompting investigation.

14.5. The WFAC enquired about what monitoring and quality assurance will be in place to review the pathogen sampling and water testing being done by producers. The committee was reassured to learn that the testing data will be part for the producer's food safety management plan, which will be checked

by the dairy hygiene inspector who will be reviewing the results. The FSA will also conduct regular sampling of pathogen testing to verify that the sampling programmes are effective.

- 14.6. The committee noted that the RDM labelling Statutory Instrument has been delayed, due to some concerns from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. It was noted that the FSA is working closely with officials in the DHSC to allay those concerns. The WFAC commented that it would welcome early conclusion to these discussions.
- 14.7. Concerns were raised regarding the false marketing claims being made by raw drinking milk producers on the health benefits. The WFAC welcomed confirmation that the Agency has made it clear to the Raw Drinking Milk Association and producers that there are no authorised health benefits and no evidence of beneficial effects associated to drinking raw milk. Further, the WFAC was informed that dairy hygiene inspectors are empowered to pass on intelligence to trading standards or environmental health officers where any health claims are identified.

15. NFCU Annual Report (Paper FSAW 18/11/12)

- 15.1. The WFAC considered the paper which provided an annual business update on the progress of the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) and, following the Board's decision in June to proceed with Phase 2, highlighted progress being made towards building an end to end counter-fraud capability within the FSA. The committee welcomed the progress being made and the update provided in relation to recruitment to fill the 3 posts which would comprise the NFCU's unit in Wales.
- 15.2. While discussing primary legislation, the time it will take to introduce, and the interim powers being put in place to ensure the NFCU can fulfil its duties in the absence of primary legislation, one WFAC member questioned the necessity of the primary legislation entirely and asked whether the non-legislative interim mechanisms would work longer term. WFAC noted that although the interim powers will be sufficient, they won't be optimal, will require greater resources and joint working to be viable and so the introduction of primary legislation is essential.
- 15.3. While welcoming the establishment of the Global Alliance on Food Crime (GAFC) and the value GAFC can bring in the application of a mainstream enforcement approach to economically motivated crimes, the committee queried whether there was much interest in joining from European countries. The committee welcomed that further alliances are being made, particularly in relation to Interpol and Europol cooperation to capture alliances not covered by the GAFC.
- 15.4. Committee members agreed on the importance of engaging with industry and building relationships with these stakeholders to ensure the success and

impact of the NFCU. WFAC noted the challenges of industry engagement and welcomed the signing of a formal information agreement between the FSA and the Food Industry Intelligence Network. It was noted that there were aspirations that this relationship might be developed further.

- 15.5. During discussions relating to Annex A, the WFAC agreed that it would welcome a breakdown of achievements specific to Wales. The committee also recommended that the FSA undertake a capability exercise once each of the four current FSA offices and the newly established office in Birmingham become fully operational.

ACTION: Andy Morling to share a breakdown of Wales specific data with WFAC.

16. Feedback from Committee Networks

- 16.1. One committee member attended the Royal Welsh Winter Fair earlier in the month and highlighted feedback from the farming community outlining their relief that there appears to be an EU exit deal. The community, in particularly those producing fresh produce, were anxious to see progress and agreement on the deal.
- 16.2. Another member attended the Welsh Government Drinks Sector Cluster Group dinner and fed back anecdotal evidence that the attendees found an inhibitor to development and setting up businesses was the difficulty in getting advice from local authorities.

17. Question and Answer Session

- 17.1. All issues raised as part of the session are reflected in the comments above.

18. Any other Business

- 18.1. The Committee noted that the next closed meeting would be 7 March 2019.