

Minutes of the open meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee

Held on 13 September 2018 at FSA Wales offices, Southgate House, Cardiff.

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

Dr R Hussey
Mr R Alexander
Mr D Peace
Dr N Barry
Mr A Gardner
Mr J Wilson

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

Richard Bowen, Director (Interim) FSA in Wales
Helen George - Secretariat
Elora Elphick - Secretariat
Julia Williams (via Skype) and Collin Wilson for Paper FSAW 18-09-04
Philip Randall via Skype for Paper FSAW 18-09-05
Nina Purcell and Michael Jackson (via Skype) for Paper FSAW 18-09-06
Steve Wearne via Skype for Papers FSAW 18-09-07 and FSAW 18-06-08

1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the open meeting and notified those present of the guest speakers who would be presenting papers.

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 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 and business advisor to a farm-based food business in Monmouthshire.
- 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, a non-executive Director of the Sea Fish Industry Authority (SEAFISH) and owns a shellfish business.

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 14 June 2018 were accepted as a true record of discussions. It was agreed that the final minutes should be translated and placed on the website.

ACTION: Secretariat to arrange translation and upload.

4. Report from Chairman (Paper FSAW 18/09/02)

4.1. The Chair presented her written report which summarised discussions at the last Board meeting and included discussions on the development of the new National Food Crime Unit, Raw Drinking Milk controls, the Review of Cutting Plants and Cold Stores, Regulating our Future – mid-point Programme Report, the FSA International Strategy and the Review of the Food Advisory Committees. The report also covered the Chair's involvement in the recruitment of two new members to the WFAC.

5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 18/09/03)

5.1. The WFAC received the regular report from the interim Director in Wales, who informed the Committee of recent engagements including discussions held with the Chair of Directors of Public Protection Wales, several meetings with local authorities and FSA Wales's attendance at this year's Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and the National Eisteddfod.

5.2. The report provided information on work underway to align the Welsh Food Fraud Co-ordination Unit to the National Food Crime Unit and a consultation on amendments to Food Law Code of Practice in Wales to introduce operational changes identified through the Regulating Our Future programme. It also stated that the FSA in Wales had been successful in a bid to obtain additional funding from Welsh Government to support EU Exit work.

5.3. In an oral update, the interim Director informed those present of the organisational changes being made across the FSA in preparation for EU Exit and implementing the first phases of ROF.

6. Animal Welfare Update (Paper FSAW 18-09-04)

6.1. The WFAC welcomed the update on progress on the Animal Welfare Action Plan and the key achievements.

6.2. In relation to the use of CCTVs in slaughter houses, the WFAC noted that there is no non-stun slaughter in Wales. It also noted that there is reasonable coverage and use of CCTV in slaughter houses already (around 99% in Wales and Northern Ireland) but that further work is required to understand the effectiveness of the equipment that is currently in place, how it is being used and whether it is compliant with legislative requirements. The Committee was pleased to note the scheme encouraging small slaughter houses to install or upgrade CCTV equipment and agreed to monitor the situation.

6.3. The WFAC raised some concerns in relation to funding for animal welfare controls in Wales and encouraged further discussion with relevant parties to ensure adequate funding for animal welfare controls. The WFAC welcomed the data and case studies detailed in the paper and supported the work which has been done around reducing the number of major and critical welfare incidents. It emphasised the importance of data sharing and the use of the Chronos referral process to further understand the issues surrounding on farm and in transit welfare issues.

6.4. In welcoming the collaborative work with stakeholders to address animal welfare issues, the WFAC commented that this needed to be strengthened to ensure that animal welfare issues are addressed across the whole food chain.

6.5. In conclusion, the WFAC welcomed the positive report noting that there were still some areas that needed to be addressed by the FSA and its partner agencies.

7. Incidents and Resilience Annual Report (Paper FSAW 18/09/05)

7.1. Members considered the annual report ending March 2018 on the FSA's incidents and resilience function, which focused on continuous improvement and efforts made to improve the FSA's risk management, resilience, capability and capacity in preparing for EU Exit.

7.2. The WFAC noted actions taken to strengthen the Incidence and Resilience Unit's capacity and capability to deal with food incidents and welcomed the four-nation approach and the close collaboration between the FSA's Incidence and Resilience Unit and the National Food Crime Unit

7.3. The Committee also noted the work in relation to EU exit and the focus not only on a no deal scenario but also on strengthening the FSA's relationship with a range of countries both in Europe and worldwide. Members were of the view that

it was important that the FSA fosters relationships with the competent food safety authorities in Europe, and worldwide, to develop a mutually supportive approach to sharing of information.

- 7.4. It was acknowledged that the number of incidents and alerts recorded can be affected by many factors, including new consumer trends, technological developments, legislative changes and sampling and testing practices, and that consequently it is not possible, at this stage, to quantify the capacity and capability costs associated with preparations EU Exit. It was also recognised that financial pressure on local authorities may impact upon their ability to react and contribute effectively to incident management and product recalls.
- 7.5. Committee members commented on the importance of having sound monitoring and evaluation measures in place to enable the FSA to evidence its effectiveness.

8. Regulating Our Future - Assurance Framework for Primary Authority National Inspection Strategies and Next Steps on Regulated Private Assurance (Paper FSAW 18/09/06)

- 8.1. The paper provided an update on progress made to explore Primary Authority (PA) National Inspection Strategies (NIS) and to develop NIS Standards as part of the Regulating Our Future (ROF) programme. It also provided an update on next steps in respect of regulated private assurance.
- 8.2. A letter received from the Head of Policy at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) which detailed concerns in relation to NIS strategies was tabled. Subsequent to the meeting, concerns were also forwarded by Directors of Public Protection in Wales (DPPWs). These concerns supported those made by the CIEH, raised a number of additional points, and provided a more detailed Welsh perspective. It was noted that formal responses to both the CIEH and the DPPWs were in preparation, and would be circulated to the WFAC.
- 8.3. During discussions the WFAC noted that a number of Welsh local authorities have PA relationships. It was anticipated that numbers might increase following a recent promotional campaign by BEIS. Mindful of concerns expressed previously by the WFAC about an over reliance on third party assurance, members were keen to understand the outcome of recent project with six primary authority partnerships to test the NIS concept and explore how PAs access and use business compliance data. The WFAC noted that an independent evaluation of the project had been undertaken and that publication of the report was imminent.
- 8.4. The WFAC enquired about the resource implications associated with the FSA's capability and capacity to assess NIS proposals. It noted the difficulty in

undertaking an impact assessment without a standard NIS strategy being in place. However, the WFAC was reassured to learn that as National Inspection Strategies become established resourcing requirements would be reviewed to ensure financial sustainability.

8.5. The WFAC noted that the changes to the regulatory regime, particularly in relation to the first tier of regulatory assurance delivery, would impact on the structure and resourcing of the FSA. It was stated that work is underway to establish the required capabilities and the necessary organisational changes for the FSA to carry out its role as a Central Competent Authority.

8.6. Members commented that while it understood the potential role of PA and NIS, it appreciated the opportunity to reflect on the comments made by the CIEH and DPPWs, and the FSA's responses.

8.7. Further, WFAC would value the opportunity to consider the evaluation report on testing the concept of NIS before providing advice to the Board. In this respect, it was agreed that the WFAC would hold further discussions on the issue as soon as possible.

ACTION: Hold an additional meeting of the WFAC to review draft DPPW and CIEH letter responses and to discuss the NIS evaluation paper

9. Risk Analysis: Process, Governance, Communication (Paper FSAW 18/09/07)

9.1. The paper set out approaches being taken to evolve risk analysis processes, capacity and capability in preparation for EU exit. The Committee noted that the delivery of an effective domestic regulatory regime will require an increase in the volume of risk analysis undertaken by the FSA post EU exit. It was pleased to learn that the FSA had received additional resources for this function. The WFAC were also encouraged to learn that a recent recruitment exercise has been underway and that a number of well qualified mid-career scientists had been recruited.

9.2. Discussions were held on how risk assessment work would capture country specific characteristics, nuances and demographics. The WFAC noted that while risk assessment will continue to address the UK population as a whole, supplementary information on country specific issues would be collected.

9.3. The WFAC concluded that it:

- agreed that continuing to align the FSA's approaches to risk analysis with those international standards is a positive approach;
- welcomed the commitment to openness, the Code of Practice and the intention to publish risk analysis recommendations; and
- would be keen to consider the frameworks and principles paper which is under development.

10. Update on the FSA's activities on antimicrobial resistance including the report of the ACMSF task and finish group (Paper FSAW 18/09/08)

- 10.1. The WFAC considered the paper which provided an update on the FSA's science activities concerning antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the food chain.
- 10.2. It welcomed the report and recommendations from the ACMSF Task and Finish Group and noted that AMR in food is a complex area which highlights the need for the FSA to work with partner organisations to deliver the science agenda on AMR. Due to its complexity, the WFAC appreciated that there are no import controls on AMR in food currently but welcomed that work is underway to address this on an international basis.
- 10.3. It was agreed that the report provides an evidence base to inform engagement with partners on research and surveillance of AMR. The WFAC was reassured to learn that both the UK Government and the devolved administrations were planning a co-ordinated approach to AMR in relation to food.

11. Feedback from Committee Networks

- 11.1. There was positive feedback on FSA Wales's attendance at the summer engagement shows and those Committee members who attended events commented about the relatively high awareness of the FHRs scheme amongst members of the public.
- 11.2. A committee member advised that the publication of the FSA funded norovirus attribution study undertaken by Liverpool University has been delayed. The Committee requested an update on the study's progress and would like to see a draft timetable for the work.

ACTION: Secretariat to seek an update from officials on the norovirus attribution study.

- 11.3. Another Committee member stated that at a recent meeting of the Welsh Government's Food and Drink Industry Board meeting concerns were expressed about the Regulating Our Future (ROF) proposals. It was understood that the Industry Board would be extending an invitation to the FSA for attendance at its next meeting in December. The Interim Director for Wales, was unaware of these concerns.

ACTION: Secretariat to discuss the Food and Drink Industry Board invite with the Interim Director and arrange a representative attendee if agreed.

- 11.4. One Committee member raised the Welsh Government consultation on Securing Welsh Farming post EU Exit. They asked that the Committee members

make note of the consultation and the elements which are of particular concern in Wales – e.g. the availability of affordable food.

12. Question and Answer Session

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

13. Any other Business

13.1. The Committee agreed to an additional meeting on 18 September 2018 to discuss the findings from the ROF evaluation being published after the Committee meeting but before the Board meeting.

13.2. The Committee noted that the next closed meeting would be 11 October 2018.