

Scottish Food Advisory Committee
Menzies Hotel, Glasgow
29 August 2007
09:30 – 12:30

Open Session

Present

Committee Members:

Prof. Bill Reilly, Deputy Chair (Acting Chair for 29/08/07)

Charlotte Maltin

David Cameron

Catherine Brady

Moyra Burns

Catherine Benton

Amanda O'Donoghue

Jim Arbuckle

John Cowden

Brian Ratcliffe

FSAS Officials:

Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS

Anna Whyte, Head of Science Branch, FSAS

Susan Pryde, Head of Food Standards Diet & Nutrition Branch, FSAS

Jane Ferries, Committee Secretary, FSAS

Emma Lane, Senior Communications Officer, FSAS

Will Munro, Policy Officer, FSAS

Guests

Andrew Wadge, Chief Scientist, FSA HQ

1 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

1. The Chair welcomed members, guests and observers to the open meeting of the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC). The Committee was pleased to be in Glasgow.
2. The role of SFAC is to provide advice to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on all food safety and standards matters, which have a specific Scottish perspective. The Agency in turn has to fully consider the Committees views when determining its actions and the policy advice it gives to Ministers. Most food issues are devolved to Scottish Ministers and changes are implemented by the Scottish Parliament. This Committee is an essential element to the Agency to ensure that devolution is fully taken into account. The Committee holds regular meetings throughout Scotland.
3. Members of the Committee were invited to declare any conflicts of interest on specific areas before they are discussed to allow a decision to be taken on whether participation would be correct.
4. The Chair asked for items of AOB. No items were raised.

5. There were apologies from Graeme Millar (Chair SFAC) George Paterson (Director FSAS) and Jim Thomson (Ass. Director FSAS)

2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

6. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting, 4 July 2007 in Aberdeen.
7. The Chair highlighted the following actions from the minutes:-
 - ACTION: SFAC EU Labelling Sub Group met on 23rd August in St Magnus House and this would be discussed in agenda item 6.
 - ACTION: SFAC's response to UK National Food Labelling Provisions consultation was issued to FSA on 27th July.
8. Members asked for the typo on page 5 to be removed and also asked for consistency in the use of member's titles.
9. A member asked that the minute reflected Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) staff had approached FSAS Staff.
10. Members agreed that the minute was a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 4 July 2007 held in Aberdeen.

ACTION: Secretariat to amend page 5 of minutes and amend the sentence referring to QMS and FSAS

ACTION: Secretariat to seek guidance from FSA HQ on titles used in minutes produced by FSA Board.

ITEM 3

Scottish Consumer Council Report – 'Young People and Food Safety – Five Years On'

11. The Chair welcomed Will Munro, Policy Officer, FSAS to the table. He gave a brief introduction to the report asking the Committee to discuss the recommendations within the report and suggested they set up a working group for this purpose. The working group should report back to the Committee in February 2008.
12. The Chair opened the discussion to members.
13. **David Cameron declared an interest as past President of REHIS.**
14. Members of the Committee had issues with the report including
 - Storage of eggs and the reheating of rice, they felt that these messages were not completely factual.
 - The quality of references made within the report was questioned.

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- Education about food safety was seen as important. However, due to the survey being targeted at teenagers, some areas of the survey would be difficult to assess such as fridge temperature.
15. Members agreed to set up a working group. They added the focus of the group should be on the knowledge and understanding of food safety and not be based on the information contained within the report due to the information with the report being factually incorrect. Members were asked to express their interest to Secretariat if they would like to sit on the Sub Group.
 16. The Agency stated the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) issued the report and FSAS had not gone through the report to ensure the information was factually correct. FSAS would support the Committee and the Working Group and agreed that reports needed to be based on sound science.
 17. The Chair opened the debate to the observers.
 18. Mary Lawton (SCC and co author of the report) informed the Committee that SCC received mixed messages from different sources in relation to the storage of eggs and reheating of rice. She supported the suggestion of the working group to establish a definitive message to put across to consumers. She added that a leaflet to accompany the report has been produced and she would issue these to SFAC.

ACTION: SFAC members to inform Secretariat if they would like to sit on the Sub Group.

ACTION: Ms Mary Lawton to issue Food Safety Leaflet to SFAC

19. The Chair thanked Will for producing the paper.

ITEM 4 Science In the FSA

20. The Chair welcomed Andrew Wadge, Chief Scientist and Director of Food Safety, FSA HQ who gave a presentation covering the following:
 - The Agency's Science and Progress
 - Integrated Structure
 - Strengthening and Winning Trust the Agency's Science
 - Science In Action: Salmonella in Chocolate
 - What Others think of FSA Science
 - House of Commons Science & Technology Committee
 - The 8 Attributes (developed by GO-Science)
 - Looking Forward
21. The Chair opened the discussion to members.

22. Members held a detailed discussion and asked the following questions: -

- Was the FSA moving fast enough in the field of Social Science?
- Were there positives or negatives with the need to advise other agencies including FSA and Department of Health?
- Web access to some report was seen as difficult and members asked that the full data of reports should be included on the website.
- How would the Social Science Committee ensure they were not duplicating work already being undertaken by other professional social scientists?
- There was a plea for the language to be kept simple and clear.
- Why was Scottish data not featured within the report, as the Agency is UK wide? If this data was unavailable then an explanation should possibly be included.
- How is the decision made for the allocation of funding for projects?

23. Andrew Wadge gave the following answers:-

- Setting up the Social Science Committee was a lengthy process especially when recruiting people for the group. The head of the Social Science, Jane Barrett, was currently recruiting for the Committee and it was hoped that the Social Science Committee would be established by April 2008.
- It was seen as strength for Scientific Advisory Committees to advise agencies including FSA and Department of Health but also a challenge for the Secretariats to ensure they communicate effectively and appropriately. The quality of science was not an issue and cross-departmental working was a clear benefit of this process.
- There was a different need amongst different audiences for information and they had to recognise this when providing the information. Full data reports would be included by a link within the main messages contained within the Science section of the FSA Website.
- This would be a challenge however this Committee would not cover the whole of Social Science, as it is not a single discipline and requires a wide collection of expertise. The Social Science Committee would need to ensure the expert Committee cover a number of areas and ensure the Chair includes other experts out with the Committee – possibly with working groups.
- One of the challenges has been how to describe risk and uncertainty, which is understandable by the general public. Communications within FSA held focus groups to ensure FSA's messages were communicated correctly.
- The issue of retrieving data for Scotland had been previously discussed.

- This was done through devolving budgets to the appropriate divisions and they then, along with Scientific Advisory Committees, identify research needs. The balance between the monitoring of success of policies versus underpinning science would be put to the General Scientific Advisory Committee.
24. The Chair informed the Committee that FSA Board members valued the input from Chairs of Scientific Advisory Committees during Board discussions and this was seen to be a crucial element to inform to the debate.
 25. Members felt that the report gave an element of trust and were pleased to see the achievements of Science within the Agency and recognised that the Blog was an effective way of explaining science to all and also enhanced the work of the Agency. They agreed that the format of the report should be used as part of a package to communicate to consumers in future years. A clear concise executive summary would be useful for non-scientists to gain information quickly.
 26. The Chair opened the discussion to the observers.
 27. Mr Howard Wilkinson, Petrie Fine Foods, asked how the FSA take and give input to international agencies.
 28. Andrew Wadge informed the Committee and observers that most food legislation was agreed at the European Level and therefore FSA Officials spend time in Brussels negotiating on behalf of the UK. In relation to scientific work he stated that he was a member of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Advisory Committee, which included members from all EU member states. FSA also work with World Health Organisation (WHO) expert committees and concordats with Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Japan.
 29. The Chair thanked Andrew Wadge for his presentation and informative discussion.

ITEM 5

Eating For Health

Progress & Challenges in Scotland

30. The Chair welcomed Susan Pryde and Anna Whyte to the table. They gave a presentation covering the following:
 - Reformulation
 - Front of Pack Labelling
 - Traffic Light Labels
 - Other Areas including: Folate, schools and community resources, food & health events and new partnerships
 - FSAS Working with Consumers, Industry Research & Government Partners
 - Future work with Dietary Targets and Food Based Standards in Schools and the wider public sector e.g. hospitals and prisons
 - Working With Local & Central Government and its Agencies including NHS
 - Nutritional Standards for Hospital Patients & Nutritional Standards for the Scottish Prison Service

31. The Chair opened the discussion to members.
32. The Agency highlighted that the manifesto of the Scottish Government was firmly committed to taking the 'Eating for Health' agenda forward and would like stronger links with the food, alcohol, smoking and mental health and welfare policies to deliver consistent effective combined messages in Scotland.
33. Members of the Committee made the following comments
 - Were there plans for FSAS to approach private care homes and special care homes run by charities?
 - Were FSAS able to identify barriers, which had influenced those who had chosen not to adopt the Front of Pack Labelling scheme?
 - How did nutritional standards fit within prisons, patient food and staff and visitor food within the health sector and how would this be monitored?
 - An FSA survey showed that the average Scot intake of salt per day is 9.1 gms however was the data being broken down into groups such as hard to reach?
 - All foods across the board must be considered when talking about reformulation to ensure that healthy foods do not become food at a premium price, which hard to reach groups would not be able to afford.
 - Some foods need to have a high salt content in order to remain safe to consumers such as anchovy paste.
 - Why were Tesco resistant to the Front of Pack Labelling scheme?
 - Was there any thoughts on tackling the salt levels in take away foods?
 - Members recognised there was a lack of trained food scientists and would this be an issue going forward when asking companies to reformulate. FSAS need to promote training in food technology.
34. The Agency made the following comments: -
 - FSAS were aware of issues connected to private and special need care homes however the Scottish Government Directorate of Public Health and Wellbeing were in the lead with this area and FSAS would be working closely with them.
 - FSAS identified some of the reasons for Scottish industry not adopting the Agency's front of pack labelling; lack of in-house technical support was a potential barrier when considering whether to adopt the scheme and some were slightly concerned to go against the policy stance of their major customers and felt that the information contained within the scheme was not relevant to their customer base. The majority of industry has however shown support for the Agency's scheme and their approach.
 - FSAS were aware that there should be a consistency of standards within each public sector and they were working in partnership with other departments/agencies on this area.
 - Most of the evaluations of the phases of the Salt campaign surveys had been broken down into age and social economic groups and this was also reflected in the annual FSA consumer survey.

- FSAS had always worked across the board with reformulation and were targeting all food groups.
 - FSAS stated that safety was paramount and messages on reformulation have highlighted this. Companies were responsible for ensuring their product was still safe for consumption if they were reformulating.
 - The main reason for Tesco not signing up for the Agency's front of pack Labelling Scheme was down to the debate in using the Traffic Light colours. Some other large food manufacturers are also reluctant to change their stance and adopt the Agency's scheme.
 - Larger companies who had not adopted the scheme were unlikely to change their stance until the independent research, on various front of pack labelling schemes, which would begin shortly was published.
 - The HealthLiving Award was currently targeted at the Scottish catering industry. FSA were currently creating a UK framework, which would encourage UK caterers to sign up to a set of commitments on reformulation.
35. Members emphasised that it was important to keep messages consistent so as not to confuse consumers and gain trust from them.
36. Some members showed concern with the phrase Traffic Light Labelling as they felt it was a front of pack labelling issue and possibly variants of the scheme, such as monochrome labelling could be used. Companies such as Tesco who use different colours on their packs were confusing for consumers, as their colours did not have real meaning or message. Members saw the use of this as a waste of resource.
37. The Chair opened the debate to the observers.
38. Mary Lawton, SCC, emphasised that consistency of messages and the language used was important for FSAS to gain trust from consumers.
39. The Chair highlighted to the Committee that members had a wide range of networks, which should be used to assist the Agency with promoting their messages. He asked for all members to submit their personal networks to Secretariat within one week. He stated that this subject should come back to the October meeting.
40. The Chair asked the Executive how they would like the Committee to assist them with networking.
41. The Agency commented that it would be useful for FSAS to connect with the Committees networks. This could be achieved by setting up a working group to take this forward.
42. The Chair thanked Susan Pryde and Anna Whyte for their presentation.

ACTION: Committee members to submit their networks to Secretariat within one week.

ACTION : FSAS to decide how best to use Committee Networks at the October meeting.

ACTION: FSAS to report on what action is being taken to increase interest in training food scientists.

**ITEM 6
EU Labelling Review**

43. The Chair asked members of the EU Labelling Sub Group to introduce the item highlighting details of the discussions held at the briefing session on 23 August in St Magnus House with FSA Officials.
44. A member of the working group gave a brief overview of the briefing session highlighting the following issues from the consultation 'General and Key Principles for Food Labelling A Framework for the Provision of Mandatory Food Information including Labelling Requirements for Foods Sold Loose': -
 - They felt the consultation provided an opportunity to improve consumer information and protection.
 - They were supportive of the general principals.
 - They were positive about using a framework approach based on clear principles and suggested amendments to the decision tree format.
 - Safety should be the key driver in food labelling and have its own strand within the decision tree.
 - They were in favour of key nutritional information being made mandatory.
 - They were in favour of a best practice approach.
45. The Chair opened the debate to the Committee.
46. Some members felt that the labelling of unpasturised products was still an issue. It was highlighted that it was an important factor when considering consumer choice.
47. Some members were against the paragraph on cholesterol within the draft response and asked for it to be removed.
48. The Agency commented that is there were other issues out with the questions within the consultation and they should submit these to the Agency in an annex of the final response.
49. The Chair asked members to send all amendments to this draft response within one week to Amanda and for the final combined response to be submitted to the Secretariat by 14 September.
50. Members thanked Amanda for formulating the draft response.

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ACTION Members to submit amendments/comments to Amanda within one week

ACTION Final version of the draft response to be submitted to Secretariat by 14 September

ACTION members to highlight other issues to the Agency which they would like to discuss at a future meeting.

**ITEM 7
AOCB/PUBLIC SESSION**

51. The Chair asked observers for any issues they would like to raise. No issues were raised.
52. The Chair asked the Agency for an update on the recent E Coli incident.
53. The Agency informed the Committee that FSAS were brought into the Outbreak Control Team (OCT) considerations however the incident did not go out with the involved area. There is no information on legal action at present.
54. John Cowden declared an interest as a member of the Outbreak Control Team.
55. John Cowden informed the Committee that the OCT would meet on 30 August and it was anticipated that the outbreak would be declared over due to no more cases being reported.
56. The Chair asked members to return all questionnaires issued to Secretariat by 30 August.
57. The Chair informed the Committee that FSAS were currently recruiting for 2 new members for SFAC and to date 135 information packs have been issued.
58. The Chair informed the Committee that the next Open of meeting would take place on the 11 October in Dundee. The major FSAS stakeholder Forum will take place on 12 October and all Committee members were encouraged to attend.

ACTION: Members to submit questionnaires to Secretariat by 30th August.

59. The Chair thanked observers, members and FSA Officials and closed the meeting at 12:25