

**Scottish Food Advisory Committee**  
**16 April 2008**  
**Menzies Hotel**  
**Glasgow**

**Open Session**

Present

Committee Members:

Prof.Grame Millar - Chair

Bill Reilly

David Cameron

Moyra Burns

Amanda O'Donoghue

John Cowden

Brian Ratcliffe

FSAS Officials:

Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS

George Paterson, Director FSAS

Jane Ferries, Committee Secretary, FSAS

Melanie Martin, Committee Administrator, FSAS

Bill Adamson, Head of Strategic Policy and Consumer Engagement Branch, FSAS

Alison Spalding, Head of Standards & Sustainability Branch, FSA HQ

Pippa Eames, Higher Executive Officer, Standards & Sustainability Branch, 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 Christopher Trotter, Carrie Ruxton, Charlotte Maltin & Catherine Benton (SFAC members) and Jim Thomson (Assistant Director, FSAS)

## 2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

6. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting 6 March 2008 in Edinburgh.
7. Members agreed that the minute was a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 6 March 2008.
8. The Chair discharged the following actions:-
  - **Secretariat to issue a note of the FHIS discussion to FSA Board Secretariat.**
  - **Secretariat to formally submit the sub group recommendations to FSAS.**
  - **SFAC EU Labelling Sub Group to prepare a draft response to the consultation to bring to the Open April meeting**
  - **FSAS to provide clarification on 'appropriate use of food' in Article 26 (Info note 2)**
  - **FSAS to provide members with the definitions for 'salatrim's' (Info note 2)**
  - **FSAS to provide SFAC with a list of which spirits are included under the proposed regulation (Info note 2)**

### ITEM 3

#### **Food Standards Agency's approach to sustainable development in policy making**

9. The Chair welcomed Pippa Eames and Alison Spalding from the Standards and Sustainability Branch, FSA HQ.
10. Pippa Eames gave a brief presentation covering the following:-
  - Background to Sustainable Development and the Agency position.
  - Embedding Sustainable Development across the Agency and achievements to date.
  - Key features of the UK wide consultation launched on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
11. The Chair opened the debate to the Committee highlighting the following questions within the paper :-
  1. ***Should the Agency set priorities within sustainable development?***
  2. ***Should food safety and nutrition be a priority for the Agency?***
  3. ***Should the Agency take responsibility for the significant impacts of its alternative action being taken***
  4. ***Should the Agency seek to take a more integrated approach, working with other departments and stakeholders in order to achieve sustainability?***
12. Members asked for examples of sustainability within the Agency and what was the biggest driver in policy making (food safety and nutrition or sustainability)

13. The Agency gave members an example of a sustainable issue they were currently working with - fish consumption. Agency policy currently is to promote consumption of fish (2 portions per week) however there were issues with fish stocks being over fished which was where there would be a sustainable issue. This could therefore have an effect on the advice provided by the Agency or incorporate a decision to use sustainable fish stocks. It was important to work closely with other departments such as agriculture to ensure the effect of the environment and safety and nutritional aspects of the diet were taken into consideration. They added that the main driver in policy making was the Agency's statutory remit and when taking forward the remit they could propose if they were sustainable.
14. FSAS stated there could be conflict between the different countries with some sustainable issues particularly for Scotland who have very rural communities. They added the result of the food policy conversation within Scotland would soon be heard and many issues surrounding sustainability have been raised.
15. Members raised the additional points:
  - Sustainability could take a different meaning within different organisations.
  - The Agency should restrict sustainable development to their remit and consider alternative sources for their recommendations (The example of the Agency's oily fish consumption was used where it could be possible to look at other sources to promote this recommendation e.g. use of other marine animals)
  - Policy development for food safety and nutrition should come first followed by an assessment of whether such policy was likely to impact negatively on sustainable development, for example increasing packaging/waste, causing pollution and imposing additional costs on individuals/businesses.
  - The science of sustainable development would be difficult and could be drawn into the organic farming and genetically modified food debate.
  - Food safety and nutrition could not be separated when prioritising, as members felt there would be no conflict. Focus on nutrition was from a food safety perspective.
  - There was a question around the use of sound science when making policy with regard to food safety & nutrition and the use of soft science evidence when considering the sustainable elements.
  - Policy making may be slowed down when considering the sustainability aspect however putting the consumer first should remain the focus of decisions taken.

- The Agency should work with other Government departments, industry, and stakeholders to ensure relationships would not be damaged with the impact of sustainable decisions made.
  - The Agency should be looking proactively at sustainability and use this as a tool when horizon scanning.
16. The Chair opened the debate to observers.
17. **Carl Schaschke - Head of Chemical Engineering, University of Strathclyde.**
- Mr Schaschke stated that sustainability was a major issue within food processing engineering adding concern of land being used for bio fuels and not being used for producing food for consumption. He asked the Agency what their role was within the bio fuel area.
18. The Chair informed the Committee and observers FSA were engaged and involved in the bio fuel debate at an EU level.
19. The Chair thanked Alison Spalding and Pippa Earmes for their presentation and contributions to the Committee's discussion.

**ITEM 4**  
**Glasgow 2014 – Delivering a lasting legacy for Scotland**

20. The Chair gave a brief introduction to the Scottish Government consultation document **Glasgow 2014 – Delivering a lasting legacy for Scotland**. He opened the debate to the Committee.
21. The Committee raised the following points: -
- General supports for the concepts within the document were given however members felt this was a high level document and more information on specific concepts would be needed to fully debate these.
  - It was important to ensure the legacy would benefit the whole of Scotland.
  - Some members raised concerns with a possibility of an outbreak of food poisoning and asked for the possibility of a food safety risk management surveillance systems to be developed to monitor this.
  - This would be an opportunity to promote food safety/handling training.
22. The Agency informed members their focus on assisting and developing initiatives for this event would begin with the spending review discussions for in 2010.
23. Committee members agreed to form a sub group to take forward specific issues/suggest projects to the Agency in relation to preparation for the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

24. The Agency stated they would discuss issues with the Scottish Government to establish initiatives already in place and would report back to the Committee and establish how SFAC could contribute.
25. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

**Carl Schaschke - Head of Chemical Engineering, University of Strathclyde.**

Mr Schaschke asked the Agency if they had consulted those involved in the 2012 Olympic initiatives.

26. The Agency informed observers and members both FSA and Scottish Government were actively looking at the initiatives from the London Olympics 2012.

**ACTION: Secretariat to ensure Glasgow 2014 Sub Group is established with Prof. Graeme Millar as Chair.**

**ACTION: FSAS to report back to SFAC on initiatives currently in progress with Scottish Government and how SFAC can assist in this area.**

#### **ITEM 5**

##### **Transformation of the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) A national service responsive to the needs of Scotland**

27. The Chair welcomed Steve McGrath, Chief Executive, MHS, who gave a presentation covering main points including: -
  - Official Controls
  - Where the MHS have come from
  - Review of delivery of official controls
  - What has happened since July 2007
  - Business headlines
  - Sustainable cost transformation
  - Flexible delivery – nationally consistent
  - New operational team – 2008-2009
  - Clusters – a new way of delivering MHS business
  - Lead veterinary role – strengthening accountability
  - Commercial partners – basic principles
  - Charging reform principals, approach and proposals from 2009 – 2010
  - Next steps for MHS

**Bill Reilly declared an interest as President elect of the British Veterinary Association as of September 2008.**

28. The Chair opened the debate to the Committee adding informing members that issues with charging would be discussed at the next Open meeting of SFAC in Aberdeen on 21 May.

29. Members asked the following: -

1. What was the rationale with the clusters across the UK particularly those relating to Scotland?
2. 100% compliance was mentioned however how did non-compliant bovines enter the food chain if this was the case and how were these detected?
3. How will MHS save £19m?

30. Steve McGrath answered: -

1. The size of clusters within Scotland was developed by MHS staff looking at the geography, number, frequency of use and size of plants and amount of staff working within these areas. Some clusters enter into England to ensure an efficient service throughout the UK.
2. The food business operators (FBO's) were responsible for ensuring over thirty month (OTM) bovines were presented at OTM abattoirs to undertake testing for BSE. Pre 1996 bovines should not enter the food chain however occasionally these were presented and it was MHS who prevent this occurring. Each bovine has an ear tag and passport and if an OTM bovine was processed and it is missed by FBO and MHS, the reconciliation was made with the DEFRA database where information on each bovine was kept. This alert would be made to the FSA who in turn would issue a recall to prevent this meat entering the food chain.
3. Administration duties were now driven by the investment of IT systems therefore delivering a more cost effective service, which is where savings had been made. Industry had also indicated that 5 region structures resulted in operating 5 businesses and therefore the transformation will result in operating 1 business, which will be more cost effective. Savings had also been made by largely charging by headage rate and not by an hourly rate. Changes in costs around 2000 were due to ensuring the UK was complying with EU regulations.

31. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

32. **Ian Anderson – Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers**

Mr Anderson asked for FBO's to be considered to carry out some duties of MHS staff (as done in the poultry industry), which would result in a reduced cost to the meat industry. He added the modernisation of protocols of meat inspection should be more risk based to reward and penalise businesses. A large element of the cost should be borne by central Government. An 8% 2007/08 – 2008/09 is a huge cost to members of SAMW.

33. Steve informed observers and members the poultry industry was steadily buying back into the state scheme due to current MHS charges being more cost effective for them. Facilities not available and EU law were constraints within the red meat industry; however there were discussions to consider the possibility of industry having responsibility of dentition checks with sheep. Issues surrounding charging and full cost recovery would be discussed at the May Open SFAC meeting in Aberdeen and the July Open FSA Board meeting in London.
34. The Chair thanked Steve for the comprehensive presentation and contributions to group discussion. He added a summary of FSA Board discussions would be provided to SFAC after the debate.

## **ITEM 6 AOCB/PUBLIC SESSION**

35. The Chair asked Amanda O'Donoghue to present the draft response on EU Labelling the SFAC Sub Group had prepared. He added Carrie Ruxton (SFAC member) had submitted comments that needed to be considered by the sub group.
36. Amanda informed the Chair and Committee that there were issues raised at the meeting reflected in the minutes which were not included in the first draft response and therefore asked Secretariat to amend the draft and resubmit to the Committee
37. Secretariat agreed to amend the draft, adding comments from Carrie Ruxton and comments made on 6 March to the draft response and then submit it to members of the sub Group before finally submitting to FSAS on 3 May.
38. The Chair thanked observers and members for their contributions to the discussion and wished SFAC member Amanda O'Donoghue good luck on her maternity leave.
39. The meeting closed at 12:20.

**ACTION: Secretariat to amend the draft, considering comments from Carrie Ruxton and comments made on 6 March to the draft response and then submit it to members of the sub Group**

**ACTION: Secretariat to formally submit EU Labelling SFAC Sub group response to FSAS by 3 May 2008.**

**ACTION: Secretariat to ensure Glasgow 2014 Sub Group is established with Prof. Graeme Millar as Chair.**

**ACTION: FSAS to report back to SFAC on initiatives currently in progress with Scottish Government and how SFAC can assist in this area.**