

**Scottish Food Advisory Committee
17 March 2009
Apex City Quay Hotel, Dundee
Open Session**

Present

Committee Members:

Prof. Graeme Millar - Chair

David Cameron

John Cowden

Charlotte Maltin

Moyra Burns

Carrie Ruxton

Amanda O'Donoghue

Christopher Trotter

Lesley Stanley

Bernard Forteath

Jim Wildgoose

FSA Officials:

Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS

George Paterson, Director FSAS

Melanie Martin, Committee Secretary, FSAS

Neil Douglas, Committee Administrator, FSAS

Elsbeth MacDonald, Head of Animal Food Chain and Novel Foods Branch, FSAS

Sandy McDougall, Head of Contaminants, Hygiene, Additives and Shellfish Branch, FSAS

Will Munro, Contaminants, Hygiene, Additives and Shellfish Branch, FSAS

Paul Holley, TSE Team, FSA Headquarters

David Carruthers, TSE Team, FSA Headquarters

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 Dundee.
2. The Chair made an official welcome to the three new members of the Committee Lesley Stanley, Bernard Forteath and Jim Wildgoose.
3. The role of SFAC is to provide advice to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on all food safety and standards matters, in particular those with 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. Food issues are devolved to Scottish Ministers and legislation is 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.
4. 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.
5. **Charlotte Maltin declared an interest in Agenda Items 3 and 4 as an employee of Quality Meat Scotland.**

6. **Carrie Ruxton declared an interest in Agenda item 5 as a paid consultant who advises Young Seafish and also Health Supplements Information Service which includes cod liver supplements.**
7. The Chair asked for items of AOB. No matters were raised.
8. There were apologies from Jim Thomson, Assistant Director, FSAS.

2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

9. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting on 4 February 2009.
10. The Chair discharged the following actions:-

Under Para 18 Page 6

Hard copies of the overheads for the Social Science Research Unit presentation which took place at the 4 February open meeting were distributed to the Committee on 6 March 2009.

Under Para 39 Page 13

A SFAC sub group of 5 Committee members was formed to meet with relevant stakeholders for further information and discussions on the impact of proposals in Scotland.

Secretariat arranged meetings for the SFAC Sub Group members with relevant stakeholders for further information and discussions on the impact of proposals in Scotland.

All 5 members of the SFAC Sub Group met on the 9 March to discuss and agree their response to the FSA Scotland consultation; Proposed Changes to the Charging Arrangements and Charging Levels for Official Meat Controls carried out in Scotland.

Under Para 44 Page 14

Peter Midgley, FSAS sent the 'Local Authority Guidance on the Operation of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme' document to the Committee Secretary electronically. Hard copies were distributed to the Committee on 16 February 2009.

11. Members agreed the minute was a true and accurate reflection of the meeting held on 4 February 2009.
12. The Chair informed the Committee that the advert had gone out for the Chair of the Food Standards Agency to replace Dame Deirdre Hutton. The deadline for applications was the 14 April 2009.
13. The Chair informed the Committee of the Food Policy for Scotland; a recipe for success conference on 22 April. Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director of FSAS would be speaking on behalf of the Agency at the event.

14. The Chair informed the Committee that the Food Standards Agency Scotland won a Scottish Communicators in Business Award for the Royal Highland Show event.

ITEM 3

FSA SCOTLAND CONSULTATION – PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CHARGING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHARGING LEVELS FOR OFFICIAL MEAT CONTROLS CARRIED OUT IN SCOTLAND

15. The Chair mentioned that on the evening prior to the last open meeting on 4 February, the Committee had met with stakeholders to discuss the FSA Scotland Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Charging Arrangements and Charging Levels for Official Meat Controls Carried out in Scotland. The Committee had also discussed the consultation at the open meeting on 4 February and agreed to set up a sub group to develop a draft response to the consultation.
16. The Chair welcomed Elspeth MacDonald, Head of Animal Food Chain and Novel Foods Branch, FSAS to the table.
17. The Chair mentioned that this was a particularly interesting debate as it would be for Ministers in each of the 4 U.K countries to agree the Board recommendation in relation to their respective countries.
18. The Chair mentioned that at the 4 February open meeting, the Committee had discussed and agreed how they would progress and handle their consultation response-
 - A sub group of 5 members had been formed at the February open meeting.
 - Secretariat had arranged meetings for the sub group members with a range of relevant stakeholders between 23 February and 6 March, for obtaining further information and views on the impact of the proposals in Scotland. A minimum of 2 sub group members attended each meeting.
 - All 5 sub group members met on 9 March to discuss and agree their draft response to the consultation to be presented to SFAC.
19. The Chair clarified that an official FSAS stakeholder meeting regarding the consultation had been held on 6 March.
20. The Chair asked Elspeth to give an overview on the consultation.
21. Elspeth informed everyone that the consultation went out at end of 2008 and that the deadline for responses was 25 March. The Agency was hoping to get a wide range of views from a range of stakeholders. They had welcomed the Committee's consideration of the issue and looked forward to receiving its comments.
22. The Chair informed the Committee that he would now welcome members views on the sub group response to the 26 specific questions within the consultation, and asked for their agreement to the final response to the consultation.
23. Questions and comments from observers.

IAN ANDERSON – SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF MEAT WHOLESALERS

On question 11 which was about the currency exchange rate and how that's factored in, Ian Anderson asked for clarification on how this would work as it was

not clear. Ian queried whether the Committee would like to consider as part of their response, making it clear that under no circumstances should the MHS profit from a windfall on the exchange rates.

The Chair informed Ian this was not an issue around a windfall for one group or another, as depending on the exchange rate any windfall could be for the business, and not just for the MHS. The Committee would be suggesting as part of their response, the idea of spreading the exchange rate over 2 dates for balance, as the Committee felt this would smooth out the situation and minimise what was regarded as a penal exchanged rate.

On question 20, Ian queried what would happen when there was a stalemate in the review process concerning Business Agreements, was there a way of resolving this at the review stage as opposed to going to an appeal.

The Chair informed Ian the Committee's response to this question in the consultation was that they disagreed with the proposed £400 fee. The Committee did not have a solution to the problem Ian had articulated. However, there had to be some form of mediation to make sure both parties at the end of the review process recognised and respected the conclusion.

Elspeth clarified that the intention set out in the consultation proposals was that at the first step of the internal review, the MHS Chief Executive would come to a view based on the information and discussion between the MHS Business Manager and the industry representative. If the food business operator was not content with the decision taken by the MHS Chief Executive, the ability to appeal to an Appointed Person would be the next step.

GRAEME ANDERSON – UNISON, SCOTLAND

Graeme Anderson informed the Committee he had attended a Seniors (Senior Meat Inspectors) meeting in Aberdeen and that his Business Manager had pointed out that the livestock cost unit was in the region of £6.21 for his business area. Graeme believed the FSA's target was approximately £12. Therefore, there were Business Managers and parts of the MHS that were working very hard within Scotland and he did not feel they were getting enough recognition for doing so.

The Chair felt Graeme Anderson's comments were valid as he recognised that the MHS were working very hard within Scotland through the process, and that the food business operators were working very hard to transform and were trying to reflect what was required for Scotland.

IAN ANDERSON – SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF MEAT WHOLESALERS

Ian Anderson commented that there were a lot of issues around the decisions that went beyond this Advisory Committees conclusions and clearly government policy on responsibility and cost-sharing would be a factor here, given the fact that the U.K government and Scottish Government had different views on how this might or might not be applied.

Also, regarding the question of the fitness for purpose of the MHS, he agreed some improvements had been made regarding the transformation. However, industry needed to see more evidence of transformation before they could be

confident that the MHS was going to provide an efficient service which they think they should pay for. Industry expected an efficient service at a fair price, and increases of the magnitude proposed in the consultation paper were premature. Ian felt other parts of the food industry paid for inspections to a much lesser extent than the meat industry.

The Chair informed Ian that they did not know whether the Ministers had different views at this stage.

He noted Ian's fitness for purpose question regarding the MHS.

The Chair agreed that the meat industry was more heavily regulated than many other parts of the food industry, in particular due to the past problems that had occurred, and the heavy regulation that had been required to regain public confidence. As part of their response to the consultation, the Committee had recommended that a debate was required around the proportionality of controls going forward.

GRAEME ANDERSON – UNISON, SCOTLAND

Graeme Anderson mentioned that when the FSA go out to consultation with the public, the public come back supporting an independent meat inspection service supplied by the government and seemed quite happy to pay for that service through increased costs on meat. Graeme queried whether this was an option they could use to cut down the level of subsidy?

The Chair informed Graeme that the Committee had already had discussions with various stakeholders around the consultation issues. Through the discussions stakeholders had argued strongly that it is in fact the farmers who would pay as the supermarkets would not pass on the additional costs to the consumer.

The Chair agreed that the consumer might be prepared to pay more if they understood what was involved, but how much more, and also there was the dynamics of the supermarkets competing against one another.

24. The Chair took the Committee through the sub groups draft response to the consultation, and it was agreed by the Committee that the following amendments should be made to the answers to the consultation prior to it being finalised and dispatched: -

Response to question 7 – The second sentence was redundant as it repeated the first sentence. Therefore the second sentence should be taken out.

Response to question 11 - The Committee would recommend a more sophisticated way of being able to adjust the Euro exchange rate rather than on a single point in the year. The Committee is suggesting the setting of two dates to achieve a smoother pattern.

Response to Question 12 - The Committee would recommend option 1 amended. The Committee believes that there is a case for increasing charges to reflect inflation. However they considered that the current rate of inflation is below 4% and that the figures should be recalculated to reflect the current economic position.

Response to question 16 - An EU wide debate and discussion needs to be held on the whole issue of SRM controls to establish what level of controls are now appropriate going forward.

Response to question 20 – They felt it inappropriate to charge £400 to secure industry representation on the review team – even if it is refundable if the review is successful. The system could be open to abuse and creates unnecessary and costly additional bureaucracy.

Response to question 22 – The answer should contain a reference to the response to question 26 on Business Agreements.

25. The Chair clarified that the Committee recommended option 1 amended, while recognising that they still wanted to see continual improvement in the delivery of the service from the MHS. However, the decision was in the Ministers hands as the Ministers had the final decision, the Agency could only recommend.
26. Sub group members extended their thanks to all the people in industry and the MHS who gave up their time and provided their knowledge to the sub group.
27. The Committee asked if there was time to see the amended version of the proposed response incorporating the requested changes to the consultation, for final comments and agreement before it was submitted to FSAS.
28. The Committee Secretary agreed to circulate the amended response to the Committee for final agreement, before submitting it by the 25 March 2009 deadline.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary to amend the sub group response to the consultation by incorporating the points made during the discussion at this open meeting. It was requested by the Committee that the amended response to be circulated to the Committee for comments and final agreement.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary is required to submit the final Committee response to the Agency by the 25 March 2009 deadline.

ITEM 3 BSE OFFICIAL CONTROLS FOR OVER THIRTY MONTH CATTLE: MOVING TO A RISK-BASED REGIME

29. The Chair welcomed Paul Holley and David Carruthers from the TSE Team, FSA Headquarters to the table.
30. The Chair introduced the Agenda item highlighting that the declining levels of from BSE suggested that consideration should now be given to allocating resources to areas of greater public health risk. The FSA had therefore been reviewing the levels of BSE official controls for over thirty month (OTM) cattle and investigating the scope to move towards a more proportionate risk based regime, which placed more responsibility for meat safety on the food business operator.
31. Paul Holley gave a presentation on the review of supervision levels of specified risk material (SRM) controls for OTM cattle which covered the following:
 - Review of specified risk material (SRM) supervision levels

- SRM audit and inspection requirements
 - SRM: The current regime
 - The current risk
 - Proposed system for OTM cattle
 - Changes under consideration
 - OTM vertebral column (VC) removal in Butchers
 - Information on stakeholder workshop recently held
 - Moving to a more risk based approach? Views requested from the Committee on;
 - Against a background of reducing risks can we extend the system applied to UTM (under thirty month cattle) and OTM cattle and move to a more risk based audit/inspection approach and make the proposed changes outlined?
 - Should we continue with our cautious stepped approach, with monitoring of each step before moving to the next?
 - Minded not to allow the derogation for butchers to remove OTM VC specified risk material given the risks highlighted
32. The Chair thanked Paul for the presentation, and opened the discussion to the Committee.
33. Members of the Committee raised the following questions:-
- A The Committee queried whether the £1 million cost per annum for the current system for supervision of over thirty month removal of vertebral column SRM was for the U.K?
 - B The Committee queried the figure of £16.5 million which had been presented in the FSA Scotland consultation on the proposed changes to the charging arrangements for official meat controls carried out in Scotland. The Committee were confused why the figure of £16.5 million had appeared in the consultation document, when the figure given by Paul was £4 million.
 - C The Committee referred to the part of the presentation regarding the current risk. Paul had mentioned that SEAC (Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee) had noted that some of the assumptions made in the modelling relied on expert judgment rather than data and that there was uncertainty about some parameters. The Committee queried what the uncertainty was, and was it essentially picked up by the prevalence of BSE remaining low?
 - D Under the current regime in the UK, the Committee asked for clarification on authorised butchers as they were confused why an authorised butcher would have anything on their premises with un-removed SRM in the first place unless they specialised in game?
 - E The Committee queried how many countries within the European Community had gone down the route of derogation for vertebral column removal and why they had gone down that route?
 - F With regards to the stakeholder workshop, the Committee queried how many consumers were consulted as part of the stakeholder workshop?
 - G With regards to the stakeholder workshop, the Committee queried whether the CJD Support Network had given any evidence for not supporting any changes?

34. Paul provided the following answers to the members' points:-
- A Paul informed the Committee that the figure was for vertebral column removal in cutting plants in the U.K. Currently the costs for hygiene and SRM controls are met by DEFRA. The total costs for hygiene and SRM controls was approximately £4 million, and £1 million of this was from vertebral column removal in authorised cutting plants.
 - B Paul confirmed the figure he had provided was for over thirty month controls only, which explained why the figure provided in the consultation was much higher.
 - C Paul informed the Committee that SEAC was content with the methodology but had noted that some of the assumptions made in the modelling relied on expert judgement rather than data and that there was uncertainty about some parameters. The underlying fact recognised by SEAC was that since prevalence of BSE was very low, the risk was very low for the different enforcement regimes.
 - D Paul informed the Committee that EU law allows Member States to apply a derogation which allows vertebral column to be removed in butcher's shops specifically. The derogation requires a specific authorisation for that practice.
 - E Paul informed the Committee that the French and the Netherlands have taken up the derogation for vertebral column removal. They took the route from the start; however the UK was in a different position historically in terms of BSE.
 - F Paul informed the Committee that they had two consumer groups and two consumer representative experts. They had invited more consumers than the number who attended however there had been limited uptake.
 - G Paul clarified that the CJD Support Network saw the presentation in terms of the risk that was presented to all the groups, but they chose not to support the change.
35. David Carruthers gave a presentation on OTM (over thirty month) official controls – BSE testing, which covered the following:
- The OTM testing controls
 - The "robust" BSE testing system
 - Possible areas for change
 - Cattle ID – FBO controls
 - Cattle ID – MHS checks
 - Verification checks
 - Risk if cattle requiring testing not identified?
 - Health marking
 - Possibility of health marking before test results received
 - Benefits of applying health marking derogation
 - Views requested from the Committee on;
 - Whether physical checks on cattle eligibility by MHS continue to be needed for consumer protection?
 - Whether the health marking derogation could be applied in the UK?
36. The Chair thanked David for the presentation, and opened the discussion to the Committee.

37. Members of the Committee raised the following questions:-

- A The Committee queried whether many of the EU countries do not apply these rules to the same extent as the U.K?
- B Regarding verification checks, the Committee queried the suggestion that cattle had to be tested before they entered the food chain but that the MHS does a retrospective check later on the records. Why was this necessary with the current situation where the health mark was not being put on until there was a result?
- C The Committee queried whether the proposals were just for the efficiency of the MHS as part of their transformation process. Also, would food business operators have any concerns about the proposed changes as they must have consulted with the food business operators?

38. David provided the following answers to the member's points:-

- A David informed the Committee that he wouldn't make the assumption that other EU countries do not apply the rules to the same extent as the U.K. They had looked at the testing controls in other EU countries. In some countries, for example in Germany, there was an even greater involvement of the enforcers as the Official would take the samples. Many countries were quite precautionary and have rigorous rules when it came to testing. If they did agree to apply the derogation in relation to the health mark, they may be ahead of other EU countries in doing so.
- B David informed the Committee that with any system of controls errors would occur. There had been ten instances in the UK where an animal that should have been tested had gone through the system without being tested because of failure to identify that it was an over thirty month animal. It does identify that a small numbers of errors have occurred:' although the UK has a rigorous system in place, it is not 100% fool proof.
- C David clarified that they did consult a range of stakeholders at the workshop Paul had mentioned as part of his presentation. On the cattle ID side, there was support by the stakeholders as a whole for moving away from the 100% physical checks by the MHS. On the health marking side there had been mixed views: the majority of industry representatives supported the move to apply the health mark derogation; however some of the consumer representatives were uncomfortable with idea of applying the health mark derogation.

39. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

IAN ANDERSON – SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF MEAT WHOLESALERS

Ian confirmed he had attended the workshop and felt the views from the workshop had been slightly misrepresented today. Ian mentioned he had received a report of the views from the workshop in mid January, with a covering letter saying they would be in touch about taking this forward. Since there had been no further communication with stakeholders, when would this be taken forward and how would this be done.

The vertebral column removal was still stuck at thirty months, why had this not increased to forty-eight months in line with the BSE testing age, and when might they expect this to happen. Ian felt a change of mind set was required given that there seemed to be general agreement that there was no significant increase in risk to public health. They would like a proportionate response to this whole issue.

The Chair informed Ian that as part of the previous Agenda item, the Committee had asked for the FSA to have a debate on the controls internally and with other EU countries, before the Committee agree to the introduction of a 5% charge on SRM controls. This information would form part of their response to the FSA Scotland consultation on the proposed changes to the charging arrangements for official meat controls carried out in Scotland.

DAAN KIEZEBRINK – ABERTAY UNIVERSITY

Daan queried the number of cattle born before August 1996 that are still alive and the likelihood of them end up in the human food chain? He assumed the cattle may be destroyed in other ways, and whether it was necessary to keep checking?

David Carruthers informed Daan that the situation on pre August 1996 cattle was that up to the end of last year there was a scheme in place to subsidise the slaughter of those cattle. This was a three year scheme which had now ended. David confirmed that approximately 450 thousand cattle went through that scheme in the three years. David understood that the British Cattle Movement Service were currently cleaning up their database in terms of the numbers of pre August 1996 cattle they still have registered and making sure these cattle were genuinely alive. Pre-clean up, in terms of previous estimates they expected there to be approximately 60 thousand still alive, however this number may be lower after the check has taken place. Although it was illegal to present these animals to a fresh meat abattoir for slaughter, they still come forward at a rate of one or two a week so there was still a need for vigilance in this area on the part of food business operators and the MHS. The food business operators were very effective with checking, and very few pre August 1996 cattle had actually been slaughtered, most were identified by the abattoir operator and dealt with.

GRAEME ANDERSON - UNISON

Regarding the figure of ten cattle that got into the food chain that were not meant to, Graeme queried whether there were figures available on how many cattle that were ineligible for slaughter the MHS had picked up at the passport check point.

David Carruthers informed Graeme that 10 cattle since testing began had got into the food chain. This figure was for over thirty month cattle, not pre August 1996 cattle. Unfortunately, the MHS do not collect data on how many they identify in their checks so a definite answer cannot be given. The MHS provided them with numbers for a year's checking at under-thirty months approved abattoirs, and 31 cattle over thirty months were identified.

40. Views requested from the Committee on whether physical checks on cattle eligibility by MHS continue to be needed for consumer protection, and whether the health marking derogation could be applied in the UK were -

- The Committee members did not agree with the health marking derogation being applied in the UK, as the health mark says the meat is safe to eat and has credibility. The health mark process should stay as it is. In other words once it is stamped there is no dubiety that it is fit for human consumption and safe to eat.
 - Regarding whether physical checks on cattle eligibility by MHS continue to be needed for consumer protection, this was a judgment call around whether they believe the food business operators had in their interest to make sure they had done the checks. Therefore, does the MHS need to duplicate their effort? The Committee felt there was every incentive for the food business operators to make sure they do the checks as part of good practice for the sake of their reputation. Therefore, the Committee felt that the MHS do not need to duplicate the food business operators' efforts. The Committee agreed that the MHS should reserve the right to go in unannounced and audit and inspect at any stage but that the MHS should not literally be on the shoulder of food business operators. In principle the Committee agreed with the enforcement aspect movement of the MHS moving away from a 100% check to unannounced audits and inspections, however they needed to be satisfied that the agreed system was workable with the other Agencies involved, for example. the Rural Affairs departments.
41. Paul Holley asked for clarification the Committee's views for moving to a more risk-based approach:
- Against a background of reducing risks can we extend the system applied to UTM (under thirty month cattle) and OTM cattle and move to a more risk based audit/inspection approach and make the proposed changes outlined?
 - Should we continue with our cautious stepped approach, with monitoring of each step before moving to the next?
 - Minded not to allow the derogation for butchers to remove OTM vertebral column SRM given the risks highlighted?
42. The Chair clarified that in principle the Committee agreed to the move to a more risk-based approach. The Committee recommended that they should not allow the derogation.

ITEM 5 REVIEW OF AGENCY'S ADVICE ON FISH CONSUMPTION

43. The Chair welcomed Sandy McDougall, Head of Contaminants, Hygiene, Additives and Shellfish branch, FSAS to the table.
44. The Chair informed everyone that the Agency was reviewing its dietary advice to consumers on fish consumption to take into account nutrition, food safety and the wider sustainability issues. The consultation seeks comments about the Agency's proposed approach to include these wider aspects in future advice on fish consumption. The Chair asked Sandy McDougall to introduce the consultation.
45. Sandy McDougall informed everyone that it was the first case in the Agency of reviewing existing policy to take sustainability into account. The key areas highlighted in the consultation were that the evidence regarding the health benefits and safety of eating fish was established and had not been re-examined. It included a discussion on the environmental concerns regarding the Agency's dietary advice on fish consumption and a key proposal was that the Agency should develop an information hub within its dietary

advice, this would offer links to other sources of information and advice to enable choices that take into account other aspects of sustainability. The emphasis would be on facilitating access to information rather than interpreting or duplicating it on the Agency's website. Other government departments, International bodies and various stakeholders were already very active in this area and the Agency was keen to support and draw on their work and not duplicate it. The consultation was drafted with considerable input from Scottish Government and the Scottish fishing industry. The key questions were summarised in paragraph 53 within the document.

46. The Chair thanked Sandy for the information he had provided.

47. Members of the Committee raised the following comments:-

- Since the consumption does not currently reach the Agency's target of two portions of fish, it was not clear how achieving the dietary targets was consistent with issues of fish stock preservation.
- The Committee recommended that the Agency should maintain the current consumption advice but also provide information relating to a range of alternative sources of long chain omega 3, including supplements, for those individuals who do not wish to choose fish or who wish to consider issues of sustainability.
- The footnote to the graph on page 5 of the consultation read that canned fish was split 79% white and 21% oily fish. It was queried whether the canned white fish was tuna as when tuna is canned the omega levels fall. What was the evidence base for the actual ingested levels of fish derived omega 3, given that if at least a portion of the canned fish was tuna then were we underestimating what consumers were consumers in relation to omega 3 derived from oily fish.
- It was felt there was still a lack of consumer confidence in fish with the scares that took place several years ago in particular with farmed fish. It was also mentioned that the consumer can buy fish farmed in Greece or further a field , and it was queried how much the consumer knew about what went on. It was felt that part of the reason consumers were not engaging in what was being suggested to them was lack of information and knowledge in that area, and it was recommended this was something that the FSA should consider.
- It seemed the Agency were setting a precedent with regard to inclusion of sustainability and if they were to start advising on the sustainability of fish consumption. Did this mean that there was going to be an onus on the Agency to the provide advice on the sustainability of all the food that we eat as this would be an enormous resource implication?
- It was felt that the Agency should define what it meant by sustainability as there were many definitions, and it was felt they had to be very clear if they were going to advise on labelling food products as sustainable.
- If the health benefits relating to fish were mainly about the long chain omega 3's, and not other constituents of fish then the information hub should give consumers information for alternative sources.

48. Charlotte Maltin, SFAC member suggested the other Committee members may find a recent Scottish Government survey on environmental attitudes and behaviours useful.

49. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

DAAN KIEZEBRINK – ABERTAY UNIVERSITY

Daan Kiezebrink mentioned when he read the term sustainability he had a slightly different take on it. He queried whether the sustainability was a barrier to the consumer for consuming oily fish.

Sandy McDougall recognised this and informed Daan that in the consultation they had asked for advice on any other information that may be useful to consumers to help the consumption of fish.

JULIE EDGAR – SCOTTISH SALMON PRODUCERS ORGANISATION

Julie Edgar informed the Committee that the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation would be putting in their own submission to the consultation response. In their experience of the many issues that may be raised by consumers in relation to farmed salmon, sustainability was very low down the list. Sustainability tended to be raised by campaigning groups. This led to observations of a potential danger that the information hub may inadvertently direct consumers to the websites where campaigning groups would be making their own unsubstantiated comments about sustainability and farmed fish, which would do nothing to help consumers make informed choices. There was also concern that the dietary advice could get lost behind the sustainability message. Julie supported giving people alternatives to strengthen the omega 3 message, however they would prefer that people ate the fish.

50. The Chair summed up that the Committee's view in response to the consultation which was that they recommended that advice is given to consumers regarding 'appropriate' alternatives to strengthen omega 3 and other vitamin intake, which would be provided by the Agency's recommended consumption of two portions of fish per week (one oily). The Committee recommends this is done in addition to providing consumers with information on sustainability issues in the purchase of fish stocks.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary to draft the Committee response to the consultation by incorporating the points made during the discussion at this open meeting. Committee Secretary to circulate the draft to the Committee for comments and final agreement.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary is required to submit the final Committee response to the Agency by the 1 April 2009 deadline.

ITEM 6
FSA PROGRESS UPDATE ON SFAC WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS
ARISING FROM THE SCOTTISH CONSUMER COUNCIL REPORT 'YOUNG PEOPLE
AND FOOD SAFETY – FIVE YEARS ON'

51. The Chair welcomed Will Munro, Contaminants, Hygiene, Additives and Shellfish branch, FSAS to the table.
52. The Chair informed everyone that following publication of the then Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) report titled 'Young People and Food Safety – Five Years On' SFAC members formed a working group to consider the report and the Agency food hygiene advice. The working group was formed following 29 August 2007 open meeting. (SCC had been amalgamated into Consumer Focus Scotland).
53. The Chair informed everyone that the working group was populated by David Cameron, Charlotte Maltin, Catherine Brady and Bill Reilly.
54. Will Munro introduced the update paper which provided the progress update that FSAS had been tasked with providing in 6 – 12 months, following ratification of the working group recommendations by SFAC on 6 March 2008. Will thanked Consumer Focus Scotland for starting this useful debate and also thanked the working group for its contributions and recommendations.
55. The working group thanked Will Munro for the work he had put into producing this report.
56. The Committee recognised from reading the progress update that the five recommendations had been taken on board and action had been taken and they were very pleased to see this.
57. Mary Lawton, Consumer Focus Scotland, thanked FSA for carrying out this work. Under the use of the word 'piping hot', she asked for it to be recognised that FSA helped them with the survey in the first place and that they were bold enough to ask them to put this question in, so she was sure FSA weren't surprised they had to review this. Under the guidance on shell eggs, the storage of eggs was under review. The report reflected this and she was pleased this was being looked at. Under the enforcement officers & food safety information, she thought one of the reasons why there were confusing messages was because the enforcement officers were getting mixed messages themselves. Mary did not feel it should reflect on them giving out bad advice, it was just that they were not getting consistent advice to give out.
58. The Chair informed Will it was a job well done and that it read very well.

ITEM 7
AOCB/PUBLIC SESSION

59. The Committee was asked to note the information paper on the establishment of Marine Scotland. This announcement had been made by the Scottish Government following the recent public consultation. This information was issued electronically to the Committee on 10 February 2009
60. The Committee was asked to note the information on the Standardised Operating Procedures for the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committees

(FACs). The three FACs were to be made aware of the position and were invited to accept the enclosed the Standardised Operating Procedures for the FACs. The Committee were content.

61. The next meeting will be held on the 29 April 2009 in Aberdeen.

62. The meeting closed at 13.00.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary to amend the sub group response to the FSA Scotland consultation on the Proposed Changes and Charging Arrangements and Charging Levels for Official Meat Controls Carried out in Scotland, by incorporating the points made during the discussion at this open meeting. It was requested by the Committee that the amended response be circulated to the Committee for comments and final agreement.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary is required to submit the final Committee response to the FSA Scotland consultation on the Proposed Changes and Charging Arrangements and Charging Levels for Official Meat Controls Carried out in Scotland by the 25 March 2009 deadline.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary to draft the Committee response to the consultation on the Review of Agency’s Advice on Fish Consumption by incorporating the points made during the discussion at this open meeting. Committee Secretary to circulate the draft to the Committee for comments and final agreement.

ACTION – The Committee Secretary is required to submit the final Committee response to the consultation on the Review of Agency’s Advice on Fish Consumption by the 1 April 2009 deadline.