

Scottish Food Advisory Committee
24 March 2010
Apex Hotel, Dundee
Open Session

Present

Committee Members:

Prof Graeme Millar CBE

David Cameron

Charlotte Maltin

Amanda O'Donoghue

Christopher Trotter

Bernard Forteath

Jim Wildgoose

Carrie Ruxton

Lesley Stanley

FSA in Scotland Officials:

Charles Milne, Director Scotland, FSA

Lydia Wilkie, Deputy Director Scotland, FSA

Ryan Bruce, Committee Secretary,

Neil Douglas, Committee Administrator

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) and advised every one of the housekeeping rules. The Committee were pleased to be in Dundee.
- 2 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 Committee's 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 for 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. There were apologies from:
 - Committee Member Moyra Burns
 - FSA in Scotland Official Jim Thomson

2. Minutes and Matters arising from previous meeting

5. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous open meeting on the 28 October 2009 in Aberdeen.
6. The Chair discharged the following items:-

Under Para 21 Page 4

- The Committee's response to the Front of Pack Consultation was sent on 2 November 2009

Under Para 29 Page 5

- FSA in Scotland responded to the audience member who queried algae and its synthesis process`.

Committee Member Charlotte Maltin requested that the minutes be amended to reflect her apologies for the meeting. On this basis members agreed that the minute was a true and accurate reflection of the meeting held on 2 September 2009.

3 Scottish Government Obesity Route Map

7. The Chair welcomed Fergus Millan from Scottish Government to the table. The Chair informed the Committee and audience that Fergus would provide a presentation on Scottish Government's Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: a Route Map towards a Healthy Weight Strategy.
8. The Chair thanked Fergus for his presentation noting the considerable ambition embedded in the strategy, and then invited the Committee to ask questions to Fergus.
9. Committee Member Carrie Ruxton raised various points following Fergus' presentation including: individual responsibility; children's eating habits; the impact that shift work has on eating behaviour; vending machines and in general the price of food.
10. Charles Milne, Director Scotland, FSA, asked Fergus how he perceived the role of the FSA in Scotland in relation to the strategy. Fergus stated that the FSA in Scotland would have a key role in the strategy, and referred to various areas of work the Agency is currently involved in, including reformulation in regards to labelling. Fergus also referred to the technical expertise the Agency enjoys, and the relationships it maintains with the business sector, that Fergus stated he hoped the strategy would draw upon.
11. An audience member stressed the importance of psychology and the environment in regards to eating behaviour, and advocated one hour lunch breaks to be made more common within the workplace.

12. An audience member raised the issue of school meals in regards to secondary school children. The audience member pointed out that various food retailers are currently undercutting the price of secondary school meals, and suggested that a system should be introduced that would encourage children to use school facilities rather than retailers for their meals. SFAC Member Bernard Forteach in response to this point, raised the issue of consumer choice, and referred to the practical difficulties that such a policy may present. However, Bernard referred to a cashless card system that is presently being used in various schools in Scotland, and Bernard felt that this particular scheme is effective in regards to this area.
13. Committee Member Charlotte Maltin, raised the issue of the underweight population, and the need to avoid exacerbating this issue. Fergus stated that the Scottish Government is very conscious of this point, and commented on the social marketing work that was involved in producing the strategy.
14. Committee Member Christopher Trotter expressed the importance of breast feeding and weaning and asked Fergus how these areas were incorporated into the strategy. Fergus confirmed that these areas were featured strongly in the strategy, and referred to Scottish Government's Infant Nutrition Strategy in Scotland, which Fergus said is to be published later this year.
15. The Chair thanked Fergus for his presentation and by way of closing this item, the Chair encouraged a fully, joint up approach across all NHS Trusts and Local Authorities in Scotland. The Chair also highlighted various confusions regarding the definition of obesity itself, before wishing the strategy and its vision every success in its implementation.

4 FSA in Scotland Update

16. The Chair introduced Charles Milne, Director Scotland, FSA. The Chair informed the Committee that Charles would be providing an update on the main issues identified for Scotland following the publication of the Food Standards Agency Strategy 2010-2015, as well as providing an update on the recent modernization program which is currently taking place within Food Standards Agency in Scotland.
17. Charles Milne provided a verbal update to the Committee on how Scotland will relate to the new strategic plan 2010-2015 which comes in place on the 1 April 2010. Charles advised of the following during his presentation:

Strategic Plan

- The FSA in Scotland will produce a strategic overlay as will colleagues in Wales and Northern Ireland. The strategic overlay will adapt the UK Strategy slightly to affect the work that the Agency is involved in within Scotland. Charles advised that the reason for doing this is because the UK Agency as a whole has various responsibilities that do not directly apply to Scotland such as international negotiations. However, Charles advised that Scotland would still feed in through the process. Charles advised of areas that the FSA in Scotland would need to include in the strategic overlay, such as the FSA in Scotland's support for Scottish Ministers and their policies.
- A Corporate plan will be produced which will set out the work of the Agency over the next year.
- The Agency helps develop and deliver Scottish Government's National policies such as Recipe for Success, which is a National Food and Drink Policy and also the Obesity Route Map.
- FSA Official Lydia Wilkie represents the FSA in Scotland on the National Food & Drink Policy Leadership forum and has provided input when required.

Modernization Program

- Charles advised that the FSA in Scotland have undertaken a restructuring exercise to align the structure in relation to the new strategic plan. The new structure will come in to affect from 12 April 2010 and shortly FSA in Scotland will be writing to all Stakeholders with a copy of FSA in Scotland's new organogram, detailing staff members with their areas of work. Charles advised that the FSA in Scotland has taken this opportunity to streamline various work creating greater efficiencies for the public and for Government.

Challenges for the Future

- Charles advised that Gus O'Donnell UK Head of Civil Service has recently issued a statement advising of the 20% reduction in Civil Service Senior Managers across the UK, and that this is being considered by the Agency presently.
- Charles advised that the General Election is due to take place later this year and will undoubtedly affect the Agency, and that the various parties have different positions on how they intend to deal with both Food Safety and Dietary health.

Committee Member Charlotte Maltin advised that as part of the ongoing review in relation to the 20% reduction in Senior Managers, that it is very important that the FSA in Scotland does not lose expertise it currently has.

The Chair thanked Charles Milne for providing his verbal presentation to SFAC and also thanked both Committee Members and audience for their questions and comments.

5 Scottish Government Leadership Forum Update

18. The Chair introduced Committee Member Carrie Ruxton. The Chair informed the Committee that Carrie has been representing SFAC on Scottish Government's National Food and Drink Policy Leadership Forum, and would be providing an update on some of the issues under discussion thus far.
19. Carrie provided a verbal update and advised of the following during her presentation:
 - The Leadership Forum has existed for a number of years but the Scottish Government decided to broaden the membership to help with policy implementation. Six meetings are planned for 2010 and that the range of stakeholders represented is wide.
 - Two meetings have taken place so far and the Forum has tried to work on the logic models for implementing the seven themes of Recipe for Success which are:
 1. Support the growth of our food and drink Industry;
 2. Build on our reputation as a land of food and drink;
 3. Ensure we make healthy and sustainable choices;
 4. Make our public sector an exemplar for sustainable food procurement;
 5. Ensure our food supplies are secure and resilient to change;
 6. Make food both available and affordable to all;
 7. Ensure that our people understand more about the food they eat.
 - Other activities that the Forum will be taking forward over the next year will be:
 1. Planning National Food and Drink event in 2010. This event will be used to gain input from Stakeholders and members of the public. The hope is to get the people who make the important decision on board to help deliver the new policy;
 2. Debating merits of promoting Food Advocacy within Scotland;
 3. Advising on progressing a Health and Sustainability Framework.
20. An audience member advised that this policy was a brilliant idea and that she supported everything that was presented.

21. Committee Member, Jim Wildgoose asked how the results regards the Leadership Forum would be communicated. Lydia Wilkie advised that the Leadership Forum is considering how the results are to be communicated.

6 Nanotechnology

22. The Chair introduced this item by informing the Committee that the Food Standards Agency and the Government are examining the issue of Nanotechnology in an open and transparent way. The Chair also advised that the Government has appointed a group including former Chair of the FSA, Sir John Krebs, to look at this issue going forward. The Chair also advised that this aforementioned Committee would produce a document that would improve the knowledge base on where nanotechnology currently sits, and would include information regards the potential role of nanotechnology in future policy making.
23. Committee Member Lesley Stanley advised the Chair that she is a member of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances, and that she would happily feedback any points that the DEFRA Committee raises, to SFAC.
24. As a point of information, Committee Member Charlotte Maltin advised that there is a group comprising of members of staff from Aberdeen University, Edinburgh University and Napier University, which is looking at the safety of nanomaterials and wondered whether the Committee would welcome a briefing from them relating to the work that they are involved in.
25. In response to Charlotte's suggestion, the Chair advised that Dr Sandy Lawrie of the Food Standards Agency, has offered to present to the Committee on this subject at a future meeting of SFAC, and that this may represent an opportunity for the group that Charlotte referred to in para 24, to exchange information with and potentially present alongside.

Action – Committee member Charlotte Maltin to provide contact details to the Secretariat of the group described in paragraph 24

7 Papers for Information

- 26 The Chair introduced the Information Papers and advised that he would go through each paper individually and invited comments on any of the papers.

Delivery of Official Controls Audit Programme in Scotland 2010-2015

- 27 Committee Member, Bernard Forteath, declared an interest as a former employee of Renfrewshire Council, and Committee Member Charlotte Maltin, declared an interest as Chair of the FSA in Scotland's Audit Advisory Committee.
- 28 Committee Member, Jim Wildgoose, asked Charles Milne whether there would be any follow up action to the letter that was sent to all Local Authorities in August 2009, following the focussed audit exercise and Pennington, by Charles.

- 29 Charles advised that all Local Authorities had responded and that all LAs thereafter held internal reviews and identified and put in place action plans.
- 30 Charles advised that in response to a pre-audit questionnaire to LAs in Scotland concerning whether LAs had sufficient resources to deliver their statutory obligations for this year, Charles reported that all 32 LAs replied; 22 responded stating they had sufficient resources though including caveats relating to the possibility of future budget cuts, 10 LAs expressed that they would have not have sufficient resources – due to maternity leave and long term funding difficulties.
- 31 An audience member stated that he would like to see greater co-operation and less friction between the FSA in Scotland's Audit branch and Local Authorities in Scotland.

Campylobacter

32. Committee Member, Carrie Ruxton, raised concerns relating to the reported cases of Campylobacter between 2008 and 2009 as stated in the Information Paper, and concluded her point by asking how the FSA in Scotland planned to tackle this issue.
33. Charles Milne informed the Committee that Campylobacter is one of the FSA's top two priorities, and advised of the various methods that should be used to tackle this issue, referring to preventing cross contamination in abattoirs, freezing processes, and home preparation of chicken.
34. Charles Milne advised that the FSA is hosting an international conference on Campylobacter later this month. This Conference is being held in an effort to identify new ways of reducing the levels of the campylobacter in UK chicken.
35. Committee Member, Bernard Forteath informed the Committee on how New Zealand has tried to tackle Campylobacter, specifically in relation to the level of chlorine used in treatment water. Bernard asked whether this level would be an acceptable level in Scotland.
36. In response Charles Milne stated that the FSA in Scotland will respond to Bernard's query.

Action - FSA in Scotland to respond to Committee Member, Bernard Forteath's question regarding chlorine levels in New Zealand

37. The Chair advised that there will be a consultation issued in June regarding this subject, and therefore the Committee would have another opportunity to input to this subject later this year.
38. Charles Milne advised that there will be a FSA Food Safety Week in June, which will highlight the dangers surrounding unsafe preparation of cooking chicken.

39. Committee member Charlotte Maltin queried imported chicken in terms of potential campylobacter risk. In response to this Charles Milne stated that the Agency works with Industry to ensure consistency of standards, and therefore the same standards would apply to any imported chicken.

SACN Draft report for Scientific Consultation

40. The Chair introduced this item asking the Committee to inform the Secretariat if they are interested in being part of a sub-group to provide a response to this draft report.

8 Public Session / AOCB

41. The Chair invited the members of the audience to raise any points they wished to raise. Various points were raised including queries regards courses that are available in relation to Food hygiene, and also the potential for employment within the FSA. Committee member, David Cameron suggested that Robert Gordon's University in Aberdeen may run courses regarding Food Hygiene, and Charles Milne reminded the audience member of the modernisation process the Agency is undertaking.
42. The Meeting finished at 12.30.

Summary of Action Points.

Action - The Agency to respond to Committee Member Bernard Forteath's question regarding Chlorine levels in treatment water in New Zealand

Action – Committee member Charlotte Maltin to provide contact details to the Secretariat of the group described in para 24