

# **Consumer Stakeholder Meeting Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2005 at the FSANI offices, 10A Clarendon Road, Belfast**

## **Attendees**

### **Industry Representatives**

Fionnuala Cook – General Consumer Council  
Andrew Dougal – NICHSA  
Jenny Jackson – Diabetes UK  
Rosemary McMullan – Dale Farm  
Sam Miskelly – independent stakeholder  
Sara Morrow – NICHSA

### **FSANI Officials**

Morris McAllister - Chairman  
Greg Irwin – Assistant Director  
Michael Jackson  
Maria Jennings  
Jim Ross  
Ruth Watson – Secretariat

### **Apologies**

Linda Robinson – Age Concern  
Howard Russell – Salvation Army  
Trevor Williamson – FSANI

## **1. Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting apologies from Linda Robinson, Howard Russell and Trevor Williamson and initiated a round table introductions. He went on to explain that the Forum has been set up to provide a mechanism for consumer organisations to raise matters of broad concern with the Agency on an informal basis. The meeting also enables stakeholders to look ahead with the Agency to help identify emerging issues as early as possible.

## **2. Key Developments since the last meeting**

The Chairman updated the consumer representatives on the key developments since the last meeting.

### **2.1 New Chairperson for the FSA**

The Chair noted that Dame Deirdre Hutton CBE was appointed as Chair of the Food Standards Agency on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005, replacing Sir John Krebs. He also gave an

extensive outline of Dame Deirdre Hutton's service on a range of public bodies, and her considerable experience of corporate governance, risk-based regulation and consumer policy.

## **2.2 Sudan I and Para Red incidents**

**2.2.1** The Chairman noted that following an incident in February relating to the adulteration of chilli powder with the dye Sudan I, the Agency announced in March that it planned to review the incident in order to identify lessons. In order not to prejudice the outcome of the ongoing legal proceedings, the external review of the incident involving Sudan I in Worcester sauce has been deferred until these investigations, and any possible resulting legal action, have been completed.

**2.2.2** The Chairman noted that the legal investigations may take a substantial amount of time to complete. In the interim, a Taskforce has been established to consider ways of strengthening controls in the food chain. The Chairman detailed the complement of the Incidents Taskforce, which is chaired by the FSA's Chief Executive, Dr Jon Bell. The Task Force held its first meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June and has met 3 times since then.

## **2.3 Salt Update**

**2.3.1** The Chairman stated that the second phase of the salt campaign would run from the week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> October to 20<sup>th</sup> November, with the message focussing on '6g per day'. Television and poster adverts have been confirmed and a major feature ran in the Sun newspaper. The Agency is also financially supporting a number of projects involving key stakeholder organisations. The consumer representatives welcomed this news, and Sara Morrow, NICHSA expressed an interest in working with the FSA to further its health messages.

**2.3.2** Stakeholders were informed of the Agency's consultation package on the proposed targets for levels of salt in various foods and product categories. The consultation runs from 1<sup>st</sup> August until 25<sup>th</sup> October, and final targets for the optimum levels of salt in key food categories will be published by the Agency in November. The targets in the consultation have been developed by a working group that included

representatives from all of the product sector organisations.

## **2.4 Signposting and Nutrient Profiling**

**2.4.1** The Chairman explained the differences between signposting and nutrient profiling to the stakeholders and went on to update them on the Agency's current position. The independent assessment of the FSA's signposting options has recently finished. Consumer testing was carried out in Northern Ireland in July and a review of the results is currently taking place.

**2.4.2** On 27<sup>th</sup> July the Agency published a consultation document on a proposed nutrient profiling model to support OFCOM's work to regulate the advertising and promotion of foods to children. The Chairman urged stakeholders to respond to the consultation, making their views known. A discussion followed on the promotion of foods to children, with stakeholders agreeing that schools would benefit from increased control of catering arrangements.

## **2.5 The Recruitment of new NIFAC members**

The Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee has recently renewed its complement. The Chairman detailed brief biographies of the four new members who have been appointed – Tony McCusker, Paul Archer, Professor Jack Pearce and Dr Alex McGarel. Members are usually appointed on three-year terms, which gives the Committee consistency while also providing new perspectives on a regular basis. It was noted that the Committee would be advertising for its next round of vacancies early in November.

## **2.6 Over Thirty Months Rule (OTM)**

The government has accepted the FSA's recommendation that the OTM rule should be replaced with a robust testing regime, and the Chairman outlined the detail of this. The FSA will be represented on the implementation group, which has been formed to oversee the roll-out of the regime, and will report to the FSA Board. The new regulations will be operational from 7<sup>th</sup> November.

## **2.7 Belfast Board Meeting**

The Chairman updated stakeholders on the recent FSA Board meeting which was held in Belfast on 13<sup>th</sup> October. Items on the agenda included: Protecting Consumers – the FSA’s role as a regulator; FSA Priorities for Local Authority Food Law Enforcement; and Nutrient Profiling. The full agenda and meeting papers are available on the FSA’s website. The minutes will be published on the website once they have been ratified at the next meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

### **3. Partnership Working / Taking Forward the Agency’s Strategic Plan**

- 3.1** The Assistant Director introduced this item. He noted that the Agency has faced difficulties in the past in attracting audiences from a consumer background. FSANI is seeking to address this issue, and has circulated a questionnaire to consumer stakeholders. The Assistant Director thanked those who had replied to the questionnaire and summarised the responses, welcoming thoughts and ideas from stakeholders. A discussion followed, and it was acknowledged that a wide-ranging approach was necessary to better the FSANI’s engagement with consumers. Suggestions such as improved audience targeting, varying the location of venues and re-designing agendas were identified as key considerations. It was also agreed that minutes of the last meeting would be issued with invites to the consumer forums.
- 3.2** The Assistant Director announced that the Agency’s consultation on its Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010 received over 200 responses, several of which indicated a willingness to participate in the delivery of strategic plan targets through partnership with the Agency. The final strategic plan strongly supported the intention of the FSA to work in partnership with others, and since then the FSA has been seeking to further explore how the idea of partnership can be advanced with stakeholders.
- 3.3** Stakeholders’ initial views were sought on the following questions:
- a) What does partnership mean to you, can you identify successful examples of partnership?
  - b) What are the challenges required to move from stakeholders to partners – can all stakeholders become partners?
  - c) What can the FSA do to enable stakeholders to become partners?

d) What are the barriers to successful partnership with the FSA?

- 3.4** A discussion followed on the issues surrounding partnership between the FSA and stakeholders. Work between Investing for Health and the education sector was identified as a successful example of partnership, with the recognition that health and education issues were being addressed simultaneously. It was noted that resource and priority conflicts within the FSA and stakeholder organisations present barriers to successful partnership. It was suggested that opportunities for creating partnership between organisations with mutual objectives should be explored.
- 3.5** The Chairman thanked stakeholders for their views and willingness to work, where possible, with the FSA and encouraged them to submit any further thoughts to Ruth Watson by 11<sup>th</sup> November.

#### **4 Invitees' Topics and General Issues**

The Chairman welcomed discussion on stakeholders' topics. The Agency's communication of positive messages to the consumer was discussed. An example of this would be to have a column in the rural press, like the coverage in the Ballymoney and Moyle Times. It was also recognised that the Agency should continue to publish clear and consistent health messages to consumers.

#### **5 Six Monthly Forward Look**

The Chairman updated stakeholders on forthcoming events for FSANI.

##### **5.1 New Food Hygiene Legislation**

New EU Food Hygiene Legislation will come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006, replacing a raft of hygiene regulations in place since 1964. The Chairman explained that the purpose of the regulations is to consolidate and simplify the previous regulations, noting that for the first time the legislation would apply to hygiene regulations in primary production.

## **5.2 Avian Flu**

The Chairman noted the recent outbreak of Avian Flu, advising stakeholders of the FSA's message that there is no evidence of the transmission of Avian Flu from birds. The Agency re-iterates its message that properly cooked poultry and eggs do not pose a risk to consumers.

## **6 Concluding Comments and Close**

The Chairman sought comments on the meeting. All present considered it to have been a useful exercise and looked forward to the next meeting. It was noted that the relatively low attendance may be attributed to conflicting priorities. The Chairman thanked everyone for their participation and confirmed that the next meeting will be held in March 2006.

**Ruth Watson**

**07/12/2005**