

Industry Stakeholder Meeting Monday 24th October 2005 at the FSANI offices, 10A Clarendon Road, Belfast

Attendees

Industry Representatives

Paul Archer – Dairy UK NI
Michael Bell – NI Food and Drink Association
Mark Elder – Moy Park
Gordon Orr – NI Mushroom Industry Association
Kenneth Sharkey – Ulster Farmers Union
Keith Smyton – Pork and Bacon Forum
Brenda Snowden – NI Meat Exporters Association
Ian Stevenson – Ulster Farmers Union
Mike Tempest – Livestock and Meat Commission

FSANI Officials

Morris McAllister - Chairman
Gerry McCurdy – Deputy Director
Greg Irwin – Assistant Director
Mervyn Briggs
Michael Jackson
Jim Ross
Trevor Williamson
Ruth Watson – Secretariat

Apologies

Paul Kerr – Northern Ireland Seafood Association

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that the Forum has been set up to provide a mechanism for industry 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. No additional items were identified for discussion under agenda item 4.
- 1.2** In relation to a previous action point from Mr Marquess, the Deputy Director noted that difficulties associated with the range of sampling regimes in use across the UK to monitor imported foods. Some stakeholders also raised labelling issues in connection with product origin.

2. Key Developments since the last meeting

The Chairman updated the industry 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 31st March 2005. 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 announced 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. It was also noted that several Local Authorities are, with the FSA's assistance, carrying out investigations that may lead to prosecution of certain companies involved in the incident. In order not to prejudice the outcome of these investigations 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 14th June and has met 3 times since then.

2.2.3 The Chairman announced that in light of recent incidents, the Agency is revising its Guidelines on handling incidents. These will be developed into a set of guidelines applicable to all key stakeholders. The Taskforce is being kept informed of progress with the revisions.

2.3 Salt Update

2.3.1 The Chairman stated that the second phase of the salt campaign would run from the

week commencing 10th October to 20th November, with the message focusing 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.

2.3.2 Stakeholders were informed of the Agency's consultation package on the proposed targets for levels of salt in various food product categories. The consultation runs from 1st August until 25th 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. Industry representatives welcomed this news.

2.4 Signposting and Nutrient Profiling

2.4.1 The Chairman explained the differences between signposting and nutrient profiling to 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 27th 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 detailed the profiling model, which is a simple scoring system giving points on the basis of the level of each nutrient in 100g of the food.

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 in August and September – 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.

2.6 OTM

2.6.1 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. 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 are operational from 7th November.

2.6.2 It was noted that Ian Stevenson, Ulster Farmers Union, had not received the guidance booklet for veterinary surgeons and farmers on the slaughter of cattle which are injured or showing signs of abnormalities. The Chairman explained that this may be a slight administrative oversight, and undertook to speak to DARD to ensure that the booklet was issued to the appropriate contacts.

Action – Chairman to speak to DARD to ensure that the booklet on casualty animals was issued appropriately to all veterinary surgeons and farmers.

2.6.3 The Chairman also referenced the DARD consultation on legislation to lift the beef export ban. Due to the link between this and the resultant consequential changes to controls on specified risk material (SRM), such changes, although the responsibility of the FSA, have been included in their consultation.

2.7 Belfast Board Meeting

The Chairman updated stakeholders on the recent FSA Board meeting which was held in Belfast on 13th 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 8th December.

3. Partnership Working / Taking Forward the Agency's Strategic Plan

3.1 The Assistant Director introduced this item. He noted 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.

3.2 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?

3.3 Mike Tempest, Livestock and Meat Commission, expressed an interest in seeing increased co-operation between the Agency and other bodies around more consistent nutrition messages. He also felt that there was opportunity for the Agency to work with industry stakeholders to produce guidance to consumers regarding the OTM Rule.

3.4 The Chairman thanked Mr Tempest for his views and encouraged stakeholders to submit any further thoughts to Ruth Watson by 11th November.

4 Invitees' Topics and General Issues

4.1 The Chairman introduced Mike Tempest, Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC), to present a paper entitled 'Putting the Consumer First in All Food Matters'.

4.2 In his presentation, Mr Tempest expressed the view of the LMC that the FSA should extent its remit to deal with imported food products. This view has arisen from the perceived priority the Agency places on domestic food products over imported food products. Mr Tempest went on to detail further areas where the LMC feels there is a cause for concern. Areas detailed were as follows:

- Legislation
- Traceability
- Origin Labelling
- Overseas Assurance Schemes and their Requirements

4.3 The Chairman thanked Mr Tempest for raising the issue, and undertook to circulate copies to all in attendance.

Action – Chairman to circulate copies of Mr Tempest’s paper to all in attendance.

4.4 A detailed discussion took place, with the Deputy Director clarifying the following points regarding the FSA’s role in the policing of imported foods into the country.

- 4.5**
- The Deputy Director explained that there are different sampling plans in place across the UK. This creates a difficulty in finding commonality across the board. Authorities across the UK are currently working towards formulating a sampling plan that will be used by all parties.
 - The Deputy Director also outlined the role of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in providing some assurance about the standards practised by Third Countries in relation to food. He also noted that veterinary officials in Northern Ireland monitor points of entry for imported foods.
 - Finally the Deputy Director explained the range of linkages that the FSA has (e.g. with DEFRA) to ensure that issues pertaining to food importation are raised with other countries outside the UK.

4.6 Mr Orr, Mushroom Industry Association NI, enquired if there was any way of tracking food movements inside the EU. The Chairman undertook to investigate this.

Action – Chairman to make enquiries regarding the regime for monitoring food movement inside the EU.

4.7 The Chairman concluded the discussion, noting that the Agency’s role is to ensure that robust controls for imported foods are in place and to identify defined points of entry. The Agency continues to work with a joined up approach with regards to imported foods.

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 1st January 2006, replacing a raft of hygiene regulations in place since 1964. The Chairman explained that the purpose of the different regulations is to:

- Simplify and consolidate existing rules
- Provide a flexible approach to food safety management
- Provide for hygiene controls from 'farm to fork', i.e. covers Primary Production
- Endorse HACCP principles.

The Chairman noted that seminars have been held to inform industry representatives of the impact of the changes.

5.2 The Official Feed and Food Control Regulations (NI) 2005

The Chairman informed industry representatives of the progress of the Official Feed and Food Control Regulations (NI) 2005. The public consultation to the Regulations was completed in June 2005, and it is anticipated that they will come into effect from 1st January 2006. The chairman explained in detail the impact of the Regulations.

The aims and objectives of the Regulations are as follows:

- The aim of the EU Regulation is to create a more comprehensive, integrated, risk-based, EU wide 'farm to fork' approach to official controls.
- The objective is to improve the consistency and effectiveness of controls across the EU and, as a consequence raise standards of food safety and consumer protection and provide a more level playing field for businesses.

5.3 Foodborne Disease Strategy

5.3.1 Poultry and red meat, HACCP, and hygiene education have been identified as priorities for the Agency's foodborne disease strategy. Work in these areas will continue for the next year along with the development of the appropriate approaches and interventions that will contribute towards meeting the new targets in the Agency's

Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010. The Chairman briefed those present on the Agency's aims and activities planned for the next 12 months, noting that the date of the workshop meeting in November would be confirmed in due course.

Action –Confirm and circulate the date of the workshop meeting scheduled for November in Belfast.

- 5.3.2** Paul Archer, Dairy UK NI asked if dead poultry meat was a conductor for Avian Flu. The Chairman explained that this is not the case. The Agency's message is that properly cooked poultry poses no risk to human health. He noted that the Avian Flu pandemic is an animal welfare issue, and not an issue for the food supply chain.

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. The Chairman thanked everyone for their participation and confirmed that the next meeting will be held in March 2006.

Ruth Watson

22/11/2005

Appendix 1 – Table of Action Points

	Action	To be actioned by
1	To speak to DARD to ensure that the booklet on casualty animals was issued appropriately to all veterinary surgeons and farmers.	Chairman
2	Chairman to circulate copies of Mr Tempest's paper to all in attendance.	Chairman
3	To make enquiries regarding the regime for monitoring food movement inside the EU.	Chairman
4	To confirm and circulate the date of the workshop meeting scheduled for November in Belfast.	Secretariat