

Scottish Food Advisory Committee
Holyrood Hotel, Edinburgh
23 May, 2007
09:30 – 12:30

Open Session

Present

Committee Members:

Prof. Graeme Millar, Chair
Prof. Bill Reilly, Deputy Chair
Prof. Charlotte Maltin
Dr. David Cameron
Dr. Catherine Brady
Moyra Burns
Prof. Brian Ratcliffe
Catherine Benton
Amanda O'Donoghue
Jim Arbuckle

FSAS Officials:

Jim Thomson, Assistant Director, FSAS
Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS
Jane Ferries, Committee Secretary, FSAS
Melanie Martin, Committee Administrator, FSAS
Emma Lane, Senior Communications Officer, FSAS

GUESTS

Geoff Tierney, 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 Edinburgh.
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 were discussed to allow a decision to be taken on whether participation would be correct.
4. **Jim Arbuckle declared an interest as a primary producer, Charlotte Maltin declared an interest as an employee of Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and Catherine Brady declared an interest as an auditor for meat processing plants** for items 3 & 5 on the agenda.
5. The Chair allowed all three members to take part in discussions for agenda items 3 & 5.
6. The Chair asked for items of AOB. Two items were raised.
7. There were apologies from Dr John Cowden (SFAC) and Dr George Paterson, Director FSAS.

2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

8. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting, 28 February 2007 held in Glasgow.
9. The Chair highlighted that the action under Para 9 was discharged with (Information paper 1 contained in the papers)
10. Members asked if FSAS had considered having a presence at Beeftech 2007.
11. The Secretariat informed the Committee that FSAS would not be having a presence at Beeftech 2007 however welcomed feedback from any member attending for consideration in future event plans.
12. Charlotte Maltin informed members that she would be attending the event through QMS and would report to the Committee.
13. Members asked if there was a confirmed date for Andrew Wadge, Chief Scientist, FSA HQ attending SFAC.
14. The Agency informed the members that Andrew Wadge would be present at the Open SFAC meeting in August.
15. Members asked if the Folate briefing session in FSA HQ had taken place on 17 April.

16. The Agency informed members that the meeting did not take place however, FSA Board members attended a closed briefing session prior to their discussions at Open sessions in May.
17. Members agreed that the minute was a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 28 February 2007.

ITEM 3
REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF OFFICIAL CONTROLS IN APPROVED MEAT PLANTS
GEOFF TIERNEY REPORT

18. The Chair welcomed Geoff Tierney, FSA HQ to the table who informed members of the objective of the review, the work carried out to date and questions that had emerged relevant to the possible recommendations from the independent review.
19. Geoff asked the Committee for their comments and advice on the information they had heard.
20. **Prof. Bill Reilly declared an interest as a Veterinary Surgeon.**
21. In a wide-ranging discussion, the Committee raised the following points:-
 - Why had the FSA subsidy to Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) risen from £3m in 2000 to more than £30m in 2007/08?
 - FSA were in a better position to change the delivery controls now compared to 20 years ago.
 - Efficiency to deliver these charges was a legitimate driver, rather than a simple cost-cutting exercise. It was recognised regulations from the EU limited the options to reduce Official Controls however, flexibility needed to be built in to whichever option was chosen to respond to future changes in regulations.
 - It was important to remember that food safety policy in Scotland was the responsibility of Scottish Ministers however; the funding for the MHS came from Westminster and therefore raised an interesting devolution question.
 - Particularly in Scotland, it was important to acknowledge the number of isolated areas and low through plants there are in Scotland and this should be focused on in the review.

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- Were there any examples in Europe that the UK model could be based on to provide best practice?
- In relation to the two models explained members asked how the FSA Board could be certain and confident that the transformed MHS model would be the most competitive option.
- The main question for the FSA Board to consider would be whether the MHS could improve sufficiently or whether there was a need for outsourcing to other providers to achieve the scale of change required. There was also an issue whether MHS could really transform or if the culture was too deeply embedded. More flexibility and a lighter touch was possibly needed.
- Additional costs would eventually be passed onto consumers or taxpayers. Costs put onto consumers would mean the extra cost was placed on those who chose to eat meat whereas costs placed on taxpayers would mean that everyone would pay extra.
- Producers could not pass the extra costs onto the consumer because retailers would not allow this and this could therefore lead to a reduction in production.
- The FSA needed to decide if themselves as a strategy and policy organisation or whether it wanted to run businesses and deliver front line service.
- One of the options was to look at using Local Authorities in the low through put areas. Whilst this may not be a problem in Scotland the Agency asked if there had been any feedback from this option from Local Authorities in England.

22. Geoff Tierney responded to the members questions stating

- Reasons for the increase in subsidy were due to MHS being asked to carry out more work by Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and around the 30-month rule schemes therefore their costs have increased. Rates charged to industry have not been increased by FSA.
- FSA had studied other EU member states including France and Holland and are due to visit Denmark and have looked at their practices in detail.

- If the FSA Board chose the transformed MHS model they would have to deal with MHS more as a contractor and have a specific budget for them to adhere to.
- The proposal was not to transfer responsibility back to Local Authorities and discussions had taken place with LACOR's who will be attending a meeting to consider how this may be an option for cost effectiveness in certain regions.

23. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

Nigel Miller, Vice President, National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS)

24. Mr Miller stated that some of the problems were a hang over from the charging regime which had not kept pace with inflation. He added there should be no option to look for extra money from the industry. Moving meat inspectors to a private contractor was increasing another interface which was not necessary as suggested in the second option. Costs could be reduced if the Food Business Operators (FBO's) were given more responsibility and the Meat Hygiene Inspectors and vets did much less.

Alistair Donaldson, Executive Manager, Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW)

25. Mr Donaldson commended the exercise and recognised it was an independent review. He also recognised the well organised engagement with the industry and added a fundamental point was to recognise what was needed to deliver safe food and the risk based approach needed to be explored in more detail. The principal of cost recovery brought responsibility and there was an opportunity to explore this in more detail. More interface would be needed with industry and the competent authority.

Dr Chris Lutton

26. Asked if the Chair felt the Committee was well balanced. He also commented on the Committees' use of bottled water.

27. The Chair responded by ensuring Dr Lutton and observers that members on the Committee were chosen according to their background and expertise. He added that the use of bottled water is dependant on the venue.

Jayantha Munasinghe, Student, Napier University

28. Recognised the increases in cost of MHS to the FSA. He also pointed out the fact the food chain could be used for terrorism and commended the Agency for their work.

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29. The Chair thanked Geoff Tierney for his presentation and informed him that the Committees views would be fed back to him by the end of May to assist in the production of the final report, which will be presented to the FSA Board in July.

ACTION: Members to return questionnaires issued by the MHS Options Review Team in FSA HQ, to Secretariat by 29 May.

ACTION: Secretariat to forward SFAC views to MHS Options Review Team by 31 May.

ITEM 4

EFFECTS OF THE RESULTS OF SCOTTISH ELECTIONS

30. The Chair outlined the new Scottish Government with a minority Scottish National Party (SNP) government. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Well-being was Nicola Sturgeon and the FSA was likely to fall within the the Public Health Ministers portfolio, Shona Robison, which supports the Cabinet Secretary post. He added that a meeting had been provisionally set up for the Agency to meet with Ms Robison on 5 July and would report back to the Committee.
31. Of particular interest in the SNP manifesto was the wish for Scotland to have a stronger input into European and international negotiations. Particularly relevant for the Agency as over 90% of food and feed legislation is governed by European law.

ITEM 5

FSA CONSULTATION ON SAT FATS

32. The Chair directed the Committee to the consultation contained in their papers – ‘Draft Saturated Fat and Energy Intake Programme’ and asked Charlotte Maltin to report on the Stakeholder video conference she attended on 18 May.
33. Charlotte gave a brief overview of the video conference where the findings of the Consumer Qualitative research on Fats report were presented. The FSA commissioned this report to identify how consumers’ understanding influenced their dietary choices and to assist the Agency with specific consumer education.
34. Key findings of this report included:
 - Consumers were not making consistent distinctions between saturated and total fat.
 - Most consumers did not monitor saturated fats.

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- Consumption of saturated fats occurred in consumers diets when they were most likely to have a low resistance to consuming fat i.e. too busy, in an emotion state.
 - Consumers felt that food messages should be tailored to lifestyles.
 - Consistent requests were made for advice and guidance for exercise, balancing foods and variety within the diet.
 - Messages on fats and saturated fat should be high on the agenda for FSA.
 - There was a perception that 'low fat' labelled products meant high in additives.
 - Consumers would like a consistent approach to labelling systems in supermarkets.
 - Advice on portion sizes was needed.
 - Consumers believed it was the retailers responsibility to reformulate.
35. Charlotte outlined how the 'Balance of Good Health Leaflet' produced by FSA could be used or adapted to assist with educating consumers about fats.
36. Members held a detailed discussion highlighting the following
- The success of the '5 a day' message was commended and it was felt messages on fats should be included in this.
 - More effort was needed to promote change in diet rather than the focus of 'do not eat' foods.
 - The foods chosen by the target audiences should be focused on rather than the target audience themselves.
 - Data from other reports including the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) should be looked at also.
 - Questions in the consultation were interlinked and it would be difficult to take them into isolation.
 - Recommendations for approaches to fish shops would be difficult to endorse, especially in Scotland.
 - It was apparent that more consumers were reading the food labels and this could be a tool to get the 'fats' message across.
 - Poverty played a part in some consumer's choice and this would be difficult to influence. Reformulation did increase costs in some cases.
 - It was important to note that the consultation covered energy intake also.
 - Working with industry was important and encouraging small changes (such as a change in source fat) would help with the overall picture and FSA should promote this and not focus on major changes.
37. Members asked the Agency the following questions:-
- How much fat within the food chain was British and how much was imported?

- What research was taking place to support the industry for the removal of fats?
38. The Agency informed the Committee they would return with the answers at a later date.
 39. The Agency informed the Committee that the healthy balance plate would be re launched later this year. It would be flexible to include all foods to ensure a healthy balance. The consultation and issues surrounding it would remain on the FSA agenda for sometime and officials therefore recommended a SFAC Sub Group was formed for this purpose. The sub group should also work closely with the SFAC EU Labelling Sub Group.
 40. The Chair agreed that members should form a Sub Group and asked them to indicate their interest to the Secretariat in order to meet to agree a response to the consultation by 19 June.
 41. Members requested that the combined response from the sub group must be circulated amongst all members for agreement.
 42. The Chair opened the debate to observers

Lynne Moody, Bell Bakers Ltd.

43. Ms Moody informed the Committee that Bells Bakers Ltd had been asked by retailers to removed hydrogenated oil and this had in some cases resulted in increased saturated fat levels. In addition, some consumers had reported that smaller portion sizes were insufficient

Michelle Cairney, Bell Bakers Ltd.

44. Ms Cairney informed the Committee that Bells Bakers Ltd had worked to reduce fat and salt and this was not seen to make a difference to sales but it did not get the impact they had hoped for either. Consumers perceived removal of fats as a healthier option

Kirk Hunter, Director, Dairy UK

45. Mr Hunter stated that the consultation should look at the economic consequences of the proposed changes. He asked what the dairy industry would do with the surplus fat that would be generated – at the moment this fat goes into products such as cakes and biscuits. There needed to be a mechanism to take this fat out of the food chain, in order for fat reduction to be economically sound for the dairy industry.

Alan Hardie, Managing Director, Paterson Arran Ltd

46. Mr Hardie informed the Committee that Paterson Arran had dropped some fats by changing the oils in some products but this was technically extremely difficult. Consumer messages (such as Walkers) were succeeding in getting their message across and should be adopted.

Jayantha Munasinghe, Student, Napier University

47. Mr Munasinghe highlighted that the two Edinburgh Universities and NHS Lothian were not on the consultation interested parties list.
48. The Chair responded by informing observers the consultation document was openly available on the FSA website and the list consisted of organisations who had expressed an interest on this matter.

ACTION Secretariat to issue all members with a hard copy of the Consumer Qualitative research on Fats report.

ACTION Members to form a sub group for Sat Fats.

ACTION Sub group to meet to discuss response to consultation.

ACTION Sub Group response to be circulated to all SFAC members for agreement before forwarding to FSA.

ACTION SFAC response to be submitted to FSA by 19 June.

**ITEM 6
FSAS
FSA POLICY ISSUES UPDATE**

49. The Chair directed the Committee to the information paper on the EU Labelling Regime and commented that the Sub group would be meeting on the 15 June to discuss this in more detail before reporting to the Committee on 4 July.
50. The Agency gave a brief overview of the Better Regulation Agenda and highlighted that members would be discussing the Cabinet Office consultation 'Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Bill' on 4 July. FSAS would provide a covering note asking SFAC to respond on specific items of the consultation relating to Scotland and food issues. This item would also be on the agenda for the FSA Board meeting on 19 July.
51. The Chair and Deputy Chair reported on the recent FSA Board discussion on Folate where the Board had agreed in principle to recommend

mandatory fortification but had asked for further information to discuss at the FSA Board Open meeting in June to decide which foods/flour would be fortified. They highlighted that in the FSA Board agreement there needed to be a control of voluntary fortification and a targeted Public health campaign.

52. Members of the Committee asked how the FSA Board proposed monitoring the effects of fortification. They noted that the FSA Board had largely followed the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) recommendations and therefore suggested that they followed SACN's full recommendation in using bread flour as the vehicle. They also acknowledged that technically and legally the control of voluntary fortification would be an issue.
53. The Chair informed the Committee that the FSA Board had not discussed details of monitoring but there was a concern to ensure monitoring of any harm of fortification which would be detected quite quickly, unlike benefits that would take longer to assess.

**ITEM 7
AOB/PUBLIC SESSION**

54. Some members of the Committee attended the FSAS Microbiological Safety of Food Research Day on 17 May in Edinburgh. They commended FSAS on the organisation and structure of the meeting including the papers and presentations delivered on the day. It was suggested an attendee list would have been useful.
55. The Chair informed members of the Hygiene, Healthy Eating and Activity in Primary Schools (HHEAPS) project, which was being developed through the collaboration of the Scottish Football Association and the Scottish Rugby Union. The project would be rolled out across Scotland and aimed to reach over 7000 Primary 4 to 6 children during the next academic year.
56. The Chair asked observers for questions for FSAS or SFAC.

Dr Chris Lutton

57. Dr Lutton asked if the Committee and Agency felt they were in the public eye enough.
58. The Chair responded by stating that surveys had been conducted and had shown that the FSA were much higher in the minds of the British population than in previous years. Campaigns would continue to help FSA get their message across.

59. The Chair informed members and observers that the next meeting would be on 4 July in Aberdeen.
60. The meeting closed at 12:35.