

**Scottish Food Advisory Committee  
3 September 2008  
St Magnus House  
Aberdeen**

**Open Session**

Present

Committee Members:

Prof.Grame Millar - Chair

Bill Reilly

David Cameron

John Cowden

Brian Ratcliffe

Charlotte Maltin

Christopher Trotter

Carrie Ruxton

Amanda O'Donoghue

Catherine Benton

FSAS Officials:

Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS

George Paterson, Director FSAS

Jim Thomson, Assistant Director FSAS

Jane Ferries, Committee Secretary, FSAS

Melanie Martin, Committee Administrator, FSAS

Anna Whyte, Head of Scientific Branch, FSAS

Susan Pryde, Head of Food Standards, Diet & Nutrition Branch, FSAS

Elsbeth MacDonald, Head of Annual Food Chain & Novel Foods Branch, FSAS

David Carruthers, Head of TSE Policy, 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 Aberdeen.
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 are discussed to allow a decision to be taken on whether participation would be correct.

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4. The Chair asked for items of AOB. Six items were raised.
5. There were apologies from Moyra Burns, SFAC member.

### **2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

6. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting 3 July.
7. The Chair discharged the following actions:-

**Under Para 31 PAGE 6** – SFAC formed a sub group to discuss the Scores on The Doors consultation. They met on 29<sup>th</sup> July to formulate a response. The formal response was submitted to FSAS on 14<sup>th</sup> August.

#### **Under Para 61 PAGE 10**

- A SFAC member attended the Saturated Fat stakeholder meeting via video conference on 15 July.
  - Only one comment and one ‘no comment’ was received from SFAC for the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) plan. The item had therefore been pulled from the agenda. No SFAC response was issued to SCC.
  - The Future Implementation of the Common agriculture Policy in Scotland consultation was discussed under Agenda item 4.
  - The ‘Healthy Eating, Active Living’ document was issued to all members on 12 July. This document will also be referred to in Agendas Item 5.
8. Members agreed the minute was a true and accurate reflection of the meeting held on 3 July 2008.
  9. The Committee commended the response from the Scores on the Doors working group adding it was a well written and comprehensive document.

### **ITEM 3 BSE Testing in Cattle**

**Charlotte Maltin declared an interest as an employee of Quality Meat Scotland and left the table for all discussions on Agenda Items 3 and 4.**

10. The Chair welcomed David Carruthers and Elspeth MacDonald to the table. David gave a brief presentation covering the following:-

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- BSE Testing
  - TSE Roadmap
  - Testing proposals
  - Current position on proposals
  - Position on BSE in the UK – confirmed cases by year of birth
  - Confirmed cases from 1999 – 2007 showing active/passive surveillance
  - Risk assessment – European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA)
  - Conclusions
11. Elspeth Macdonald gave a brief overview of the main issues raised at the FSAS stakeholder meeting held on 2 September in Edinburgh including:-
- General acceptance of the risk assessment process and conclusions which had been reached.
  - Acceptance of the three age groups European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) had considered. Preference was for the oldest age limit of 60 months as most stakeholders present felt this would be acceptable in terms of risk.
  - Stakeholders indicated the Commission needed to move more quickly with regard to the TSE roadmap.
  - An analysis of costs to the industry was needed as changing the age of testing could lead to increased costs for processors handling different categories of cattle.
  - There was a need for legislation to be developed in parallel
  - Concerns were raised with possible impact that the age limit change could have on the cow beef trade due to the possibility of plants not considering handling cattle at an older age due to additional costs.
  - Consumer confidence was critical throughout the changes and consumers needed to be constantly kept informed of the progress of these changes
12. The Chair opened the debate to the Committee.
13. Members raised the following points:
- What would the cost advantage be when considering lifting the age to 48 months as opposed to 60 months?

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- Was there a model to show how many cases of human infection occurred?
- What was the sensitivity of the tests at present?
- Was it possible for bovines to still be fed on mammalian protein feed?
- How could FSA and/or SFAC feed into the UK position in discussions with the European Commission?
- Was there a possibility Scotland could go down a separate route to the rest of the UK?

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

- Some modelling had been done to assess the reduction in testing of different age groups and this showed that lifting the age to 48 months would reduce the number of tests by approximately 25% and with 60 months it would reduce tests by approximately 40%. These figures were unlikely to have a pro rata effect on actual costs as the costs involved included the analysis and the dependence on the number of abattoirs undertaking the work.
- Similar calculations linking bovine infectivity to human infection were undertaken during the Over Thirty Month (OTM) review when looking at maintaining the OTM rule in place and also replacing the OTM rule with BSE testing. This showed an increase in risk only by a miniscule amount. On worse case assumptions, with possible human CJD epidemic, the increase with the lifting of the age group would even less than in previous calculations.
- The test is 100% sensitive with cattle which are clinically infected. The tests are carried out on the brain stem however prions are only detected in the late stage due to the nature of the disease. The test was not so sensitive when detecting diseased animals.
- The requirement was to adhere to the feed ban which came into place in 2001 and this continued to be monitored.

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- It was expected the Commission would publicise its decision on lifting the age limit in late September 2008 with regard. The FSA Board would then hold discussions in October 2008 and their advice would be provided to Ministers to assist them when making their decisions to agree to the rise of age for testing. The new rise in age was due to come into force on 1 January 2009. The agreement of final age would be one of the age limits that EFSA considered (36, 48 and 60 months). The UK application submitted by DEFRA to the European Commission was to allow the UK to carry out implementation of the new age if required and not to decide on the new age limit, and it has been made clear that the UK's application is without prejudice to the FSA Board's advice.
  - In theory having different arrangements in Scotland may be possible as this was a devolved area. The European Commission should produce legislation to allow member states to raise the age rather than require member states to raise the age. The Scottish Government was comfortable with the UK position at this point, and to date Scottish stakeholders had not identified any particular different requirements that should apply in Scotland.
15. The Agency added Ministers would also receive advice from Chief Medical Officers throughout the UK, to assist with making their final decision. With regard to Scotland taking a different route, stakeholders at the meeting on 2 September did not raise any issues which would indicate this would be the case.
16. Members added
- it was important for future discussions, particularly with the FSA Board, to include human infectious doses as well as bovine infectious doses.
  - it was important that messages concerning changes to the age limit were made clear to all consumers.
  - an analysis of the cost impact to consumers and the industry was needed for future discussions.
  - they agreed to the principal of raising the age and that the evidence presented to them aided their decision.
17. The Chair opened the debate to observers.

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### **David Atkinson – Chair – Scottish Churches Rural Group**

18. Mr Atkinson asked the Agency to ensure consumers were informed at a level they would understand to ensure confidence was maintained.
19. The Chair thanked David Carruthers and Elspeth MacDonald for the comprehensive presentation and valuable comments throughout the Committee's discussions

#### **ITEM 4**

##### **Future Implementation of the Common Agriculture Policy in Scotland.**

20. The Chair gave a brief introduction to the consultation document before opening the debate to the Committee.
21. Members did not feel there were any particular issues within the consultation pertinent to their role within SFAC; however issues such as water quality issues and reduction in payments to farmers within Scotland and the impact this would have on the promotion of Scottish produce and cost to the consumer were raised. Water quality issues were also raised.
22. A member asked for an explanation from the Agency with regard to the impact to the dairy industry with the gradual reduction in milk quotas.
23. The Agency informed members the information on milk quotas would be provided to the Committee at a later date. They added that they would continue to watch aspects of the consultation to ensure food safety was not compromised, particularly when working with the Scottish Government Rural Department and taking forward the Food Policy conversation work plan.
24. The Committee agreed the Agency should continue their working partnerships with other departments who would be looking at this consultation in more detail. FSA needed to ensure areas of work concerning food safety and where there was possibly an impact on consumers should be brought back to SFAC as appropriate.

**ACTION: FSA to provide information with regards to the reduction of milk quota as stated in the Future Implementation of the Common Agriculture Policy in Scotland consultation and to provide the impact this would have on the dairy industry.**

#### **ITEM 5**

##### **'Eating for Health' progress and challenges in Scotland**

25. The Chair welcomed Susan Pryde and Anna Whyte to the Table. They gave a brief presentation covering the following:
  - Setting the Scottish Policy context
  - Setting the UK Policy context
  - Strategic Aims including Salt & Saturated Fat targets and front-of-pack-labelling scheme.

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- Saturated Fat & Energy Programme – 4 Prong Plan
- Adopters, Supporters, Core Principles and Evaluation of the front-of-pack-labelling scheme.
- EU Food Information Regulation
- Public health nutrition advice to Scottish Government led public sector working groups
- Research and Surveillance FSAS funded projects

26. Members asked the following questions:-

- Did the Agency see the London Olympics 2012 and Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014 as a way to promote an 'active living' element to their work and promote interest in this, particularly with young people?
- Did FSAS share budgets within their working partnerships established particularly with regard to research projects?
- How would SFAC and FSAS become involved in the development of the National Food & Drink Policy?
- What efforts are being made to target the more deprived areas of Scotland?
- What was being done to encourage and influence the Public Sector with regard to healthy eating?
- Would there be any opportunity to work with the Care Commission and nursery groups to encourage healthy eating at an early age?
- Could the 'Healthy Start Voucher Scheme' be widened to include all pregnant women?
- There were concerns with the nutritional standards in hospitals and members asked why snacks such as biscuits and cakes were still included in these?
- What were the top sources of Saturated Fats in Scotland?
- What would the evidence within the National Diet & Nutrition Survey (NDNS) show with regard to intake level of selenium?

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27. The Agency gave the following responses:-

- The Agency was actively involved with London Olympic Games Organising Committee (LOGOC) and a number of proposals were being put forward by colleagues in FSA HQ to look at the promotion of health balanced diets and physical activity in the run up to and during the games. FSAS sit on the Healthier sub group for the 2014 Commonwealth Games and were involved in promotion of the above areas through this route. The Hygiene, Healthy Eating and Activity in Primary Schools (HHEAPS project) model is being considered to be adopted for these events.
- FSAS were actively developing joint funded projects with the Scottish Government Health and Well Being Directorate, The Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health and the Chief Scientists Office to ensure a joint up approach.
- There were 5 work streams being used to develop the National Food & Drink Policy and FSAS were actively involved in these. FSAS also sit on the Strategic Overarching Group for the 5 work streams and would establish how best the Agency and SFAC could become involved as work progresses. The Strategic Group was made up of Government officials, Scottish Ministers, Chairs of the 5 work streams and four food champions.
- The Health Eating Active Living policy document had a heavy emphasis on health and equalities and the Scottish Government £40 million additional spending within the next 3 years would be focused on these areas.
- The first stage was the Government commitment of the 'Healthy Living Award' to be obtained by all hospitals for staff and visitor canteen by March 2009 and a further commitment to the 'Healthier Living Award' by 2011. In schools 'Hungry for Success' has been in place since 2002 and the Care Commission would audit these standards to ensure they were being implemented. Further work on this would be undertaken within National Food & Drink Policy work
- The work with Care Commission at present was to provide nutritional standards. They would then implement them in partnerships with Scottish Government. There was guidance for nurseries produced by NHS Health Scotland for early years setting. Scottish Government had prioritised children in residential settings and would probably target residential homes for the elderly in future work. This would prevent a two tier system.

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- Scottish Government were looking at the Healthy Start Voucher Scheme and could not widen this scheme to other recipients until discussions had taken place with Westminster.
- Biscuits and cakes were still available and considered part of the nutritional standards in hospitals due the large proportion of elderly patients and a large portion of these patients being malnourished. A high calorie intake was required.
- A note containing information regarding saturated fat sources would be issued to members at a later date.
- The NDNS collected data on selenium status through blood samples and discussions were taking place on the interpretation of this data.

### **Carrie Ruxton declared an interest as a nutrition advisor to the horticultural development company which represents UK fruit and vegetable growers**

28. Carrie asked the following question-
  - What was being done to promote consumption of fruit and vegetables in children and adults? ***(The Chair felt this was a conflict of interest however allowed the question for information to other members)***
29. The Agency gave the following answer
  - 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day was part of the makeup of a healthy balanced diet and this was promoted by all health directorates & departments and FSA throughout the UK.
30. Members felt it was important to focus not only on improving the health deprived and hard to reach areas but on Scotland as a whole.
31. Some members raised issue with the traffic light labelling used by the Agency and asked if this could be looked at again.
32. The Agency informed members there was a great deal of consumer research underpinning the traffic light labelling and that low (green) nutrition levels of salt, saturated fat and sugar were determined by the European Commission within the current Nutrition and Health claims legislation. Scottish consumer research showed they were able to interpret the traffic light system.
33. Members asked for clear concise messages (such as traffic light labelling) to be put to the public and an evaluation of messages should be undertaken to ensure they are being understood.
34. The Chair opened the debate to the audience.

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### David Atkinson – Chair – Scottish Churches Rural Group

35. Mr Atkinson questioned the effectiveness of the 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Communication needed to be clear and targeted in different ways depending on the audience. He added it was important to look at healthy eating messages and the rise in food prices. More focus should be considered with the selling point of various food products containing healthy elements. He added he was pleased to see research on Selenium was continuing.

### Alan Rowe – Scotland Food & Drink

36. Mr Rowe highlighted there had been consideration with regard to promotion of health benefits in mainstream products.
37. The Agency informed the Committee of 3 key strands where SFAC could become involved in the future and forward work plans including the FSA Strategic Plan, the Scottish obesity strategy being developed by Scottish Government and work streams throughout the National Food & Drink Policy. They added they would produce a document explaining the 5 work streams of the food policy and would provide regular updates on the progress of these at future meetings.
38. The Chair thanked Susan and Anna for the presentation and paper produced for the Committee.

**ACTION: FSAS to provide SFAC with a copy of Sugar Intake Survey**

**ACTION: FSAS to provide SFAC with a copy of Saturated fat sources**

**ACTION FSA to provide SFAC with a copy of nutritional standards for nurseries produced by NHS Scotland**

**ACTION: FSAS to provide members with a brief of all work streams in the National Food & Drink Policy and provide an update at regular Open meetings.**

## ITEM 6 AOCB/PUBLIC SESSION

39. The Chair announced the retirement of Director of FSAS (Dr George Paterson) which will take place in June 2009.
40. The Committee agreed to respond to the Scottish Government consultation 'Scottish Aquaculture – A Fresh Start'. They would also set up a sub group.
41. Members were informed of a new Government body 'Consumer Focus Scotland' which will replace the Scottish Consumer Council as of the 1 October 2008.
42. SFAC members were asked to put forward suggestions for the FSAS Communication Plan 2009-2010 to the Secretariat by 10<sup>th</sup> October.

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43. Members and observers were informed of the advert for the SFAC and FSA Scottish Board member vacancy which had gone to press and would run until 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008.
44. John Cowden gave an update on the salmonella agona outbreak in UK and Ireland.
45. The next meeting will be held on 29 October 2008 in Dundee.
46. The meeting closed at 15:40

**ACTION: SFAC to form a working group for the Aquaculture consultation  
ACTION FSAS/Secretariat to arrange a briefing session with Scottish Government officials and SFAC Aquaculture working group.**

**ACTION: SFAC Aquaculture working group to submit final draft response to the consultation by 17th October 2008.**

**ACTION: SFAC to discuss and agree final draft response to Aquaculture consultation at the October Open meeting.**