

The Scottish Food Advisory Committee
Marriott Hotel, Argyle Street, Glasgow
09:30 – 12:30

Open Session

Present

Committee Members:

Graeme Millar, Chair
Bill Reilly, Deputy Chair
Charlotte Maltin
David Cameron
Catherine Brady
Moyra Burns
Brian Ratcliffe
Catherine Benton
John Cowden

FSAS Officials:

George Paterson, Director, FSAS
Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director, FSAS
Jane Ferries, Committee Secretary, FSAS
Melanie Martin, Committee Administrator, FSAS
Heather Peace, Senior Scientific Officer, FSAS
Emma Lane, Senior Communications Officer, FSAS
Elspeth MacDonald, Head of Animal Food Chain and Novel Foods Branch, FSAS

Guests:

David Hart, Head of Meat Hygiene Business & Meat Plant Approvals, FSA
Maria McCann, Scottish Executive Education Department
Prof. David Stone, Glasgow University

ITEM 1

Chair's Introduction and welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed members, guests and observers to the open meeting of the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC). The Committee was pleased to be in Glasgow.
2. The role of the Scottish Food Advisory Committee is to provide advice to the Food Standards Agency 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.
4. The Chairman asked for items of AOB. Two items were raised.
5. There were apologies from Jim Thomson (Assistant Director FSAS), Amanda O'Donoghue and Jim Arbuckle.

ITEM 2

Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting

6. The Chair directed the Committee to the minutes from the previous meeting.
7. The Committee agreed that the minutes were a true record and accurate reflection of the meeting on 26 April 2006.

ITEM 2A

EColi O157 UPDATE

8. Committee members received an update from the Agency on the Ecoli O157 outbreak in South Lanarkshire highlighting that a second premises had been closed for precautionary measures and further details would become known from the Official Control Team as investigations continued.

ITEM 3

Folic Acid

9. [The Chair welcomed Professor David Stone from Glasgow University and Heather Peace from FSAS to the table who presented a paper based on Committee questions asked at a previous meeting. It was explained that the Agency consultation would be delayed until autumn to allow the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and Committee on Carcinogenicity to consider and advise on new scientific evidence. The Committee would get an opportunity to respond to the Agency Consultation in late September 2006, with the Board finalising its advice to Ministers in Spring 2007.

10. Professor Stone explained how neural tube defects differed in Scotland to other cases throughout the UK and the rest of the world and that the data available highlighting these cases in Scotland was poor. He also added that observations should be made of other countries such as the USA, that have fortification already in place. He also considered the whole folate debate would provide a good opportunity to address and focus on the wider issue of nutrition of the elderly.
11. After a detailed discussion Committee members agreed that more data would be needed to make a decision on this topic, such as evidence that the level of fortification under consideration would lead to a meaningful reduction in neural tube defects.
12. The Chair opened the discussion to observers and there was a clear agreement that nutrition of the elderly should be an area for FSA to focus on.
13. The Chair thanked Professor David Stone, Heather Peace and observers for their comments and contributions to the discussions and assured the Committee that this topic would return once the consultation had been issued.

ITEM 4

'Improving the Health & Nutrition of Scotland's Children'

14. The Chair welcomed Maria McCann from the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) who gave a detailed presentation to the Committee highlighting the proposals set out in the consultation entitled 'Improving the Health and Nutrition of Scotland's Children'
15. The Chair opened the discussion to the Committee and asked for their thoughts on the consultation.
16. The Agency highlighted that the FSA UK Board were fully aware of this consultation.
17. Members had concerns over packed lunches and the nutrient standards of these, in particular in relation to primary school children whose parents were unable to afford the healthy options available. They also felt that in some schools there was a stigma attached to children who were provided with free school meals and hoped that this Bill would help to extinguish this.

18. Members felt that the concept of this Bill was to improve the health of Scotland's children and that this could only be achieved if the uptake of school meals increased. They felt that variation and choice within 'healthy' school meals were key issues to improve the uptake and that meeting the standards set out should ensure that the food remained appetising to children.
19. There was confusion with members as they felt some of the proposals within the Bill were much broader than just school meals (e.g. providing breakfast, healthy snacks throughout the day) and therefore had concerns how nutrient standards would be defined and measured over such a varied range of foods and different age groups. There were also concerns with how the promotion of school meals would be achieved and how the success of this would be measured. Members felt that the concept of the 'health promoting school' was one that should be commended, however, there were concerns with the inspection process of schools and how progress would be measured.
20. Members agreed the principal of the Bill however; there were concerns over weak areas within the document and the way in which the seven specific questions were presented with yes or no answering. Committee members highlighted that the proposed working group would be crucial to ensure that the correct criteria were set and that this proposal could be monitored effectively. Members also felt that assistance to schools should be provided such as extra funding for improving catering facilities/dining halls and extra resource for initiatives such as staggered meals times.
21. SEED informed the Committee that they would address the pack lunch issue by working with parents throughout schools and that basic ingredients for healthy options did not necessarily represent a more expensive option. It was also noted that the Agency had developed guidance to support this issue. Investments in schools have been made to take into account implications for management of dining and the overall environment. Maria also informed the Committee that the short life-working group will define the nutrient standards set out in the Bill and guidance would be given to all schools and Local Authorities to ensure they would be able to measure their success.
22. The Chair opened the debate to observers.
23. Members of the audience commented that this Bill should not only look at school meals but should also address the culture of food in the country and asked that FSA and SE look constructively at introducing practical food skills into the school curriculum.

24. Observers also commented that good nutrition should begin at home and asked what was being done to help make parents choose the healthier options and if there were any thoughts of making home economics compulsory in schools.
25. SEED informed the Committee and observers that they were aware parents were an important part of the whole picture and that Local Authorities have encouraged parents, particularly at a pre school level, to get involved in Hungry for Success initiatives. They further added there were no current plans to make Home Economics compulsory, as this was not the preferred approach of the SE. Instead, through 'Hungry for Success', they were attempting to integrate healthy choice food across the whole curriculum.
26. The Chair asked the Committee to answer the questions in the consultation and to forward any additional comments to the Secretariat within the timescale.
27. The Committee agreed to answer yes to all questions as set out in the consultation and to the principal of the Bill.
28. The Chair thanked Maria McCann for her presentation.

ITEM 5

Charging for Official Controls for Meat Inspection

29. **Charlotte Maltin** declared an interest as an employee of Quality Meat Scotland.
30. The Chair allowed Charlotte to take part in discussions.
31. The Chair welcomed David Hart, FSA HQ, and Elspeth Macdonald, FSAS, to the table who introduced the item and clarified issues surrounding Charging for Official Controls for Meat Inspection. They also asked the Committee for comments on the four principle areas in order to produce a comprehensive consultation, which will go out late summer 2006.
32. The Committee agreed that
 - the FSA should not subsidise the industry
 - FSA expenditure should be more appropriately aligned across all FSA Strategic priorities
 - the charging proposals fit with wider Government principles on cost sharing

- the FSA should phase in increased charges for meat hygiene controls and introduce charging for SRM controls, whilst reducing the costs of the controls where possible.
33. The Committee agreed that the reduction in costs of the controls was important, subject to the caveat that public health protection must not be reduced. They were also aware of the industry views that current controls could be delivered under different and less expensive control arrangements.
 34. The Committee recognised that significant changes to control arrangements would take time to develop and, if appropriate, to implement. However they agreed that industry views on fundamental changes to the control arrangements should be sought and considered, particularly in light of the proposal to increase the level of charges.
 35. Committee members asked if there would be an opportunity to compare what is already in place in other European countries. Members also commented that the Agency should ensure that the consultation is robust when issued.
 36. The Agency informed the Committee that all EU Member States have to work to the same European Legislation and will be inspected to ensure that they are compliant, however, there was quite a reasonable amount of scope for each country as to how official controls are financed.
 37. The Chair opened the debate to the audience.
 38. Alistair Donaldson, Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW), agreed that the principal of charging was understood throughout the industry, however, they do have a vigorous view when costs are increased and asked to ensure that there would be justification with these increases. He also asked for the SRM control regime to be revisited to ensure that it is efficient and effective.
 39. The Agency thanked the Committee for their comments and assured them that they would be part of the consultation process in the late summer 2006.
 40. The Chair thanked FSA Officials for attending the meeting and ensured that the Committee will come back to this issue in the near future.

ACTION: Charging Official Controls for Meat Inspection consultation to be put on future agenda once issued.

ITEM 6
Food Premises Survey

41. The Chair steered the Committee to the draft outline of the FSA Board paper where they had an opportunity to comment before this is presented to the FSA Board meeting in July 2006.
42. Members of the Committee were aware only 68% of Local Authorities responded to the survey and asked the Agency what percentage of Local Authorities responded separately in England, Scotland and Wales – to be given as a percentage.
43. Scottish Board members asked for details of the Scottish situation within this survey to be supplied to them before the July FSA Board meeting. They particularly asked for the names of the Scottish LA's that took part.
44. The Chair informed the Committee that this topic would come back to the Agenda once the Survey results had been published which is hoped to be July 2006.

ACTION: FSA to supply FSA Board members with information regarding the names and percentages of Local Authorities who responded to the survey and to establish how meaningful this survey is in the Scottish context before the July Board meeting.

ITEM 7
PUBLIC SESSION

45. Alistair Donaldson, SAMW, commented on the new style of meeting and appreciated the chance to contribute to discussions throughout the meeting rather than that the end. He asked the FSA Board members to take on board the comments from the FSAS Atypical Scrapie Stakeholder meetings held earlier this year, when debating this topic at the next FSA Board meeting in June.

ITEM 8
A.O.B.

Ofcom Consultation

46. The Chair raised the issue of the Ofcom consultation recently issued and highlighted the initial thoughts of the FSA Board, this its final response being agreed at the open meeting in June.

47. After a brief discussion, the Committee supported the developing thinking of the FSA Board and agreed for the Scottish Board member to take forward their views that they would appreciate a hybrid of the three options set out in the consultation therefore recommending a new Option 4, based on limiting advertising before the 9pm watershed based on the Agency's nutrient profiling .

Cooksafe Project

48. **Catherine Brady** declared an interest as a former Cooksafe trainer and **David Cameron** also declared an interest. Catherine asked the Agency their intentions of future funding for this initiative and issues such as updating the manual and producing them in languages other than those already issued.
49. The Agency informed the Committee that they are currently reviewing the demand and ongoing maintenance of Cook**Safe** and are seeking information on printing Cook**Safe** on a sustainable commercial basis and in other languages. They welcomed comments from both the HACCP Working Group and SFAC.
50. The meeting closed at 12:45.