

**PAPER FOR DISCUSSION
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING ON 9 MARCH 2016**

Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 9 March NIFAC open meeting.

Members are invited to:

- Agree minutes as a true record of proceedings.

FSA Northern Ireland

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REF NIFAC MINUTES 2/16
OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY
COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON 9 MARCH 2016, 1.00PM, AT THE INNOVATION
CENTRE OF THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL
ENTERPRISE, LOUGHRY CAMPUS.

Those present:	FSA
<p><u>NIFAC members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henrietta Campbell – Chairman. • Brian Smyth. • Aodhan O’Donnell. • Christine Kennedy. • Phelim O’Neill. • David Lindsay. • Colin Reid. <p><u>By Teleconference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Mitchell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Jennings – Director for Northern Ireland and Organisational Development. • Michael Jackson –NI Head of Local Authority Policy and Delivery. • Seth Chanas – NIFAC Secretariat. <p><u>By Teleconference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rod Ainsworth – Director of Regulatory and Legal Strategy • Chris Harvey – Better Regulation Senior Advisor • Jason Feeney – Chief Operating Officer • Steve Wearne – Director of Policy

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. It was explained that NIFAC member Elizabeth Mitchell would not be able to attend the meeting in person but would be joining the meeting by teleconference from Dublin.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2016.

2.1. The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of NIFAC’s open meeting on 20 January. The Secretariat explained that all amendments suggested by NIFAC members had been incorporated. No further changes were requested and the Secretariat agreed to arrange for the publication of the minute.

Action Point – Secretariat to make arrangements for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 20 January 2016.

3. Chair’s Report and Director’s Update

- 3.1. The Chair updated the Committee on progress for the appointment of a new FSA Board member for Northern Ireland. It was explained that the position had now been advertised and members should give consideration to applying, or to sharing the advertisement with anyone they might know whom they consider a suitable candidate.
- 3.2. Members were also reminded that the May meeting of the FSA Board, to be held on the 18 May, will be preceded by a dinner for Board members and Stakeholders on the 17 May and it is hoped that NIFAC members will be available to attend.
- 3.3. Maria Jennings then updated the Committee on items from her report contained in the meeting papers, including:
 - Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) slaughter hygiene project.
 - DARD Veterinary Public Health Program (VPH) seminar.
 - The Going for Growth agri-food strategy.
 - The Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.
 - The Eatwell Calendar.
 - DARD Governance Audit.
- 3.4. On the FVO slaughter Hygiene project, it was explained a team of experts were sent to Northern Ireland to see how slaughter was carried out here. This was a successful visit and the FVO inspectors were impressed with how slaughter is carried out here and will have good information to share with other member states.
- 3.5. Some of this work was showcased at the DARD VPH seminar on the 20 February. This was a good opportunity for the chief veterinary officer to outline the proposed structures of the new department and allowed an opportunity for the FSA’s Chief Operating Officer, Jason Feeney, to explain FSA activity to improve the service.
- 3.6. On the Going for Growth agri-food strategy, it was explained that the FSA is working with its partners to ensure understanding around the implications of the recommendations for healthy eating contained in the strategy.
- 3.7. The Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 has now received Royal Assent. The FSA is now working with councils around the implementation of the provisions. Committee recommendations on on-line display are proving challenging to incorporate into policy. The FSA in NI’s Local Authority Policy and Delivery team are continuing to work on this aspect of the Act.

- 3.8. It was explained that the Eatwell calendar has been designed to mirror the monthly themes for the Northern Ireland Year of Food and drink 2016.
- 3.9. On Health and Social Care Catering, it was explained that guidelines around food provision in HSC establishments have now been issued for catering to patients and visitors.
- 3.10. The Committee was updated on the DARD Governance meeting. It was explained that the structure of the new department should help with the consolidation of the service and the building in of efficiencies. The FSA is now working to deliver a new Service Level Agreement with DARD.

4. FSA Innovation Plan

- 4.1. The Chair welcomed Rod Ainsworth, the FSA's Director of Regulatory and Legal Strategy and Chris Harvey, FSA Better Regulation Senior Advisor, to the meeting, by teleconference, to introduce a paper on the FSA's Innovation Plan. The presentation covered:
- the purpose of the paper to provide a snapshot of the FSA's approach to innovation; and
 - the aim of demonstrating that the FSA, as a regulator, will not represent a barrier to innovation.
- 4.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:
- This paper represents a good continuation of previous papers on the use of innovative technology and the Committee welcomed the FSA taking a leadership role in supporting the use of new technologies where this can help to improve food safety.
 - The paper deals primarily with how the FSA as a regulator can support innovation by food businesses but there are good examples, from Northern Ireland, where the FSA has made use of innovative technology to support businesses in providing food that is safe to eat while promoting good nutritional standards, such as the MenuCal tool.
 - The Committee was supportive of the two strands of the plan – supporting the use of innovation in food production and in compliance with regulation. It was questioned whether there might be room for a third strand about consumers' relationship to technology and how this impacts on the work of the FSA. As the plan is a living document, it could be considered whether work in this area should fall within the scope of this plan.
- 4.3. The Chair thanked Rod Ainsworth and Chris Harvey for bringing this paper to NIFAC for consideration. It was also suggested that a copy of the

matrixni.org innovation matrix be forwarded to Rod Ainsworth and Chris Harvey for information.

Action Point – Secretariat to forward matrixni.org innovation matrix to Rod Ainsworth and Chris Harvey.

5. Stow Project Phase 2 – Sustainable Funding Model Project Scope.

5.1. The Chair welcomed Jason Feeney, the FSA's Chief Operating Officer to the meeting, by teleconference, to introduce an item on Phase 2 of the meat charging Project. The presentation covered:

- the origin of the paper coming, not from the FSA Executive, but from the independent Chair of the Steering Group on Meat Charging;
- the scope of the project; and
- the requirement of a successful implementation of phase1.

5.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- The issue of how the inspection of meat should be paid for has long been on the agenda of the FSA but the Committee were pleased with the direction of travel outlined in this paper. It was suggested that work undertaken under Stow 1 has built a trust between the FSA and industry that may otherwise have been absent and the FSA is to be congratulated on what has been achieved to date.
- The Committee noted that the FSA is still seeking efficiencies, as with the review of official auxiliaries. This is to be commended as it will be important to ensure that the inspection regime is as efficient as possible.

5.3. The Chair thanked Jason Feeney for assisting the Committee's consideration of this subject.

6. Campylobacter Reduction: Update On Progress and Next Steps.

6.1. The Chair then welcomed Steve Wearne, the FSA Director of Policy to the meeting by teleconference, to present a paper on campylobacter reduction. The presentation covered:

- reviewing the progress made in reducing campylobacter;
- a focus on the public health outcomes in reducing human cases;
- next steps in campylobacter reduction; and
- the intention to work with retailers to reduce cases.

6.2. There then followed a discussion, during which the following points were made:

- NIFAC were pleased with the momentum that has been maintained over the issue of campylobacter reduction. This is an issue that had been considered by some to be too difficult to achieve any real progress but is now being tackled by both industry and the FSA.
- The statistics demonstrate a similar decline in the number of cases in Northern Ireland to those seen across the UK as a whole. It would be helpful, for any future report to the Board on this issue, if disaggregated figures for the various nations of the UK could be included.
- NIFAC agreed that retailers should take some ownership in making these reductions and supported the proposition that the Chair of the FSA should write to retailers to emphasise their responsibilities to consumers. It was also mentioned that the effectiveness of the campaigns the FSA had run for consumers about not washing of raw chicken had been successful and the Committee were pleased to hear that these messages will be reinforced during the campaigns that the FSA will be running around the summer, barbecue season.
- There is a question over how well we understand the epidemiology of campylobacter. A better understanding of the conditions conducive to the proliferation of the bacteria will be needed before truly effective measures can be taken to eliminate campylobacter as a significant risk to health. Overall, however, the paper shows a good news story and the FSA should be applauded for the efforts it has made.

6.3. The Chair thanked Steve Wearne for assisting with the Committee's consideration of this paper. Following the members' discussion, the following comment was received from observers:

- There are indications that the campylobacter organism may be becoming more virulent. This, combined with the knowledge that the population of those who are immunocompromised will be rising, means that the efforts of the FSA and industry in combating campylobacter reduction must remain a priority.

6.4. The Chair thanked observers for their contribution to the discussion. It was explained that AFBI had recently published a paper on Virulence characteristics of hcp⁺ Campylobacter jejuni and Campylobacter coli isolates from retail chicken. The Secretariat undertook to circulate this paper to NIFAC members.

Action Point – Secretariat to circulate paper on campylobacter virulence to NIFAC members.

7. Update from the FSA in NI Local Authority Policy and Delivery Team

7.1. The Chair invited Michael Jackson, the FSA's Head of Local Authority Policy and Delivery to deliver an update on the Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern

Ireland) 2016, and the consultation on the Orders and Regulations. This item represents the first update of a series to run over the course of 2016 where the various teams within the FSA in NI will provide updates to the Committee about key activities and work carried out by that team. The presentation covered:

- the consultation on the FHRS, secondary legislation;
- the importance of the contribution of the Councils;
- Act's provisions' coming into force date of 1 October 2016;
- the portability of voluntary ratings into the statutory scheme;
- content and purpose of the Regulations;
- sticker variants; and
- questions around fees and fixed penalties.

7.2. There then followed a brief discussion, during which the following comments were made:

- An incredible amount of work has gone into bringing the primary legislation through the assembly, bringing us to the point where we now have an Act. This is a great success.
- NIFAC will meet in a subgroup to consider the individual questions posed by the consultation on the Regulations and Orders as well as the guidance document and will submit a consultation response based on those discussions.

7.3. The Chair thanked Michael Jackson for bringing this item to the Committee.

Any Other Business

7.4. The next meeting will be on 11 May 2016. A venue is currently being considered for the meeting and members will be updated on progress. No further business was raised and the meeting was closed.

TABLE OF ACTION POINTS

No	Action	To be actioned by	To be completed by
1.	To make arrangements for publication of the minutes of the NIFAC meeting on 20 January 2016	Secretariat	11/05/2016
2.	To forward matrixni.org innovation matrix to Rod Ainsworth and Chris Harvey.	Secretariat	11/05/2016
3.	To circulate paper on campylobacter virulence to NIFAC members.	Secretariat	11/05/2016