

Welsh Food Advisory Committee Chairman's Report – October 2022

Report by Peter Price, Board Member for Wales and Chair of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee

1. Summary

1.1 Due to the National Period of Mourning, the September Board meeting and associated meetings and visits in Belfast were cancelled, with the Business Committee and Board meetings being held virtually on 23 and 26 September respectively.

1.2 This report provides a brief summary of matters considered at that last Board meeting, and other activities relevant to the FSA remit in Wales.

1.3 Members of the committee are invited to:

- note the Board discussions
- invite the Chair to expand on any issues for further discussion

2. Board Meeting

2.1 The last open Board meeting was held virtually on 26 September 2022. The Board considered the following matters:

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill

This paper gave an update on the progress of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill and discussed the FSA's approach to developing an appropriate and proportionate regulatory framework for products produced in England, using precision breeding (PB) techniques.

This will motivate legislative action in Wales and I raised the prospect of divergence. I stated WFAC's concerns about traceability and urged funding to support research to develop ways of distinguishing between naturally occurring changes and those which had been induced. I also expressed the committee's support for consumer research and engagement, including in Wales, because consumer messaging is key.

Achieving Business Compliance Programme

This paper provided a comprehensive update on the Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) Programme.

I said that WFAC is broadly supportive of the programme but raised again the use of the potentially misleading term 'influential business'. I pointed out differences in local authority structures in Wales and in the Code of Practice, so requiring adjustments to adapt the ABC programme. I also raised the importance of consumer confidence in FHRS, which could be impaired if inspections were less frequent.

Public Analyst Official Laboratory System: Our Approach to Building a Resilient System

This paper explained the official laboratory system in the UK and recommended an approach to build GB testing capability and resolve the current challenges within the system.

I mentioned the need to engage with Wales' Chief Scientific Officer and reported that Eurofins are making a large investment in a laboratory in Cardiff, which could give more capacity in Wales.

Food Hypersensitivity Programme: Outline Plans for Phase Two

This paper set out the proposed priorities, key activities, and timetable for phase two of the Food Hypersensitivity Programme (September 2022 to April 2024). This gave rise to discussion of the difficulties and priorities which were practicable to achieve.

I raised the issue of consumers who suffer severe allergies to foods not included in the list of 14 allergens and sought plans for research or development to include such additional foods. I reported WFAC's concerns about the need for alignment with the way inspections are carried out in Wales and the missed opportunity to carry out allergen management and control checks in conjunction with those for FHRs. I also stressed the need for good training of staff in the non-prepacked sector and asked whether relevant training for the regulators had been scoped and gaps identified.

Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

This paper provided the Board with a summary of the work undertaken by the ARAC during 2021/22 in accordance with the ARAC's Terms of Reference. WFAC members had not expressed any concerns.

Report from the Director of the FSA in Wales

This paper gave an update on the progress of the FSA in Wales in delivering its programme of work since the last report to the Board in September 2021. I commented on the past year and said that our committee fully supports the future priorities shown in the report.

2.2 A [recording of the 26 September meeting](#) is available on the FSA website, along with the minutes of the meeting when published.

2.3 The next Board meeting will be held on 7 December 2022.

3. Other meetings

3.1 My last written report to the Committee was at its themed meeting on 14 July. Since then:

- On 15 July, the Board held a KIT & Coffee day (two 1-hour online sessions). During the first, we had a strategic update (hot topics), and discussion. The second hour was the latest staff 'coffee' event, at which Board members and specialist staff have an informal exchange – this time with the Path Safe Team. We break up into groups, typically comprised of 2 Board members and 3 staff, then the Board members come back together and discuss the useful insights obtained.
- On 26 July, Susan Jebb, Nathan Barnhouse and I met online with Minister Lynne Neagle and her team to discuss Precision Breeding.
- On 2 August, I had a useful online 1:1 meeting with Susan Jebb to discuss both Board and Welsh topics
- On 3 August, I met with Jane Clark, Chief Vet, and Nathan here in Cardiff. We discussed issues around the shortage of vets and had a distinct but overlapping discussion about FSA in Wales.
- On 12 August, the Board held a KIT session to discuss Precision Breeding Bill, to talk about current issues with Chief Exec Emily Miles, and to have some private Board member

time.

- On 9 September, I met Richard Wynn-Jones online to discuss the OTP and ABC programmes. In particular, we talked about specific issues relating to Wales and also the risks involved in divergence from EU rules.
- On 27 September, I attended the SSAFW meeting in Cardiff in my usual observer capacity.
- I have had several online discussions with Sioned, Lucy and Christie to discuss arrangements and programme for this themed meeting in North Wales. We are grateful to our North Wales members for their many ideas and to Phil Hollington for pulling those ideas together into a list of options.

3.2 The Board held a two-day Retreat in Oxford on 10-11 October to enable the senior Executive team to brief Board members on the fast-moving latest developments and share their ideas about changes in key programmes ahead of formulating papers for the December Board meeting.

We questioned, discussed and gave a steer to the Executive on all those major topics. It enabled priorities to be set in a context of the need for FSA to accomplish a great deal in a short time. In the margins of the meeting, we heard from the first Chair of FSA, Lord Krebs, and over dinner we heard ideas from Dr Claire Craig and Prof Sir Charles Godfray.