

FOOD FRAUD TASK FORCE: PROGRESS REPORT OCTOBER 2006

Executive Summary

1. Following the paper presented to the Board in April 2006, recommending the establishment of a Food Fraud Task Force, this information note reports on the progress to date of that task force against the agreed terms of reference which were included in that Board paper. The task force was established to consider and report on all issues, which are likely to impact significantly on food fraud, in line with the terms of reference.

2. The Board is asked to:
 - **note** the progress made since the April 2006 Board meeting, against the terms of reference and the timetable agreed in the April Board paper.

Enforcement Division

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Issue

1. The Board is invited to note the progress that has been made by the Food Fraud Task Force (FFTF) in considering the various issues, which are likely to significantly impact on food fraud and against the agreed terms of reference, which are provided at Annex A.

Strategic Aims

2. The Agency's policy is to protect consumers from food fraud and illegal practices.

Background

3. In April 2006, Dr P J Barlow was appointed as an independent Chairman of the FFTF. A proposed membership of some 14 members (see Annex B for details) was considered and agreed by the Chairman. The membership represents a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The group is supplemented by representatives from other organisations as and when required and such affiliated members present their views either directly to the Task Force or via *ad-hoc* sub committees set up and chaired by a FFTF member, to address specific issues.

Meetings and Issues Addressed

4. The Task Force has to date met on three separate occasions. The first meeting took place on the 6/6/06 and its primary purpose was to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the FFTF members within the specified duration of the Task Force.
5. The meeting included a presentation by FSA staff on the outcome of the Waste Food Task Force (WFTF) 2003, so that the suggestions and recommendations arising from the WFTF which had been implemented, should not be further discussed unless there were specific reasons for this, so as to avoid duplication.
6. The terms of reference as approved by the Board in April were debated and agreed but with the suggestion that the FFTF focus on the following aspects:
 - initially concentrating on red and white meat fraud, but considering other food sector problems later in the process;

- public health and animal health and welfare risks with less emphasis on financial considerations of fraud;
 - sufficient deterrents to make it less attractive for people to engage in food fraud activities.
7. The FFTF agreed the following areas for subsequent detailed discussion:
- A review of current legislation and any perceived needs for change.
 - The relationship between the various enforcement authorities including the police.
 - The responsibilities of the various enforcement authorities and if there is any need to clarify or simplify these.
 - The effectiveness of current procedures for ensuring traceability of food throughout the food chain.
 - Whistle-blowing as a positive contribution towards the detection of food fraud.
 - The special position of food brokers and current control measures particularly as regards traceability of foods in their control.
 - The current controls on Annual by-products including staining of meat and the possibility of extending provisions to Category 3 by-products.
 - The methods and materials used for staining and if these would be appropriate for Category 3 material if the provision were extended.
 - The implications of the Hampton Review 2005 as regards any recommendations made by the FFTF.
8. A provisional timetable for subsequent meetings and the specific topics to be addressed were agreed by members, and for meetings to be held at approximately six weekly intervals. Consensus was reached that the first 2 or 3 meetings would be primarily for information gathering, providing members with a broad overview of current provisions and problem areas. Subsequent meetings would then consider specific recommendations to be put forward to the FSA Board.
9. Topics considered to date include:
- The CIEH Meat Crime Survey 2005;

- A detailed debate and review of the findings and recommendations of the Waste Food Task Force 2003;
- Imported food controls and how current practices are effective or not;
- Import controls and Veterinary Checks Regime;
- The role of HMRC in tackling illegally imported foods;
- Current practices as regards Health Marking of meat and meat products;
- The Macrory review and penalties and significance for food fraud offences;
- An update of the activities of the FSA Illegal Meat Task Force, The Fighting Fund and The Food Fraud Database;
- The role and control of Food Brokers;
- Meat Staining with particular reference to Category 3 material including a presentation by the Animal By-products Industry);
- Animal By-products non-visible staining materials - a research proposal.

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

10. The aim of the FFTF is to ensure that any loopholes in the law and control procedures are identified and closed in order to make it as difficult as possible to carry out fraudulent activities. The penalty regime should provide an adequate deterrent.

Board Action Required

11. The Board is invited to:

- **note** the progress made since the April 2006 Board meeting, against the terms of reference and the timetable agreed in the April Board paper.

FOOD FRAUD TASK FORCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To consider and report on all issues which are likely to impact significantly on food fraud and in particular to consider the current controls in place to deal with food fraud and their, suitability to control and deter food fraud. It is intended that the Task Force will initially focus on the meat sector and draw lessons, which will then be expanded more broadly, to the rest of the food industry.

Notwithstanding the generalities of the above to particularly consider:

- A review of health marking requirements.
- A review of inspection and audit arrangements for meat plants particularly cold stores, including inspection frequencies.
- A review of the inspection and audit arrangements for MHS and DARD to ensure sufficient regard is paid to food fraud risks.
- Consideration of inspection frequency of food businesses as part of the review of the Statutory Code of Practice, having particular regard to food fraud risk.
- A review of the roles and effectiveness of the Illegal Meat Task Force, the food fraud data base and the Agency's local authority "Fighting Fund".
- Consideration of the current staining requirements for Animal by-products.
- The adequacy of the existing legal framework for prosecution and the suitability of penalties to act as a deterrent to food fraud.
- Arrangements for encouraging 'whistle-blowing'.

In arriving at their conclusions, which should take the form of a report to the Food Standards Agency Board, the Task Force should involve and consult all relevant stakeholders.

Food Fraud Task Force Membership

Chair: Dr Philip Barlow BSc (Hons), MSc., PhD

1	Mr	Jeffrey Moon	Chief Specialist Environmental Health	Food Safety Authority Ireland
2	Mrs	Jenny Morris	Food Policy Officer	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
3	Mr	David Pickering	Lead Food Officer	Trading Standards Institute
(3A)	Mr	Phil Thomas	Lead Food Officer	Trading Standards Institute
4	Ms	Beryl Morgan	Principal Environmental Health Practitioner	LACORS
(4A)	Mr	Nick Wellington	Principal EHO Food & Safety Team	LACORS
5	Mr	Kevin Swoffer	Head of Technical Services	British Retail Consortium
6	Mr	Peter Bradnock	Chief Executive	British Poultry Council
7	Ms	Kerina Cheesman	Secretary of Meat Group	Food and Drink Federation
8	Mr	Rob Phillips	Food Fraud Co-ordinator	Welsh Food Fraud Co-ordination Unit
9	Ms	Julie Lennard	Principal Researcher	Which?
10	Mrs	Jill Nute BVSc MRCVS	Veterinary Officer	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
11	Mr	Mike Seton	Veterinary Officer (RCVS)	City of London Corporation
12	Mr	Dave Slater	Consultant (with experience in CHIS and whistle blowing procedures)	Criminal Investigations Specialist
13	Mr	Graham Walker	Director of Training/ Environmental Health Practitioner	The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)
14	Mr	Victor Hazelton	Group Technical Manager	Dungannon Meats Group