

Enforcement Stakeholder Meeting Wednesday 29th September 2004

Attendees

Wesley Thompson – Belfast City Council Gerry McCurdy – Chairman
Andrew Hassard – Belfast City Council Trevor Williamson – FSA
Colin McGill – North Down Borough Council Jim Ross - FSA
Mervyn Briggs – Craigavon Borough Council Deirdre Ni Chleirigh – FSA
Linda Hutton – Fermanagh District Council Olivia Keown – FSA
Robert Huey - DARD Ruth Watson – Secretariat
Sam Mitchell – DARD
Wilf Weatherup – Quality Assurance Branch, DARD
Fiona McClements – Dungannon & South Tyrone District Council
Ian Leitch – Omagh District Council
Jackie Barr – Coleraine District Council
John MacIntyre – Carrickfergus Borough Council
Catriona McGrath – Magherafelt District Council

1. Introduction

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Food Standards Agency NI and went on to explain the following points:

- Re-cap on why the initiative is happening
- The appointment of the new NI Chairman
- The resignation of Sir John Krebs
- The agenda for the open Board meeting on 14th October 2004
- The agenda for the closed NIAC meeting on 5th October 2004

The Chairman also invited delegates to attend the open Board meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Belfast, which will include a short question and answer session.

2. The Agency's Draft new Strategic Plan

The consultation period for the Agency's draft Strategic Plan for 2005 - 2010 closed on 25th June 2004. The Board will discuss the draft Strategic Plan at

their October meeting, leading to the redrafting and subsequent publishing of the Strategic Plan towards the end of 2004.

The Agency is currently being restructured to meet the demands of the new Strategic Plan. For example a new directorate will be set up, headed by Jill Fine, to meet the demands of our growing Health and Nutrition campaign. While this will mainly take place at our headquarters in London, there may be some impact on the FSA-NI.

3. Invitees Topics and General Issues

There were no topics for discussion raised by the invitees.

4. Salt

The Agency launched a public health campaign on 15th September. This is the first phase of a large public health campaign aimed at:

- Raising consumers' awareness of the health issues associated with the excessive intake of salt
- Explaining how easy it is to consume too much salt because of its presence in so many foods.

To support this, the Agency will also be carrying out a 'shopping basket' survey, which aims to find out how much salt is in the average consumer's shopping basket. The second phase will be more technical and will follow early in 2005. We have received a very good response from the food industry, both prior to and after the launch of the campaign. It was noted that the campaign's target audience is very important. The campaign must not appear to preach to the public, given that the target audience is consumers in low socio-economic groups who don't have the choices of those in higher socio-economic groups. The televised adverts are therefore tailored to suit the target audience. One industry representative commented that the consumer group WHICH is also currently heading a campaign to lower salt intake. This however, is not the case. As reported on their website, while WHICH strongly supports the FSA's salt initiative, they are not conducting a parallel campaign. More effort should be made to promote healthy eating in schools. For example, school dinner tables should not have salt cellars for children to add

salt. The nutrition steering group is currently involved in the Key Stage 3 Review and is piloting the healthy drinks vending scheme. Concerns were raised about the shelf life on products that have lowered salt levels.

Producers may add more potassium to maintain the current shelf life – the effects of this have not yet been considered.

5. Food Labelling and Nutrition

Olivia Keown invited stakeholders to consider the EU consolidation of labelling rules and the national food labelling regulations consolidation. She made them aware of developments to the EU proposal for a regulation for nutrition and health claims made on foods, and brought them up to date with the FSA position on the signposting of foods.

6. HACCP

Trevor Williamson gave an update on the Agency's position with HACCP.

More HACCP training groups and seminars are to take place this year.

Trevor urged councils to share the safe catering packs until more resources become available. While resources look limited for this year, they may improve next year. There is to be an evaluation of funds spent on HACCP.

The Agency will continue to build relationships with the ethnic minority caterers to further their understanding and implementation of HACCP. A 'toolkit' for caterers is currently being developed by the Agency. It is currently intended that this will contain 3 guidance documents: Northern Ireland's 'Safe Catering' pack, Scotland's 'Cooksafe' pack and 'Safe Food Better Business' developed in conjunction with Salford University. The toolkit's aim is to increase the number of businesses fully implementing the HACCP principles.

7. Eat Safe Award

The Eat Safe Award scheme is moving forward slowly. Awareness of the scheme continues to grow with more enquiries from the catering industry.

There are now 49 businesses with the award, spread across 17 council areas.

Due to the imminent extension of the scheme to Local Authorities in Scotland, now is the time to review the criteria, which is currently linked to the Code of Practice (CoP) hazard rating scheme. An Eatsafe Enforcement Stakeholder

Group will be set up shortly to progress this. The award may be distanced from the CoP to eliminate scoring differences across the devolved administrations. A review of which establishments are eligible will consider the inclusion of schools to the Eat Safe Award scheme.

8. Consolidated EU Hygiene Regulations

A consultation for the consolidated EU Hygiene Regulations (H-123), which covers all food premises, will be circulated in the first week of October. These regulations will set the scene in Europe for the next 5 to 10 years for all food businesses and, excepting primary production plants, are based around the HACCP principles. There will be no scope for interpretation in these regulations. It is intended to retain as far as possible the existing enforcement arrangements – although some premises may change hands with regards to enforcement bodies. The financial impact of the aspects, i.e. changing provisions will not occur until 2007. The Agency will be responsible for the legislation for primary production, while the role of enforcement will be discussed with DARD. The industry will be required to promote guidance for their specific sectors.

9. Revised CoP

We are the final stage of issuing the revised CoP. This should be available within the next month. The CoP should now be a lot more structured and user-friendly.

10.FVO Missions

There is an ongoing FVO Mission in relation to “AUDITING” – NB capitals?? This is a fact-finding exercise on FVO missions.

11.DARD Veterinary Service Review and Science Review

DARD is currently reviewing the Veterinary Service and Science Service. The Science Service is to become a non-departmental public body. No decision has been reached regarding Veterinary Service.

12. Concluding comments and Close

Mr McCurdy thanked everyone for attending. It was agreed that the format of the forum should be retained as well as twice yearly meetings.

Ruth Watson

04/10/2004