

# Enforcement Stakeholder Meeting Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005

## Attendees

### Enforcement Representatives

Mervyn Briggs – Craigavon Borough Council  
Alexis Cann – Coleraine Borough Council  
Dr Maureen Edmondson – NIFAC Chairman  
John Farrell – Newry and Mourne District Council  
Richard Hanna – Armagh City and District Council  
Sam Knox – Southern Group Chief EHO  
Fiona McClements – Dungannon & South Tyrone District Council  
Sharon McQuillan – Antrim Borough Council  
Dr Michael Rowe – Food Microbiology, DARD

### FSANI Officials

Gerry McCurdy – Chairman  
Greg Irwin  
Kirsten Dunbar  
Michael Jackson  
Andrea Marnoch  
Bronagh Curran  
Ruth Watson – Secretariat

## Apologies

Sharon Bateson – Larne Borough Council  
Danny Gray – Veterinary Service, DARD  
Andrew Hassard – Belfast City Council  
Robert Huey – Veterinary Service, DARD  
Colin Magill – North Down Borough Council

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the third Enforcement Stakeholder Forum and noting apologies. After a round-the-table introduction, he introduced Dr Edmondson and informed the table that she would be observing the meeting. He then explained that the Forum has been set up to provide a mechanism for the principal enforcement bodies to raise matters of broad concern with the Agency on an informal basis. The meetings also enable stakeholders to look ahead with the Agency to help identify emerging issues as early as possible.

**1.2** The Chairman referenced the minutes of the meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004, noting that the DARD Veterinary Service Review was still underway. The Science Service is expected to undergo organisational changes, functioning as a Non Departmental Public Body by 2006.

## **2. Key Developments since the last meeting**

The Chairman updated the enforcement representatives on the key developments since the last meeting.

### **2.1 The Strategic Plan for 2005 – 2010.**

After an extensive consultation, the Strategic Plan for 2005 – 2010 was approved by the Board and can now be found on the FSA website, [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk). The Agency's key priorities for the next five years are:

- Food Safety
- Eating for Health
- Consumer Choice
- The FSA's role as a Government Department

Hard copies have been ordered for the FSANI office, and copies will be issued to those who are interested.

**Action** – Secretariat to ensure all delegates receive a copy of the Strategic Plan.

### **2.2 The Independent Review of the Agency**

**2.2** Baroness Barbara Dean had been commissioned by the Board to conduct an Independent Review of the Agency last year. The aim of the review was to measure how far the Agency has delivered on its promises and to what extent it has lived up to its core values. Baroness Dean was asked to make recommendations on any areas of weakness in delivery of the Agency's consumer protection role or in any other aspects of its performance. The review was carried out by a small team, and consisted of 110 interviews across the UK, with additional participation via the website. All interviewees showed a great willingness to engage. The interviews were conducted with a free-format approach for all stakeholders, who could raise issues from the Agency's early years up to recent times. The key issues identified in the report were those

voiced by a number of stakeholders. Baroness Dean has made 22 recommendations relating to the core values, devolution, and specific issues raised by stakeholders. The overall impression was favourable – the majority of stakeholders agreeing that the Agency has done well, and there is widespread confidence that the Agency can meet future challenges. The Board has accepted all 22 recommendations, and the Report can be found on the FSA website along with the Agency's response.

### **2.3 The Recruitment of new NIFAC members**

**2.3** The terms of office for four out of the nine Advisory Committee members expire at the end of July 2005. Dr Edmondson has been involved in the recruitment process for new members, which is well advanced. The interviews were held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. The process was carried out in line with the Best Practice from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (OCPANI). We hope to see the newly appointed members in office by August to avoid any gaps in membership. The FSANI will announce the successful candidates following the Minister's approval.

## **3 FSANI Restructuring**

Mr McCurdy gave a brief history of the staffing of FSANI and the current restructuring. He tabled the new structure chart and talked the delegates through the changes to the organisation. The existing Policy and Legislation will be incorporated into the Scientific and Technical team, creating a new Policy team.

This will consist of five branches:

- Consumer Choice
- General Food Hygiene
- Audit
- Primary Production
- Meat Hygiene

The new structure, which will be effective from 4<sup>th</sup> April 2005 ensures full integration of the professional and administrative staff, ensuring that the Agency in Northern Ireland is well placed to deliver the new Strategic plan and is

configured to interface better with the key enforcement and other stakeholders.

## **4 Diet and Nutrition Update**

**4.1** Andrea Marnoch gave a general overview of some of the key areas of diet and nutrition work the Agency is currently involved in, as well as highlighting a number of planned activities over the next 12 months.

**4.2** She briefly outlined the wider policy background in Northern Ireland and the increasing emphasis on diet and nutrition as a public health issue. This is reflected in the Agency's Strategic Plan for 2005 – 2010, as well as in a number of Northern Ireland initiatives:

- The Food and Nutrition Strategy
- The Childhood Obesity Task Force (Fit Futures)
- The Nutritional Standards Steering Group, led by the Department of Education

**4.3** Andrea went on to explain that much of the Agency's work in the last 18 months has been shaped by the Promotion of Foods to Children Action Plan, which was agreed by the Board in July 2004, following extensive consultation across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Action Plan was informed by the findings of the Hastings Review in 2003, which showed that promotional activity has an impact on children's food preferences, purchasing behaviour and consumption. Recommendations have included – but are not limited to – the following:

- The development of a healthy drinks vending toolkit
- Planned consultation on target food specifications for school meal suppliers based on the Scottish 'Hungry for Success' model
- The piloting of front of pack signposting labelling information

**4.4** In addition, Phase II of the salt campaign is planned for September this year, with Sid the Slug featuring again. This time the message is about informing consumers on how to read nutrition labels on foods and convert sodium levels

into salt, which many people misunderstand. Evaluation from Phase I of the campaign show that people are more aware of the health implications associated with excessive salt intake.

- 4.5** Andrea then went on to discuss the current signposting consultation, the results of which will form the next phase of consumer research in May this year. For details on this please see the website:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/Consultations/ukwideconsults/signpostconsultmar05>

- 4.2** The Chairman thanked Andrea for the comprehensive brief, emphasising that no decision has yet been taken on the signposting initiative. He then invited delegates to comment and discuss.

- 4.3** Michael Rowe from Food Microbiology, DARD noted that there would have to be a substantial introduction time allowed for signposting on food labels to allow the industry time to adjust. Mr McCurdy agreed, stating that the EU suggests a minimum of 18 months' lead-in time for such initiatives.

- 4.4** Sam Knox of Southern Group expressed a desire to see the Food Standards Agency as a leader in the field of diet and nutrition, and asked about the remit of the Agency in the field. The Chairman stated that diet and nutrition is the main remit of the Department of Health, and while the Agency is keen to promote diet and nutrition issues, its primary concern is food safety. The FSA recognises however that the nature of this field causes boundaries to blur slightly. The Agency is therefore in discussions with the Department of Health to find the best way for the two Agencies to address the issue. Andrea Marnoch also noted that FSANI is represented on the Childhood Obesity Task Force. The Chairman explained that due to tensions across Government Departments, the Agency couldn't be seen to fully take the lead concerning diet and nutrition. Andrea Marnoch undertook to contact Mr Knox to discuss the Agency's direction regarding this issue.

**Action** – Andrea Marnoch to contact Mr Knox to discuss the Agency's direction

regarding diet and nutrition.

**4.5** John Farrell of Newry and Mourne District Council noted that from experience, very few consumers actually examined product labels in a supermarket. Andrea Marnoch agreed, compounding the importance of high-visibility signposting. Mr Farrell voiced his support for clear and simple signposting, while Mervyn Briggs of Craigavon Borough Council suggested that successful signposting could be further explored through TV advertising. Mrs Marnoch noted that Scotland's Healthy Living programme is a good practice to follow.

**4.6** Mr Farrell and Mr Briggs also commented on the decline of school children who eat school meals, resulting in more children choosing unhealthy take-away lunches. Andrea Marnoch explained that this could be tackled in the 'whole school approach', with schools taking initiatives such as promotional school canteen schemes, and forbidding children to leave the school grounds in lunchtime. It was agreed that the promotion of healthy foods to children requires combined efforts from all sectors, as well as a change in attitude from consumers.

## **5 Update on Enforcement Issues**

### **5.1 EU Food Hygiene Regulations (H-123)**

Kirsten Dunbar gave an update on the progress of the new EU Food Hygiene Regulations (H-123), informing the delegates that FSANI's Environmental Health team is in the process of updating district councils on the Regulations. Coming into force from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 they are applicable throughout the food-chain, from 'farm to fork'. While existing enforcement arrangements will be retained as far as possible, there may be some minor changes with respect to catering, butchers and coldstores. Guides for businesses and enforcement bodies are currently being developed. In addition to the food hygiene regulations the FSA is also responsible for the implementation of the EU Official Food and Feed Controls (OFFC) Regulation, where it relates to food and feed, and the Feed Hygiene Regulation, also applicable from 1 January 2006. Dr Dunbar urged the enforcement representatives to take part in the ongoing consultations.

## **5.2 Code of Practice**

Michael Jackson updated the enforcement representatives on the Code of Practice. The new Code of Practice consolidates and simplifies the previous 18 Codes. A further review of the new Code of Practice is the rationale for not publishing any 'Practice Guidance' at present, and is required to reflect the new EU Consolidated Hygiene Regulations. There will be significant changes to the risk rating scheme, particularly for Food Standards. Update roadshows are underway in which the main changes are being discussed, and there will be a loose-leaf format consultation published before the summer. IT companies have been advised and a meeting with TASK will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

## **5.3 Proposed Changes to the Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Monitoring System**

Michael Jackson gave an overview of the proposed changes to the Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Monitoring System. The consultation on the proposed changes will be issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, with responses required by 27<sup>th</sup> May. Phase 1 of the consultation will be regarding the PSG Proposals. This will be followed by a second consultation on more debated aspects of the review in June. The key proposals for the changes are as follows:

1. To simplify procedures for reporting data on FIT and Food Safety inspections;
2. Revised outcome measures;
3. The inclusion of advisory and educational activity; and
4. A matrix to measure overall performance.

## **5.4 Monitoring Returns 2004 / 2005**

Mr Jackson outlined the process for monitoring returns for 2004/2005. An email will be issued this week to cabinet officers regarding arrangements for submitting this year's returns. There are two options to consider:

1. To continue to use the existing monitoring form. Details of what is required are available on the website together with excel spreadsheets to help calculate in-year changes; or
2. To use the new Excel spreadsheet version of the monitoring form. This

is available from the website but a copy of the application to validate the data will be required. This will be provided on request in CD-ROM format.

Option 2 is only likely to be of benefit to those who have experienced significant difficulty in using the existing form. Mr Jackson urged delegates to evaluate the practicalities of the Excel form before opting to use it.

## **5.5 Butchers' Licensing**

The Chairman noted that with the introduction of the new H-123 Regulations on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006, the current system of licensing butcher's will become obsolete. He assured delegates that although the licensing procedures would change, standards for butchers premises would be maintained by the H-123 Regulations. Interim measures will be introduced to take into account premises whose licenses are due to be renewed before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

## **6 Invitees' Topics and General Issues**

### **The Hampton Report**

- 6.1** Mervyn Briggs enquired about the Agency's response to the Hampton Report, which referenced various environmental health functions relating to the Agency. Mr McCurdy informed the table that undertaking increased regulatory functions may jeopardise the Agency's independence. The FSA's formal response to the report can be viewed on the website.

## **7 Six Monthly Forward Look**

The Chairman updated stakeholders on forthcoming events for FSANI.

### **7.1 Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) Events**

The next open meeting of NIFAC will take place on 6<sup>th</sup> April in the FSANI offices. The Committee will discuss Accredited Food Quality Management Systems, and Traceability.

NIFAC are also holding an outreach meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May in Londonderry, entitled 'Making Healthy Food Choices in a Modern World'. This is the first of its kind, and is aimed at every-day consumers.

The Advisory Committee will also hold an open meeting on the following morning in Londonderry, and will address the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (NI) report on food poisoning.

## **7.2 The Appointment of the new Chairman to the FSA**

Sir John Krebs, Chairman of the FSA Board has resigned and will leave the FSA in April. He will shortly take up a new appointment in Christ's College in Oxford. Interviews have been held for his successor, and the Agency is expected to announce the new Chair in the near future.

## **7.3 Meeting of the FSA Board in Belfast**

The October open Board meeting will be held in Belfast. Details of time and venue will be announced in due course.

## **8 Concluding Comments and Close**

Mr McCurdy sought comments on the meeting. All present considered it to have been a useful exercise and looked forward to the next meeting. Mr Knox expressed an interest to see more participation from District Council representatives in future meetings. The Chairman agreed to look into the proposal. Mr McCurdy thanked DARD for their involvement in the recent nitrofurantoin contamination of poultry, and thanked the District Councils for their co-operation with the Sudan 1 food incident. He went on to thank everyone for their participation and confirmed that the next meeting will be held in six months' time.

**Ruth Watson**

**04/04/2005**

## **Appendix 1 – Table of Action Points**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>To be actioned by</b>
1	To ensure all delegates receive the Strategic Plan	Secretariat
2	Andrea Marnoch to contact Mr Knox to discuss the Agency's direction regarding diet and nutrition.	Andrea Marnoch