



THE FOOD CHAIN

THE *safe food* KNOWLEDGE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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BREXIT AND THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND



Dr. Anthony Soares

Dr. Anthony Soares, Deputy Director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh, sees both threats and potential opportunities for the Agri-food sector on the island of Ireland in a post-BREXIT world.

So much has yet to be decided on how BREXIT will play out. Will the UK leave the single market, or if it remains, under what conditions?

As Dr. Anthony Soares of the Centre for Cross Border Studies explains:

"BREXIT won't happen for several years."

In the meantime, Anthony and his team are researching and attempting to identify the main potential issues.

The most recent research in the Agri-food sector involved

mapping activity in four border counties – Armagh, Down, Louth and Monaghan – among food producers, retailers, restaurants, customers and employees. It took place before the BREXIT referendum.

"The biggest concern at the moment post-BREXIT for the food sector is that there may be divergence in food supply and food

BREXIT IMPACT

POTENTIAL RISKS:
Food supply and safety standards on the island of Ireland diverge. Food exports from NI to ROI are subject to new checks.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY:
The Agri-food sector north and south work together to meet common challenges, such as increasing productivity to match standards in other markets.

THE CENTRE FOR CROSS BORDER STUDIES

The Centre for Cross Border Studies was set up in 1999 to establish and promote cross border co-operation at a local level and on an all island basis. Dr Anthony Soares is deputy director of the organisation, which is based in Armagh. He is in charge of research and policy across all sectors.

For more information on the Centre for Cross Border Studies go to: www.crossborder.ie

Check out: The BREXIT section on this website for more detailed information on the impact of BREXIT on the island of Ireland.

safety standards between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland," he says. "This is particularly the case if the UK doesn't stay in the single market and especially so if it decides to do trade deals with other markets and as

part of that accepts lower standards. Or say the UK does a deal with a Latin American country such as Brazil, which is a huge beef producer. That could leave NI open to cheap imports."

Even if the UK remains

"IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE INTERESTS OF THE AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY IN NI ARE REPRESENTED."

in the Single Market, because it is no longer a member of the European Union, it won't have a seat at the table in negotiating agreed standards, he points out. The same is true for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). "The UK will have no say in that going forward."

While the ROI will continue to have influence, NI will be dependent on UK policy. It is important that the interests of the Agri-food industry in NI are represented.

Agriculture in NI has more in common with the ROI than with the sector in England, where farms are larger and there is more intensive production. The dairy and beef industry is more significant on the island of Ireland than it is in GB.

Cross border movement is also a potential issue. According to Anthony, food producers, particularly in the big towns around the mid-Ulster area, state that the increase of EU migrants in the early 2000s was crucial in allowing their businesses to flourish. "Without that the towns might have died," he says.

Free movement of goods and people north to south on the island of Ireland is another important factor for the Agri-food sector. At

the moment, the ROI accounts for 55-56% of all NI's exports to the EU. People in the industry also may work on one side of the border and live on the other.

If the UK doesn't stay within the single market, there will have to be controls. It might not be necessary to have a 'hard' border but there will have to be checks on any goods coming into the ROI and NI. "Whatever system is put in place, it will carry an additional financial and administrative burden for exporters in Northern Ireland."

So, what are the potential upsides of BREXIT for Agri-food on the island of Ireland?

Again, Anthony points out, much has yet to be decided but there is an increasing understanding on the island of Ireland that some creative thinking is required.

Productivity remains a challenge for the Agri-food sector in both NI and ROI, "There is huge opportunity for working together on the challenges on an all island basis, especially when compared with the sector in Great Britain. Working together and using all our institutions could enable the sector to innovate, increase productivity and offset the costs of price volatility and climate change," he says. ●

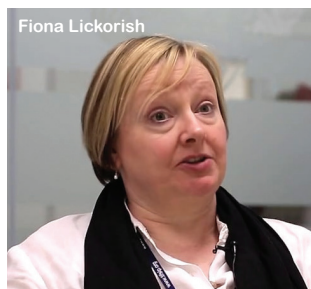
ABOUT ANTHONY

He likes: Travelling, which is fortunate given that his current role involves frequent trips across this island and throughout Europe.

His favourite pastime: Making the most of the landscape of the island of Ireland, walking its hills and mountains and visiting its great eateries.

INVESTIGATING THE FUTURE

Fiona Lickorish, Head of the UK-based Cranfield Institute for Resilient Futures, on what the future might hold for food safety.



Considering Fiona Lickorish used to run a wildlife trust, it is no surprise that her interests lie in sustainable planning for the future. Her background in impact assessment saw her move to the UK Department for Environment, Food and

This could be anything from the risk of potential disease from a particular crop to looking at new and emerging indicators of food crime, i.e. what are the things that drive people to nefarious activities here? A lot of my work concentrates on the resilience and vulnerabilities of food chains."

Fiona works right across the food safety sector with retailers, manufacturers, Agri-food consultants and government bodies. "We also think about new and innovative ways of producing foods,

"MOST COMPANIES ARE ALREADY DOING HORIZON SCANNING BUT THEY JUST DON'T CALL IT THAT"

Rural Affairs (DEFRA), when they set up a rural policy function. She ran the Horizons programme there until she moved to Cranfield University five years ago.

"I have always been focused on impact assessment throughout my career," she explains, "identifying and understanding the potential emerging issues and opportunities as early as possible. Most of my work involves what we call Futures Research: investigating what the future might look like.

covering all areas, not just beyond the farm gate but prior to that as well. We tend to call it strategic foresight – trying to give an organisation an idea of what they might face in the future, and how they can be strategic about it. If it is a risk, is it in their control and can they manage it themselves? If it is an opportunity, how can they capitalise on this? Sometimes, if you don't take an opportunity it can become a risk."

Fiona does stress however that you need

to manage the spend when it comes to Futures Research, and not invest too quickly when the apparent risks or opportunities have yet to unveil themselves.

"It is about monitoring the situation and when it hits a certain point you need to be prepared and know what action you are going to take."

Fiona also refers to the importance of Horizon

make decisions now. Many people already know what these things are: they are the things that keep you up at night. Giving people the space and time to have a conversation about these things in a way that is standardised, means that you can address it now rather than when you are forced to. It can save you a lot of time and resources. With Foot

those things that make them feel uncomfortable, those things that they may not necessarily discuss with their boss. Having the confidence to challenge things that have always been done a certain way and having an organisation that is open to accepting those types of conversations is important. The organisations that do well are those that are open to staff at all levels being able to challenge the status quo."

Pointing to examples of food safety issues and Futures Research, Fiona says: "We are looking for things before they become a trend, sometimes in another sector which could be transferable to food. For example, we found one of the first issues around the recession in 2008 was that people were pressed money-wise, however they did not want it to affect their lifestyle. This led to a big surge in rural crime in the UK, where animals were being stolen and subsequently there was a rise in black market meat. If you got a good joint of meat in a pub for a very good price, if it appears to be too good to be true, then it

was. So we need to look at what drives people to do these things. It is mainly about economics, so you have to be aware of the environment we are working in beyond our particular sector. We look at political, legislative, social drivers and if we know there is a particular country we source food from, do any of these drivers point to the fact that it is likely to adulterated? It allows you to be one step ahead of the issue." ●



Scanning in the detection of emerging food safety risks. "What we are trying to do here is to consider those things that are on the periphery of becoming a reality. We need to identify these things as early as possible so that we can do the thinking and make a plan of action.

Lots of people are so busy dealing with today that they don't have the time to lift their head and see what is coming down the road. We want to provide people with a comfortable space to talk about new and emerging things that may affect their business and to

and Mouth disease, for example, it would have been cheaper and a lot easier to deal with when it wasn't staring us in the face."

So, is this something

"WE ARE LOOKING FOR THINGS BEFORE THEY BECOME A TREND"

that can be achieved by most companies, big and small? "Most companies are already doing horizon scanning but they just don't call it that. They often know the issues to be addressed but there is no space to do this. I always ask people to talk about

usually is.

"This was a big food safety issue. Another example is the adulteration of milk with melanine – this was an issue regarding technology, because they were testing the protein levels but not checking what type of protein it

UPCOMING EVENTS

Workshop on Developmental Neurotoxicity Testing Strategy (EFSA): Brussels, 18th October 2016

Food Factory: Laval (France), 19th - 21st October 2016

Next steps for UK food waste policy: Innovation, partnerships and energy recovery: London, 20th October 2016

5th International "Fresenius Feed Conference": Darmstadt (Germany), 21st - 28th October 2016

First Food Chemistry Conference - Shaping the Future of Food Quality, Health and Safety: Amsterdam, 30th October - 1st November 2016

Rapid Methods Europe 2016: Amsterdam, 7th - 9th November 2016

Health Research Board (HRB) 30 - Research Evidence Action: Dublin, 30th November 2016

NORTHERN IRELAND'S YEAR OF FOOD



The Food Chain catches up with Naomi Waite, Director of Marketing with Tourism Northern Ireland on a hectic year of celebrating everything that's delicious in NI



Naomi Waite is, understandably, a busy woman. As Director of Marketing for Tourism NI, she has been to the fore promoting events to highlight NI's fabulous food and drink produce.

"So much has been happening, it's difficult to know where to start," she says.

"Highlights so far have included a Gala Banquet Launch at the Ulster Hall, Belfast, an outdoor radio broadcast promoting NI produce, an #UlsterFRYday and an attempt at a Guinness World Record for Pancake Flipping."

Each month has featured a dedicated theme including a Heritage and Traditions Event; a Cheese and Beer night; a Seafood Cookery Class and a BBQ in the City to promote Love NI Meat month.

In the Brewing and Distilling Month, for example, Tourism NI ran a media drop in NI and the Republic of Ireland.

"Throughout the year we've hosted a number of media trips," says Naomi.

And of course the year isn't over yet. "October is Harvest Month and in November we'll be celebrating legacy and learning in the culinary arts. We'll be rounding off the year with a focus on all things Christmas and premium goods."

essential part of the Northern Ireland economy and a key element of the holiday experience. It's one of the strongest memory triggers and visitors increasingly want to search for authentic and local experiences."

Already the initiative has surpassed expectations. New foodie experiences that have been developed include Lough Erne Water Taxis Food Tours, a Trails and Ales cycling trail in County Down and McComb's Pub and Food Crawl.

"FOOD AND DRINK ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE NI ECONOMY AND KEY TO THE HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE"

So why all the activity?

"Food and drink experiences have become increasingly important to tourism as they offer destinations an opportunity to differentiate and celebrate indigenous foods. While food and drink are a vehicle through which our visitors can learn about our heritage, landscape and culture as well as meet our people, it also accounts for a significant proportion of visitor spend," explains Naomi.

"Northern Ireland's reputation as a good food destination has been steadily improving.

"Food and drink is also an

The Food Standards Agency in NI has been working side by side with Tourism NI during the year to highlight and promote restaurants and attractions in the country that have achieved a Food Hygiene rating of three or above.

There has also been some collaboration with Seafish NI to promote sustainable fishing in the area.

"We've also worked closely with Food NI and the Livestock Meat Commission to ensure that any produce being used at Tourism NI events can be traced from the plate back to the plot of land that it was reared on." ●



FROM PETRI DISH TO PRODUCER

Dr. David McCleery, Head of the Bacteriology Department at the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) on the work of his organisation which includes creating vaccines which are used globally in fighting endemic animal diseases.

As Head of the Bacteriology Department, Dr. David McCleery leads a team of 67, providing research, analytical services and specialist advice on the control of the major bacterial pathogens of animal and public health significance.

David is passionate about his work and about AFBI's multi-disciplinary approach. "Working alongside other disciplines and conducting innovative research and development, AFBI seeks to create novel solutions to problems and realise clear outcomes for customers," he says.

"We have conducted lots of research projects for **safe food** over the years," says David. "For example, we are currently conducting a project risk-profiling *Listeria* in food production environments and recently completed a project characterising ESBL *E.coli* in raw meat"

"The skill base within the Bacteriology Department

"WE ARE CONSTANTLY LOOKING FOR INNOVATIVE WAYS OF WORKING"

includes traditional and specialist bacteriology methods in addition to advanced molecular diagnostics, test development, immunology, genetics, experimental design, wildlife ecology and veterinary epidemiology. We have an international standing in bovine TB and *Campylobacter* research," he says.

"We have extensive collaborations and linkages with other research organisations within Europe, North America and elsewhere in the world."

The *Salmonella* Unit within the Branch is the EU recognised National Reference Laboratory for NI and conducts confirmation and serotyping of *Salmonella* from animals and related sources in NI, and statutory and surveillance work in relation to antimicrobial resistance in food-borne pathogens.

"In the area of food safety, the specialist expertise we offer includes the detection, characterisation and control of food-borne pathogens in the food chain, food hygiene and food preservation," explains David.

"The research undertaken aims to protect public health, add value to food products and improve industry competitiveness," he adds.

The Bacteriology Department also participates in an Animal Health Research Club and works with the University of Edinburgh (Roslin Institute) and the Scottish Rural University College to fine map genetic variants associated with TB resistance in cattle and to investigate the feasibility of genomic prediction for TB resistance.

"We are constantly looking for innovative ways of working. For example, in collaboration with the Statistics Department at Queen's University Belfast, we have a PhD student who has just started on a project to develop a mathematical model to assess spread and control of bovine TB integrating both domestic and wild host dynamics," says David. ●

ABOUT AFBI

Bovine TB, *Campylobacter*, Bluetongue, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, antimicrobial resistance, Schmallenberg and swine flu are among the microbiological challenges tackled by AFBI, the multi-disciplinary scientific institute based in NI which provides world-class services to Agri-food customers globally.

AFBI works in collaboration with partners on a 'translational' approach, providing a range of services from 'petri dish to producer' for government departments, public bodies and commercial companies. AFBI operates across seven sites in NI as well as a purpose-built marine research vessel, which operates in the Irish Sea from the Port of Belfast.

ABOUT DAVID

Background: Science, communication and public administration. David has held a number of positions across the Agri-food sector on the island of Ireland in the area of research and development.

Favourite Pastimes: Along with being a self-confessed foodie and a keen gardener, David has diverse musical tastes and tries to attend as many live concerts and gigs as he can.

THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND



Dr. Susan Steele

The Republic of Ireland's seafood industry contributes about €1 billion annually to its national income and employs up to 11,000 people. In this issue, we talk to Dr. Susan Steele, Chair of the board of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) about the challenges facing the industry.

The Republic of Ireland has an excellent reputation for the high quality of its seafood products, according to Dr. Susan Steele of the SFPA. The latest figures show that seafood exports are now worth €564 million. Domestic consumption is up 6% and countries as far afield as Nigeria, China, Cameroon and Ghana are the main export markets.

Maintaining that reputation and ensuring that the ROI fishing industry has a strong future are among the responsibilities of Susan's organisation.

Susan comes from Castletownbere on the beautiful Beara Peninsula in West Cork. She was just three years old when she decided to become a marine biologist and the sea has been her passion ever since. Along with her role at the SFPA, she sits on the Wildlife Committee of the Heritage Council.

The thriving seafood industry in the ROI has won fans throughout the world. Nigeria is the top export market, accounting for a staggering 46% of exports. Mackerel, horse

mackerel, blue whiting, herring, whelk and crab are the preferred products with the latter three showing good growth.

From a food safety point of view the main challenge, according to Susan, is traceability and documentation. "We urge all consumers and food businesses alike to only purchase from reputable suppliers. For example, food businesses have a legal obligation to source all mussels and live bivalve molluscs from reputable suppliers and with the necessary traceability and documentation

only," she says.

The main challenges facing the SFPA, particularly in the summer months are un-registered and recreational fishermen, especially with the new limits for lobster and crab fishing. "Regulations are in place regarding the minimum size that can be harvested to ensure these species can reach maturity and reproduce

to provide future stocks," she points out. The solution to the problem has been increased SFPA inshore patrols with more than 140 of these patrols having taken place since June this year.

The SFPA is also involved in a range of research projects. Susan points to the Sanitary Surveys, an essential first step towards establishing a microbiological

"WE URGE CONSUMERS AND FOOD BUSINESSES ALIKE TO ONLY PURCHASE FROM REPUTABLE SUPPLIERS"



The seafood sector in numbers

- €344 million worth of fish are landed into fishing ports
- €148 million worth of fish and shellfish are farmed around the coast
- 8,858 people are directly employed
- Exports to Nigeria and North Africa: €98 million
- Exports to Asia: €47 million
- The most valuable species in volume is Atlantic mackerel at 88,709 tonnes, worth €49 million
- The most valuable species by value are Dublin Bay prawns at 8,282 tonnes, worth €49 million



monitoring programme and which provide valuable information on the landscape surrounding classified production areas.

Advances in technology and production as well as new EU regulations are leading to changes

(BIM) and the Marine Institute. These events are free to attend and a one-stop opportunity for fishermen, processors and producers to learn more about these changes and have their queries answered by experts.

The next SFPA

**“MAINTAINING THE ROI’S
REPUTATION FOR HIGH
QUALITY SEAFOOD IS A KEY
RESPONSIBILITY”**

in the fishing industry in practice in ROI. To that end, the SFPA are holding a series of Information Breakfasts which include representatives from organisations including the ROI Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; The Air Corps; Bord Iascaigh Mhara

Information Breakfast takes place on 11th October from 8am to 12pm at the Maritime Hotel, Bantry, County Cork. ●

Future events:

- **Waterford City**, 15th November 2016
- **Tralee**, 7th December 2016
- **Galway City**, 25th January 2017
- **Cork City**, 22nd February 2017
- **Donegal town**, 22nd March 2017

To register for these events or to find out more about the SFPA check out www.sfpa.ie

PUTTING THE 'FUNDING' INTO SAFEFOOD'S TRAINING AND MOBILITY PROGRAMME

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safefood has renamed the Training and Mobility Programme to the Training and Mobility Funding Programme. Why? So that, as the saying goes, 'it does what is says on the tin'.

The word 'funding' in the title highlights that **safefood** has a 'funded' programme that enables **safefood** Knowledge Network members to spend time in another organisation to develop their knowledge/expertise in an area related to food safety. This is an ideal opportunity for members to enhance their skills and broaden their expertise. The knowledge and skills gained can then be shared within their organisation and with other Network members. For further details on how to apply for the Training and Mobility Funding programme, email: ttmp@safefood.eu

Get involved with THE FOOD CHAIN

We'd love to hear from you. Would you like us to feature your research or industry sector? What else would you like us to cover in the world of food safety? Send your article ideas, feedback and suggestions to knowledgegenetwork@safefood.eu

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Workshop on shelf-life studies

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) in conjunction with **safefood** and the ROI Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is hosting a one-day workshop on shelf-life studies on Thursday 10th November in the DAFM Backweston Laboratory Complex, Co. Kildare. The workshop will have a very practical focus and cover topics such as; (i) what regulators expect from food business operators in terms of shelf-life studies; (ii) what legal criteria must be met throughout a food product's shelf-life; and (iii) what options are available to help estimate, set and verify the shelf-life of food.

The workshop is free to attend and open to staff of public and private laboratories, food business operators and regulatory staff. For more information and to register please visit: www.fsai.ie/events/



Attendees at a recent SME event in Galway entitled 'Safer Food: Avoidance of Product recalls'. To date, **safefood** has co-hosted 8 free training workshops with Teagasc and CAFRE across the island of Ireland, with over 130 people in attendance representing 90 food businesses.



safefood sponsors an annual prize for the Best Food Safety essay in Queen's University, Belfast. Pictured is the 2016 winner, Nicola McNeice who is currently on the MSci Food Science & Food Security. Also pictured is Andrew Castles (**safefood**)

COMPETITION

