



Minutes of the thirty-first meeting of the Advisory Board of the Food Safety Promotion Board held on Friday, 20th August 2004, at 1100 am in **safefood**'s Boardroom, 7 Eastgate Avenue, Little Island, Co. Cork

PRESENT:

Cllr Bertie Kerr (Chairman)
Mr Don Anderson
Mr Leslie Craig
Mr Odran Flynn
Prof Patrick Fottrell
Mr Pat McColgan
Prof Sean Strain

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive
Mr Ray Dolan, Director, Planning & Resources
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director, Scientific and Technical
Mr Barney Whelan, Director, Marketing and Communications
Dr Margaret Patterson, FSPB
Ms Jane Lennox, acted as Secretary

APOLOGIES:

Prof Charles Daly (Vice-Chairman)
Ms Carmel Foley
Ms Catherine Murphy
Mr Damien O'Dwyer
Ms Anne Speed

1. Introduction and Apologies

Noted: The Chairman welcomed all members. The Chairman noted all apologies.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 21st May 2004

Agreed: The minutes were adopted without amendment.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Chief Executive's Report

Events

Our 'Why Risk It' Conference in Cork in June was successful and well attended.

The Review of the public food laboratory service was presented to Minister of State, Brian Lenihan, TD in July.

The Chief Executive and the Chairman appeared before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture and Food on 30th June and the organisation was very well received.

Staffing

A Senior Technical Executive specialising in nutrition, Dr Marian Faughnan commenced employment in July.

safefood are currently in negotiation with candidates for the Chief Specialists posts in Microbiology and Toxicology and a selection panel has recommended a candidate for the Public Health Specialist post which will complete the last of our 30 permanent posts.

The Departments have indicated that there will be no more posts till end 2006 due to current restrictions in the Southern public service, and the ongoing re-structuring of health services in the South. Mr Higgins is working closely with the Departments on a proposed revised staffing plan.

Scientific Advisory Committee

The next meeting takes place on 2nd September 2004. The tenure of the current SAC expires in January and the Board agreed to address the matter at the next Board Meeting.

Marketing and Communications Update

Research

Mr Whelan informed the Board that the results of safetrak 3 are due on Monday, 30th August 2004.

Events

The Ploughing Championships will take place on 28th and 29th September 2004 and **safefood** will share a stand with Department of Agriculture and Food.

Education

Safefood in association with the Department of Agriculture and Food have produced a labelling resource for schools and will pilot this with 30 schools. The launch of this resource will take place at the Ploughing Championship in September.

Mr Whelan also updated the Board on current Direct Marketing activity plans, publications, PR and sponsorship activities.

Science and Technical Update

Research Activities

Dr Quigley briefly explained the rationale of choosing the following research projects. **safefood** put out a call for the research proposals with a closing date for receipt of applications of 8th October 2004.

Project Title
Sentinel surveillance of <i>Campylobacter</i> in Ireland
A study of listeriosis and food contamination on the island of Ireland
Scoping study to investigate the feasibility of developing methodologies for a basket survey
Food Poverty in Northern Ireland
Profiling for abuse of anabolic agents in meat production
Development of techniques for the detection of anti nutritional and toxic compounds in "health foods"
The occurrence and epidemiology of <i>Salmonella</i> in Pork

Prof Strain would like future research calls to go through the Scientific Advisory Committee for comment.

Dr Quigley updated the Board on recent Science and Technical activities, forthcoming events and publications.

LabLink Activities

Dr Quigley informed the Board on the significant amount of activity on the laboratory side with the positive development in the reporting system for rapid access to laboratory results, a cross-Directorate team involving the Lablink Unit and IT has been set-up to help develop food data reporting systems in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

5. Corporate Plan Update

The CEO presented the most recent draft of the Corporate Plan 2005 – 2007 to the Board and opened the paper for comment and questions.

The basic Corporate Plan outlines the direction of the organisation for the next three years, setting out strategic objectives in the following key functions:

- I. Governance and evaluation
- II. Marketing and Communications
- III. Scientific Assessment
- IV. Education and Community Development
- V. Laboratory Linkages and Information Management

The Board supported the Corporate Plan with some comments.

Professor Fottrell valued the plan's complementary approach and encouraged an independent systematic evaluation. He also agreed on the particular importance for the organisation to keep our government stakeholders apprised of our activities, and address all relevant governance issues.

Professor Anderson complimented the plan and suggested that we should include a section on our website, perhaps as a FAQ, on 'What we do that others don't?'

6. Screening of Food Chain

Mr Higgins outlined the proposed approach outlined in our Corporate Plan. In the draft Corporate Plan 2005 – 2007, **safefood** has determined a complementary and evaluation-based approach to its activities over the next three years. Furthermore, the organisation's vision is 'an environment where consumers have confidence in the food they eat'. On the basis of the above we have proposed a series of screening exercises on sectors within the food chain, to provide reassurance for consumers.

The discussion focused primarily on the prioritisation of the sectors for screening. While the Chair expressed the opinion that a relatively

straight-forward sector should be selected first, it was the general view of the Board that the area of greatest concern to consumers should be the first priority. Mr Higgins thanked the Board for its advice on the matter and indicated that the matter would also be addressed by the SAC at its forthcoming meeting.

7. Audit Committee Report

Mr Dolan gave the Board an update on the highlights of the first FSPB Audit Committee Meeting of 21st May 2004. It was recognised that **safefood**'s particular circumstances in not having a governing board created unique challenges. The question of whether the Chief Executive should be a formal member of the Committee was raised.

Action: At the Board's suggestion Mr Dolan will contact the Comptroller and Auditor General's office for advice on the composition of the Committee.

8. Date of next meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Friday 1st October 2004 at 11.00 am at **safefood**'s boardroom, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

9. Any other Business

Noted: There being no further business the meeting closed.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____