



Minutes of the 62<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Advisory Board of **safefood**  
held on Friday 29 August 2008 at 11.00 am  
**safefood's** Dublin office, Block B Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

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**PRESENT:**

Mr John Dardis (JD - Chair)  
Mr Campbell Tweedie (CT – Vice Chair)  
Ms Lynn Ni Bhaoighealláin (LNB)  
Mr Joe Byrne (JB)  
Ms Aoife Healy (AH)  
Mr Seamus Sheridan (SS)  
Mr Con Traas (CT)  
Ms Jane Wells (JW)  
Ms Susan Heraghty (SH)  
Mr Neven Maguire (NM)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)  
Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition (CFN)  
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director of Marketing (FG)  
Mr Ray Dolan, Director of Corporate Operations (RD)  
Ms. Marian Faughnan (MF)  
Ms. Erin Brennan (EB) Secretary  
Ms Emma Corbett (EC) Secretary

**APOLOGIES:**

Dr Margaret Patterson (MP)  
Dr. Ken Baird  
Mr Brian Cunningham (BC)  
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director, Food Science (TQ)  
Mr Peter Dewhurst, Finance Manager (PD)

**1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES**

**Noted:** The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the Members, particularly Erin Brennan who is replacing Emma Corbett in the Dublin office. He wished Emma Corbett well in her future career. The apologies of Dr. Patterson, Dr. Baird, Mr. Cunningham, Dr. Quigley, and Mr. Dewhurst were also noted.

**2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 MAY 2008**

**Agreed:** The minutes were approved and it was noted that one person on the board had still not submitted their Declaration of Interest to Emma Corbett. The Chair emphasized the importance of this

document and advised whomever it was to submit it as soon as possible.

### 3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- Noted:** The 2009 Business Plan is currently being developed.
- Its development is shadowed by the current budget uncertainty, as caused by recent budget cuts to the Department of Health and Children and also the current Euro to Sterling exchange rates.
    - o The Sterling exchange rate is of particular importance to the 2009 Business Plan because **safefood's** budget is calculated in Euro and, as such, value from Northern Ireland will be lower because the rate has decreased. It was noted that **safefood's** funding ratio is fixed at 70:30 and even though the sterling rate has declined, the organisation is still funded on this basis. Both the budgetary forecast and the decline of sterling are considered to be serious challenges and are currently being addressed. Clarity on both issues by the board's next meeting.
- Noted:** **safefood** is strengthening its in-house scientific resources with the use of third-level university internships. Internships aim to provide the holders with practical 'real-life' experience and are available for up to three years.
- Noted:** Three resignations were received in August (Senior Scientific Manager, IT executive, and PA in the Dublin office). All were wished well in their future careers. Approval for an additional resource for the North-South obesity forum is still in progress, but considering the current public finance situation may not be forthcoming.
- Noted:** The 2007 Audit has been completed and signed off by the Comptrollers and Auditor-General in both Jurisdictions in June 2008. These accounts are currently being integrated into the 2007 Annual Report, which is currently being finalized.
- Noted:** The Five Year Report was submitted to the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland in June.
- Noted:** A draft report on the surveillance of food borne disease is being prepared by **safefood** to be presented to the SAC at their 2 October meeting. All board members are invited, as this is a good opportunity for them to meet members of the scientific advisory structure.
- Noted:** A leaflet was published on 21 July 2008 in conjunction with the Health Protection Surveillance Centre in regards to pregnancy and *Listeria*. This is of particular relevance to Northern Ireland, as they have just recently dealt with a *Listeria*-related problem in hospitals.

- Noted:** **safefood** led a multi-agency food safety and agriculture meeting to discuss the policy implications for the island of Ireland of the **safefood** funded project "Development of a risk assessment model for *Salmonella* in pork on the island of Ireland" and other recent developments at EU level. The group have agreed to continue informal discussions.
- Noted:** For the 2008 Christmas message in 2008, **safefood** plans to commission project work in order to simplify turkey cooking instructions and also provide guidelines for the safe cooking of turkeys that are cavity stuffed.
- Noted:** The fourth annual **safefood** Biotoxin Research Network conference was held in Belfast in July. The conference dealt with the *Azaspiracid* toxin in Irish shellfish, which was a problem in the months leading up to the conference.
- Noted:** Training workshops on food allergies is being organised for October 2008, highlighting the role Environmental Health Officers and third level catering play in mitigating the risk to the food allergen. There is a need for ongoing training in the catering sector due to the great turnover in staff.
- Noted:** The Little Steps Campaign had a very successful launch in Dublin and Belfast this past June. The second phase of the project is currently underway and the third is due to start 8 September.
- Noted:** **safefood** funded a consumer research survey with a representative sample of adults in ROI to investigate knowledge and attitudes towards the current National Dietary Guidelines. This research was overseen by CFN and the review, which should be out in November, clarified that the public prefers less detailed dietary guideline information. Overall, the research was helpful.
- Noted:** Smoothies have become a very trendy and popular food item but their contribution to fruit and vegetable intake, as well as their sugar content, is often misunderstood. **safefood** funded a consumer survey of adults on IOI in June 2008 and the results are currently being analysed. The results will in turn be used to support consumer messages.
- Noted:** Two research projects in the area of food poverty ('Decent Food for All Programme' in Armagh/Dungannon and the 'Diet, Nutrient Intake and Attitudes among Disadvantaged Groups' on the island of Ireland) have been completed and the project findings will be launched at a designated workshop in November 2008.
- Noted:** Community Food Initiatives are projects that improve the availability and accessibility of healthy food for low-income groups at a local level, using a community development approach. **safefood** will be funding between five and seven initiatives over a

three-year period. Each initiative will receive annual funding over a period of three years to set up, manage, and sustain a project.

- Noted:** The Nutrition Exchange Programme (NEP) was piloted from May 2006-May 2007. The program will continue for another year. Initially the numbers of applications from NI were small, but they have doubled from 11 to 22 since the pilot programme.
- MH noted that there are more community dieticians in ROI than in NI, and the ratio of academics to dieticians using the resource was approximately 1:6. Therefore, the NEP is now trying to attract other types of professionals, in addition to the community dieticians.
  - MH informed that the NEP is a low-cost project but a great way to exchange ideas about best practice and create networks/new channels for **safefood**.

- Noted:** The last in the first series of Consumer Focused Reviews (pork food chain) is to be launched in mid-September. The next CFR ("Where Does Our Food Come From?") is underway. Under this theme issues governing and impacting the importation of food from Third Countries will be discussed.
- An external group with a wide range of members has been established to help direct the review.
  - It is anticipated that a first draft of the review will be completed by the beginning of October.

- Noted:** Board members are invited to attend the mini conference in the afternoon preceding the SAC meeting (1 October). The theme of the conference is "The Role of Science in Society – Discussing the Risks and Benefits of Food" and will be held in the Radisson Hotel in Cork.

- Noted:** **safefood's** "Speak Out" campaign aims to empower consumers to speak out if they are unhappy with the food hygiene practices in retail and catering establishments. This campaign will benefit the catering sector because studies have shown that 60% of customers will not return if they are unhappy with their food.

- Noted:** The summer cooking campaign was launched on the 30 June/1 July in Belfast and Dublin respectively.
- MH thanked NM for his participation in the BBQ master classes that were launched at each event

- Noted:** The following press releases were released since the last Board meeting:
- 9 June – National Food Safety Week in NI
  - 16 June – Little Steps – obesity campaign
  - 24 June – Welcome National Dairy Council campaign on milk consumption
  - 30 June – Summer Campaign
  - 31 July – *Listeria* leaflet

- Noted:** MF presented **safe food**'s nutrition strategy to the Board
- key nutritional issues such as obesity, food poverty, low fruit & vegetable intakes, high intake on calorie dense, micronutrient foods, and high salt intake were discussed
  - the Little Steps campaign was discussed and an update provided to the Board
    - o Little Steps brochures have been distributed to the HSE and help lines, but have yet to be given to schools

There being no further business the meeting ended.

**Date of next meeting:** Friday 7 November in Enniskillen.