



Minutes of the thirty-seventh meeting of the Advisory Board of the Food Safety Promotion Board held on Thursday 10th March, 2005 at 9.30 a.m. at the Armagh City Hotel, Armagh

PRESENT:

Cllr Bertie Kerr (Chairman)
Prof Don Anderson
Mr Odran Flynn
Prof Patrick Fottrell
Ms Catherine Murphy
Ms Anne Speed
Mr Damien O'Dwyer
Mr Patrick McGolgan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive
Mr Peter Dewhurst, Director, Planning and Resources
Mr Ray Dolan, Director Marketing and Communications
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Consumer Services Manager
Mr Tim O'Connor, Joint Secretary NSMC Secretariat
Dr Peter Smyth, Joint Secretary NSMC Secretariat
Ms Valerie Devlin, NSMC Secretariat
Mr Kevin Lyons, NSMC Secretariat
Ms Noeleen McDonnell, NSMC Secretariat

PRESENTATION

Mr Ray Dolan, Director, Marketing and Communications
Ms. Fiona Gilligan, Consumer Services Manager

APOLOGIES

Prof Charles Daly (Vice-Chairman)
Ms Carmel Foley
Prof Sean Strain
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director, Science and Technical

1 WELCOME TO NSMC JOINT SECRETARIES

The Chairman welcomed the Joint Secretaries Mr Tim O'Connor and Dr. Peter Smyth and thanked them for hosting the meeting at the offices of the Joint Secretariat.

2 INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed all members and attendees. The Chairman noted all apologies.

3 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 28TH OF JANUARY 2005

Agreed: The minutes were adopted without amendment.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Planning and Resources

Human Resources

Interviews have taken place for all of the vacant positions. All positions were filled - however, the Chief Executive officer emphasised the poor response of only three applications for the Administration Assistant position, based in Dublin. This is as a result of the very low starting salary, which is also a factor in employee retention. A case will be made to the Joint Secretariat. Professor Fottrell recommended the organisation look at Job Sharing

Organisational and Structural Review

The consultants, Ernst and Young commenced their exercise on the Organisational and Structural review on Monday March 7th and are expected to complete by end April.

Audit

The Comptroller and Auditor-General commenced the Audit of the 2004 Accounts on Monday March 7th

Nutrition and Public Health

The Food and Nutrition Forum convening group meeting is being held on March 10th.

Professor Fottrell questioned how safefood was meeting its' key targets in the area of nutrition and what was the basis of working with other agencies. The Chief Executive Officer said the basis of working was complementarity, but there was a need to focus on what we can do uniquely. Regrettably, the report of the Obesity Task Force gave no particular role to safefood. Ms. Catherine Murphy reported she was working on part of the transition team on work to be transferred to the Health Service Executive and said that safefood should be involved.

The Chief Executive Officer indicated that Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan will at the next meeting give a presentation on public health issues with particular focus on nutrition.

Burden of Acute Gastroenteritis Research

The Chairman concurred with Professor Fottrell's comment that these outreach programmes are key for safefood and effort should be put in to these programmes.

Laboratory Linkage Integration

The Chief Executive Officer highlighted the commencement of the Laboratory Linkage Project in Northern Ireland. There are two laboratories in Northern Ireland, but the equivalent project in the South would be more complex as there are seven laboratories. This is a key part of **safefood's** remit, and successful completion of the integration project will be a major achievement.

MAP (Mycobacterium avium subsp. Paratuberculosis)

Dr Patterson and Mr O'Dwyer both expressed support for the position of safefood in adhering to the international consensus on this issue.

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

The Chief Executive Officer noted that potential nominees had been agreed for the new Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), and the final agreement would form a paper under the Interim Procedures. Anne Speed would welcome more feedback on SAC meetings in future.

6 JOINT SECRETARIES OVERVIEW

Mr Tim O'Connor provided an overview of the development of the North-South Implementation Bodies since the Good Friday Agreement of May 1998. Despite the suspension of the Legislative Assembly, over 110 decisions had been taken under the 'care and maintenance'

arrangements introduced in November 2002. He noted the more joint and consultative approach that had been taken recently across all the Bodies – for example, the Business Planning held for all bodies in Armagh on February 28th.

Dr Peter Smyth echoed the comments of Mr. Tim O'Connor. He indicated that the NSMC was moving forward with a number of issues e.g. Pensions, Freedom of Information etc. He expected that there would be a squeeze on Budgets going forward particularly from Northern Ireland. However, **safefood**'s involvement in collaboration and communication was a key to success.

The Chairman thanked the Joint Secretaries for their contribution and was sorry to note that the two Joint Secretaries would be leaving at the same time. However, progress had been positive and he believed that the North-South process was working well. **Safefood** had progressed with excellent North-South progress in the area of, for example, laboratory collaboration. However, we should make a case for additional funding for an Enteric Reference Laboratory.

safetrak Market Research.

Mr. Ray Dolan and Ms. Fiona Gilligan updated the Board on the results of the latest Amarach Market research (**safetrack** 4).

The main trends are upwards as regards the work and visibility of **safefood**. However, there were increased levels of consumer concern regarding food poisoning and country of origin issues.

Salt content of food was also an issue as fifty-two per-cent of all meals are seasoned at tables.

Four out of five consumers were exposed to **safefood** advertisements.

Healthy Eating represented an opportunity for **safefood** and this could be exploited perhaps through General Practitioners.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman pointed out that one of the key messages was stressing to the consumer that there are strict food control regimes. The Chief Executive Officer explained that this would be one of the functions of the Consumer Focussed Review.

Mr O'Dwyer indicated that the new food Hygiene Package will force farmers to put further rigorous food safety practices in place.

There was a lack of public knowledge regarding the correct quantity of salt intake required, even though the public appeared to be aware of the negative effects of salt. This may be associated with labelling issues.

The next meeting of the Advisory Board will take place in the Cork headquarters on Friday May 13th.

There being no other business, the meeting closed.