



Minutes of the 61<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Advisory Board of **safefood**  
held on Friday 30 May 2008 at 11.00 am  
**safefood's** Boardroom, 7 Eastgate Avenue, Eastgate, Little Island, Co. Cork

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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)  
Mr Brian Cunningham (BC)  
Ms Susan Heraghty (SH)  
Mr Neven Maguire (NM)  
Dr. Ken Baird

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)  
Mr Ray Dolan, Director of Corporate Operations (RD)  
Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition (CFN)  
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director, Food Science (TQ)  
Mr Peter Dewhurst, Finance Manager (PD)  
Ms Emma Corbett (EC) Secretary

**APOLOGIES:**

Dr Margaret Patterson (MP)  
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director of Marketing (FG)

**1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES**

**Noted:** The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the Members, particularly Neven Maguire for his first Board meeting. Apologies were accepted from the Director of Marketing and Communication, Fiona Gilligan, who was recently married. The Chair wished to congratulate her on the occasion. Dr. Patterson's apologies were also noted.

**2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2008**

**Agreed:** The minutes were approved, subject to one minor change.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- Noted:** The topics; Safe Water Supply and Genetically Modified Food were identified at the April meeting as issues for consideration.
- CFN pointed out that the first day of the Infectious Intestinal Disease (IID) conference was devoted to safe water supply. Three speakers from both NI and ROI gave presentations. The differences in the prevalence of private water supplies in ROI (19%) and NI (1%) were noted.
  - CFN reported that it was the general view that emphasis is needed in training staff in water treatment. In addition an upgrade of water treatment facilities in NI and ROI is essential to bring water supplies up to standard. It was also noted that surface water is a major source in NI, whereas there is a greater reliance in ROI on deep water table sources.
  - The Chair asked if the restaurant industry was affected by safe water concerns.
  - Offering tap water, washing raw foods (salad) and keeping fish fresh were all issues that would seriously affect the restaurant industry if dealing with questionable water supply.
  - SS felt the Galway water problem could easily happen again and the public are not clearly informed that boiling water to avoid contamination was all that is necessary.
  - CT stated that the meat industry uses large amounts of water in preparing meat for market and therefore any question over safe water supply could potentially be a huge problem.

### 4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (DOI)

- Action:** MH asked members to submit their completed DOI's.

### 5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- Noted:** The North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meeting took place on 28 May in Queens University, Belfast. Ministers from both jurisdictions were present and acknowledged **safefood**'s progress. The establishment of an obesity forum between the two jurisdictions was endorsed.

- Noted:** The CEO, Chair and Vice Chair met with Dame Deirdre Hutton, Chair, and Tim Smith, CEO of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in London, in April. The meeting was a useful opportunity to enhance communication planning between both agencies. The FSA which has approximately four hundred scientific staff, is considered a key partner by **safefood** in relation to scientific matters.

- Noted:** **safefood** is strengthening its science resources and relationship with third-level universities, through internships. Two internships commenced in May 2007 with UCC and two others are in process with UCG and Queens.

- Noted:** An additional staffing resource request is under consideration by the sponsor departments for the major public health challenge area of obesity. After open competitions in April Andrew Castles accepted the position of the new Events Executive and Emma Corbett is the new PA (both in Dublin).
- Noted:** The 2007 Audit is due to be certified by June 30 2008.
- Noted:** A new research project titled: "Control of Campylobacter in poultry – development of a dissemination programme of lessons for farmers on the Island of Ireland" commenced in ROI in the past month.  
- TQ explained a similar project has been on-going in NI. The aim of this new project is to analyse the previous data and to prepare the findings for dissemination in the industry.
- Noted:** Recently completed research titled; "Determination of the appropriate cooking regimes for recommendations for the safe roasting/cooking of stuffed turkey"; provides scientific back-up for **safefood**'s messages on cooking turkey.
- Noted:** The project titled; "Dietary patterns, food intakes, attitudes and their determinants among low socio-economic adults and children: an in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis"; highlights the fact that messages are not getting through to low socio-economic groups.  
The Chair informed that the Ministers are keen on seeing improvements in communication, especially in rural areas. He mentioned that Dr Jane Wilde, Chief Executive of the Institute of Public Health (IPH) in Ireland, at the NSMC meeting, highlighted the risk factors involved in not reaching this community and the potential increase in diseases as a result.
- Noted:** The surveillance working group, a sub-committee of the SAC provides advice on the harmonisation of surveillance of food-related disease in humans, animals and the food supply. A report is expected to be presented at the SAC in October.
- Noted:** **safefood** is involved in a European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) project to develop a European Risk Assessment for Salmonella in Pork.  
- TQ informed that the systems of assessment in NI and ROI are different. He stated that 1% - 2% of abattoir supply is tested over a five week period in ROI. Human infections have not increased and have reduced in the past few years, but zero tolerance is required to protect public health fully.  
The Department of Agriculture is assessing a new control system. The UK has a new system that is being implemented. The EU is set to issue a press release in June.  
- SS emphasised that salmonella is killed by heat/cooking correctly.  
- MH pointed out that this is highlighted in the next **safefood** CFR on pork and will provide reassurance to consumers.

- CFN emphasised the point that considerable improvement in salmonella surveillance in both the chicken and pork industry is needed rather than putting more safety responsibility on consumers.
- MH noted the importance of an enteric reference service in enhancing traceability.

**Noted:** The Food Allergen Training programme which has run successfully in the border region of NI and ROI will be rolled out throughout all-Island. It provides training to the ~~enviromental~~environmental health officers and others to increase levels of awareness in food allergies.

**Noted:** Contaminated Irish shellfish products had recently been highlighted in the media. Azaspiracid was the toxin in question. **safefood** commissioned a study with research teams from QUB, DCU and CIT to develop efficient methods for detecting this toxin before it enters the market. A workshop is scheduled in Belfast for July which will cover the hazards and ways to manage such risks.

**Noted:** The Infectious Intestinal Disease study was launched on 13 May.

- SS enquired if the term "food borne" would have negative affects on the food industry.
- CFN confirmed that it was estimated that one third of all IID's transmitted are food borne.

**Noted:** The weigh2live website, a weight control resource with no commercial links, was launched in May in collaboration with INDI (Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute).

**Noted:** The Consumer Focus Review (CFR) on milk received large media coverage highlighting the low consumption of milk in teenage girls and women.

The CFR on pork is ready for launch in June.

The next CFR will cover the broader topic of "Where does our food come from" such as: ethical labelling, carbon footprint, food miles and sustainability. In house development is in process.

**Noted:** The Scientific Advisory Committee's (SAC) ninth meeting was held on 24 April. A draft paper on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) was presented and the final paper will be available for the October meeting.

The SAC mini-conference themed; 'The Role of Science in Society-Discussing the Risks and Benefits' will be held in Cork on 1 October. All Advisory Board members are invited to attend.

**Noted:** **safefood** for Life; a safety and hygiene resource for the post-primary school sector has been successful in the ROI. Promotion of the resource in NI has proved more difficult.

**Noted:** The Taste Buds resource for primary schools is set to be rolled out across the Island of Ireland shortly.

- Noted:** The Hands of Doom primary school resource is currently being evaluated with the assistance of UCC. It has been in place for the past four years.
- Noted:** **safefood** and the HSE are developing a campaign tackling childhood obesity, aimed at parents. The campaign was endorsed by the Health Ministers. Discussions are also in place to involve the Health Promotion Agency Northern Ireland. The campaign will launch in Dublin on 16<sup>th</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> June in Belfast by TV, radio, web and outdoor advertising.
- Noted:** Phase three of the 'Speak Out' consumer campaign will be launched in autumn 2008.
- Noted:** A syndicated article entitled "Brain boosting snacks for study time" was issued in April.

## **6. Genetically modified food**

- Noted:** Dr. Pat O'Mahony, Food Safety Authority of Ireland gave an informative presentation on Genetically Modified (GM) food and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO). He welcomed questions afterward.
- Noted:** KB suggested that a possible approach for the Island of Ireland is to remain GM-free to give it an advantage in developing a niche GMO-free food market.
- Noted:** MH pointed out that GM food is a low-profile topic for the general public. He stated that it is not so much a safety issue, but rather an environmental concern.

There being no further business the meeting ended.

**Date of next meeting:** Friday, 29 August.