

Meeting of the **safefood** Advisory CommitteeThursday, 8th September 2016Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute - 18a Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX

MINUTES**SAC members present:** Prof Margaret Patterson - Chair

Prof Martin Caraher
Ms Amanda McCloat
Mr Michael Bell
Mr Martin Roper
Ms Therese Coleman

SAC apologies:

Prof Moira Dean
Mr Kenneth Carroll
Mr Robert Huey
Ms Maria Jennings
Dr Christine Domegan
Mr Dermott Jewell

safefood staff:

Mr Ray Dolan, Chief Executive
Ms Fiona Gilligan
Dr Gary Kearney
Dr James McIntosh
Dr Charmaine McGowan
Ms Colette O'Shea
Mr Dermot Moriarty

Invited guests:

Dr Lynsey Hollywood, QUB
Dr Catherine Jordan, EIQA
Mr Richard Wright, (Agrifood Journalist, NI)
Mr Derek Thompson, Gluten Free Ireland

1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The chairperson welcomed the **safefood** Advisory Committee (SAC) members and **safefood** staff to the meeting at the Agriculture and Biosciences Institute in Belfast. Apologies were noted from six SAC members.

2. Minutes of the April 2016 SAC meeting & matters arising

The minutes from the last SAC meeting held on Thursday, 28th April 2016 were reviewed and agreed subject to a minor change. In section 4d. *SAC research ideas tour de table*, it was noted that *E. coli* is now an important cause of food poisoning incidents in the UK rather than the most important cause.

There were six matters arising and these were addressed.

- I. **4a. The potential role for safefood in establishing a database of food safety research on the island of Ireland to be investigated:** There were logistical considerations with regard to setting up such a database, in particular who the end user would be and why they would use it. Mapping of research data has been done in the case of nutrition. For food safety research it was agreed this would be a substantial task with no clear boundaries. It was agreed that this was an issue for **safefood** to decide given the significant resource requirements involved.
- II. **4b(1). Human Health & Nutrition to consider the potential for using focussed research to build the evidence base on the issue of including exercise equivalents on food labels to expend the associated calories:** There is a resource requirement for the inclusion of activity equivalents on menus, etc. There is some progress made in different regions with regard to this issue. However, there is still considerable debate as to how this can be achieved for the benefit of the consumer.
- III. **4b(2). Food Science to further develop the research idea concerning investigating the capacity of food manufacturing businesses on the island of Ireland to perform adequate Food Defence analyses of their production systems.** It was noted that the food industry is playing a leading role in this regard and adheres to the BRC standard. However, there are still considerable vulnerabilities within the food industry and this project was considered to be well worthwhile.
- IV. **4b(3). Food Science to scope key issues in regard to the ability of Campylobacter in biofilms to transfer to surfaces in a domestic kitchen and the effectiveness of decontamination methods, how potential outcomes from any associated research can be imparted to consumers and whether other organisations are currently investigating this topic.** This is being addressed as part of a wider EU-funded project and **safefood** will continue to watch developments in this regard.
- V. **4c. Food Science to consider efforts to support SMEs with regard to their food safety obligations.** This was addressed under section 4b. **safefood** Knowledge Network Development.
- VI. **4d. Based on the discussions of potential research ideas from the members, safefood to determine potential research ideas that can be taken forward.** The CEO of **safefood** has written

to other stakeholders in the food arena, including FSA, FSAI, PHA, Teagasc, CAFRE and DAFM, to garner their research priorities for the short term. This information is currently being collated.

3. **safefood** media campaign updates

Updates were given on three **safefood** media campaigns:– (a) Childhood obesity, (b) Folic acid and (c) 4C's of food safety

(a) Childhood obesity

An update on the three-year childhood obesity campaign was given.

Noted: The format used took greater account of parents from a disadvantaged background.

Noted: There were multiple factors influencing their food choices, particularly for their children.

Noted: The television advertisement used during this phase of the campaign was shown.

(b) Folic acid

An update on the latest iteration of the Folic Acid campaign was given.

Noted: A purely digital campaign that ran in June/July of 2016

Noted: Message was to emphasise the importance of the advice surrounding folic acid supplementation.

Noted: The radio campaign add was played. 26% increase in folic acid sales following the 2015 iteration of the **safefood** campaign.

(c) 4C's of food safety

An update on the latest food safety campaign aimed at the over 65's was given.

Noted: Campaign was grounded in WHO and **safefood** research that showed over 65's are more susceptible to food poisoning.

Noted: A lot of elderly who get food poisoning don't necessarily make the connection with food. **safefood** research showed that the elderly are confident in their cooking skills and in controlling their own diet.

Noted: The television advertisement used during this phase of the campaign was shown.

4. **safefood** research

4a. **safefood** Community Food Initiatives

A brief overview the Community Food Initiatives was given. The members received a document describing the aims of the Community Food Initiatives.

Noted: This latest iteration of the Community Food Initiatives is a 3-year programme that focuses on low income families.

Noted: This factors in innovative projects that pilot new developments that include 13 Leader programmes – 9 in ROI and 4 in NI.

Noted: Each Leader programme is required to stage two networking and sustainability events per year

4b. **safefood** Knowledge Network Development

An overview of the latest development of the **safefood** Knowledge Network was given.

Noted: A synopsis of the achievements of the Knowledge Networks that ran from 2011-15 was given including the value-added elements that are somewhat difficult to capture.

Noted: The previous disparate role of a number of facilitators has been replaced by an 'Expert Facilitator Group' who will advise on the most pertinent food safety issues that **safefood** should focus on. A programme for the year will be drawn up following the initial meeting of the Expert Facilitator Group.

Noted: Attracting greater food industry membership of the Knowledge Network will be a worthwhile achievement. The resources provided will be critical in this regard.

5. **safefood** Food Hypersensitivity

Presented by guest speaker: Mr Derek Thompson, *Gluten Free Ireland*

An overview of the work of Gluten Free Ireland in assisting coeliac consumers in Northern Ireland.

Noted: The difficulties of following a gluten-free diet in Northern Ireland were presented including the availability of GF food.

Noted: There is still work to be done in the catering sector with regard to adequate training of the staff and management for controlling gluten in food.

Noted: There is considerable interest in Northern Ireland in GF food and events run on this theme are usually very well attended.

6. Guest speaker

The impact of cooking and related food skills on healthiness of diets

Presented by: Dr Lynsey Hollywood, QUB

Noted: Confidence and enjoyment impacted on consumers intention to cook from scratch again whereas perceived difficulty did not

Noted: Communications need to emphasise the pleasure and enjoyment of cooking in order to encourage consumers to try it. This could be done using technological mechanisms such as smartphones and web-based facilities.

Noted: The challenge is to find ways of communicating the outcomes to different community groups

7. Guest speaker

A needs assessment of food safety knowledge and skills within small or medium sized food manufacturing enterprises on the island of Ireland

Presented by: Dr Catherine Jordan, EIQA

Noted: Food business owners (FBO's) report that they realise the need for food safety and prioritise food safety to protect their customers and their reputation in the industry;

Noted: Food business operators confirm that they are compliant in practice but may fall behind in documenting/recording throughout the day and hence admit that they are not always compliant on paper!

Noted: However, they also state that food safety regulation is a financial and administrative burden and in the current format is unsuited to small business needs;

8. Guest speaker

The importance of verifiable food safety standards post Brexit to access Single Market

Presented by: Mr Richard Wright – Agrifood Journalist, NI

Noted: We should never underestimate the capacity of a food scare to impact on consumer confidence

Noted: The food industry generally responds well to food crises. Safety is now central to everything they do.

Noted: What will happen to the EU-wide food safety controls, such as the RASFF system, post Brexit? Also, what influence will structures such as EFSA have on food safety standards in a post-Brexit UK? These are just some of the many uncertainties that Brexit has highlighted.

9. AOB & date for next meetings

Noted: The dates of for subsequent meetings of the SAC in 2017 will be established once the competition for new committee members has been completed. This is expected by end of December 2016.

Close of meeting