



'To protect and improve public health, by fostering and maintaining confidence in the food supply on the island of Ireland in partnership with others'

CONSULTATION PAPER ON SECTION 75 SCREENING

March 2006

This document is available in a range of accessible formats and minority ethnic languages, on request.

Comment/feedback will be accepted in the format preferred by the consultee.

Contents

Section 1 – General information	3
1. Introduction	3
2. Making Consultation Accessible	3
3. Giving us your views and contact information.....	3
4. Feedback	3
Section 2 – <i>safefood</i>	4
1. Background of <i>safefood</i>	4
2. Accountability	4
3. Responsibilities.....	4
4. The statutory duties on equality	4
5. Screening and Consultation.....	5
6. Organisational structure.....	5
7. Identification of Policies	6
8. Screening criteria	6
9. Results of Internal Screening Programme and timetabling	7
10. Screening consultation	7
Appendix	9
CONSULTATION ON <i>safefood</i> 's SCREENING OF ITS POLICIES FOR EQUALITY IMPACT.....	9

Section 1 – General information

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to invite views on the equality impacts of **safefood** policies and processes under our legislative remit to assist **safefood** in carrying out equality screening for the purposes of S75 Northern Ireland Act 1998.

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and wish to hear your views on how best this can be achieved.

2. Making Consultation Accessible

safefood is committed to assisting all stakeholders to participate fully in this process and would welcome feedback on how the consultation process can be made accessible.

This document is available on our website:

www.safefoodonline.com/about_equality.asp.

It can also be made available in a range of accessible formats on request.

3. Giving us your views and contact information

We have listed a number of questions for your consideration and would welcome written feedback on the proformas attached. However, this is optional and feedback will be accepted in format preferred by the consultee.

The consultation period will be open for eight weeks and we would appreciate your replies by **5pm Friday 26 May 2006**.

Patricia McCarthy
7 East Gate Avenue
Little Island
Cork
Republic of Ireland

Telephone: 00 353 (0)21 2304100
Fax: 00 353 (0)21 2304111
Email: pmccarthy@safefoodonline.com

4. Feedback

A summary of the responses from this consultation will be compiled at the end of the consultation period. This will be provided to all consultation participants and also placed on the **safefood** website.

Section 2 – *safefood*

1. Background of *safefood*

safefood was established on 2 December 1999 as one of the Implementation Bodies under the Agreement between the Government of Ireland and Government of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Belfast Agreement). **safefood** has a clear operational remit and implements on an all-island and cross border basis, policies and decisions of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

Funding is provided by the respective governments of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

2. Accountability

safefood is accountable to the North South Ministerial Council. Departmental responsibility for **safefood** rests with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health and Children in the Republic of Ireland.

3. Responsibilities

The role of **safefood** is determined by the legislation which sets out its functions. The key function is to promote food safety as a responsibility shared by the entire food chain through the:

- promotion, commission and funding of research
- communication of food alerts
- advancement of scientific co-operation and laboratory linkages
- development of an all-island strategy for specialised laboratory services
- provision of independent science based assessment of the food supply; and the
- promotion of awareness and knowledge of food safety

4. The statutory duties on equality

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires **safefood**, in carrying out all its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, **safefood** shall, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

safefood's equality scheme was approved in June 2003.

5. Screening and Consultation

The purpose of screening is to determine those of our policies which relate to our work in Northern Ireland and are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity for any of the nine categories. This will provide us with a list of those policies which will then be subject to a full equality impact assessment. Part of the screening process also involves determining when during the next five years each policy will be impact assessed.

We are committed to those with a legitimate interest in the screening process. **safefood** will finalise its decisions on which of its policies will be subject to a full impact assessment when we have had an opportunity to hear the views of those groups and individuals who may be affected by its policies.

6. Organisational structure

The structure is determined as per legislation. **safefood** is assisted in the discharge of its duties by an Advisory Board including a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson appointed by the North South Ministerial Council and a Scientific Advisory Committee appointed by the North South Ministerial Council.

The NSMC appoints the Chief Executive who is responsible for the management and control of the administration and business of the body.

Our operating organisational structure is:

- **Advisory Board.** **safefood** is assisted in the discharge of its duties by an Advisory Board (12 members) including a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson appointed by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).
-
- **Scientific Advisory Committee** which is appointed by the NSMC and advises **safefood** on scientific matters.
- The **Chief Executive** is appointed by the NSMC and is responsible for the management and control of the administration and business of the body.
- The **Marketing and Communications** function within **safefood** promotes the corporate messages of the organisation to a number of key audiences using the most effective channels. The key messages around food safety, food hygiene and nutrition are communicated using a combination of public relations, media relations, advertising, promotional activity, events, direct marketing, publications, sponsorship, website and the **safefood** helpline.
- **Corporate Operations** is responsible for ensuring that **safefood** complies with all legal requirements and responsibilities from finance, HR and Information Systems and promoting best practice in all areas of corporate policy making and governance. Corporate Operations has overall responsibility for the research function and the development of the laboratory linkages programme.

- **Food Science** undertakes all aspects of food safety as related to microbiology, chemistry and toxicology including scientific assessments, identifying and commissioning research and surveys and surveillance of foodborne diseases. Specialist scientific advice and support is also provided to external stakeholders.
- The **Human Health and Nutrition** remit covers the nutritional safety of food and the prevention of infectious foodborne diseases by *safefood*'s communication and research programmes.

7. Identification of Policies

safefood has, therefore, determined that it is responsible for the following general policies which relate to our functions:

- Communication and promotion of awareness and knowledge of food safety.
- Development of all-island strategy for specialised laboratory services
- Promotion of Scientific Co-operation
- Promotion, commission and funding of research into food safety
- Corporate Support Functions: HR, IT and Finance.
- Corporate Strategy.

8. Screening criteria

safefood has reviewed the range of functions we carry out in Northern Ireland. We believe that the policies listed in Paragraph 9 include all the activities discharged in Northern Ireland.

safefood is currently assessing each policy against its likely impact on equality of opportunity for each of the nine categories specified in S75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ie religious belief, political opinion, sex, marital status, age, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, disability and race. This process involved using the following criteria set out by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities, in relation to the particular policy area?
- Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or better promote community relations by altering the policy/developing a policy in consultation with others in government or the community at large?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that particular policies create problems which are specific to them?

9. Results of Internal Screening Programme and timetabling

safefood has determined that the Employment Policies are, at present, unlikely to have a significant impact on any of the equality categories as no staff are employed in Northern Ireland and therefore unlikely to have a significant impact on any of the nine equality categories.

Policy Area	Screening Completed	Decision	Year
HR	Yes	No EQIA	N/A
IT	No	Unlikely to require EQIA	2007
Finance	No	Unlikely to require EQIA	2007
Corporate Strategy	No	Likely to require EQIA	2007
Communication	No	EQIA required	2006
Specialised Laboratory Services	No	Unlikely to require EQIA	2007
Education Strategy	No	Likely to require EQIA	2006/7
Nutrition Strategy	No	Likely to require EQIA	2006/7

As each policy area is developed **safefood** will carry out an equality impact assessment. The factors used to determine when each policy will be assessed are:

- relevance to social need;
- effect on people's daily lives;
- effect on economic, social and human rights;
- the timetable established by other relevant statutory agencies;

The final decision on the policies chosen for full equality impact assessment and its timetable for implementation will take account of the views expressed during consultation. Account will also be taken of the responsibilities of other designated public bodies and which of their policies they propose to impact assess and when.

10. Screening consultation

An integral part of the screening process is consulting with those groups affected by these policies. The decisions listed at Section 9 (above) are thus not final until individuals and groups have responded to these decisions and **safefood** revisits its proposals as a result.

safefood has already in its initial screening taken account of the views expressed by a number of groups in response to the consultation on its draft Equality Scheme. These views have helped us to assess the impact of our policies on the nine specified categories.

We would particularly welcome views on the following questions:

- Do you think we have missed any policies which have an impact on your group?
- Do you think that our Employment policies, which our initial screening has suggested should not be subject to a full equality impact assessment, should be? If you do, please describe how you feel it is likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity.
- Are there policies in your area of interest which could be usefully grouped together to make assessments more meaningful?
- Do you agree with our suggested decision making process with regards to EQIA and the proposed timetable? If you do not, please identify when you would like to see policies assessed and indicate why you feel a different priority is justified.

An Appendix is attached to allow you to answer these key questions more easily, but please feel free to raise any issues relevant to which of our policies should be impact assessed, and with what priority, over the forthcoming period.

Appendix

CONSULTATION ON *safefood*'s SCREENING OF ITS POLICIES FOR EQUALITY IMPACT

safefood welcomes any comments on its initial screening of its policies for their impact on equality. It would particularly welcome comments on the following:

1. **safefood** has reviewed its policies and has determined that it is responsible for six general policies in Northern Ireland:
 - Communication and promotion of awareness and knowledge of food safety.
 - Development of all-island strategy for specialised laboratory services
 - Promotion of Scientific Co-operation
 - Promotion, commission and funding of research into food safety
 - Corporate Support Functions: HR, IT and Finance.
 - Corporate Strategy.

Do you think we have missed any general policies which have an impact on your group?

2. As a result of its initial screening **safefood** has concluded that some policies may require an EQIA.

Do you think that **safefood**'s employment, IT and procurement policies should be subject to a full equality impact assessment?

Yes/No?

If **Yes**, please indicate how you feel that it is likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity?

3. Are there policies in your area of interest which could be usefully grouped together to make assessments more meaningful?

4. **safefood** has proposed a provisional timetable for each of its policies:

Do you agree with the proposed timetable for impact assessments?

Yes/No?

If **No**, please state when you would like policies assessed.

Please indicate why you feel a different priority is justified.

5. Our initial screening has suggested that the following equality categories might be affected by some of our policies - disability, gender, race, age and religious belief. Do you wish to make any other comments in relation to our policies which would help us to focus on those aspects of their impact which most affect equality of opportunity for the groups you represent?

Thank you for your assistance and time. Please return your response to the address below by Friday 26 May 2006.

Remember if you would like to discuss this further, please contact:

Patricia McCarthy
HR and Administration Executive

safefood, the Food Safety Promotion Board
7 East Gate Avenue
Little Island
Co Cork

Telephone: 00 353 (0)21 2304100
Fax: 00 353 (0)21 2304111
e-mail: pmccarthy@safefoodonline.com