



Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee of **safefood**, the Food Safety Promotion Board, held on Tuesday 26th September, 2006 at 10.30 am in the Dublin office of **safefood**, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

PRESENT:

Prof Charles Daly (Chair) (CD)
Prof David McDowell (DMcD)
Dr Brian Smyth (BS)
Mr Gerry McCurdy (GMcC)
Ms Patricia McCusker (PMcC)
Mr Jim Buckley (JB)
Mr Bert Houston (BtH)
Dr John Egan (JE)
Dr Derval Igoe (DI)
Dr Emer Shelly (ES)
Dr Margaret Patterson (MP)
Dr Wayne Anderson (WA)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director, Food Science (TQ)
Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition (CFN)
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Manager Marketing & Communications (FG)
Dr Geraldine Quinn, Scientific Support Manager (GQ)
Mr Ray Dolan, Director of Corporate Operations (RD)
Dr James McIntosh, Chief Specialist Toxicology (JMI)
Dr David McCleery, Chief Specialist Microbiology (DMC)
Dr Helena Murray, Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine (HM)
Ms Eileen O'Connor, Minute Secretary (EOC)

APOLOGIES:

Mr Barney Heywood
Ms Cathy Foye
Dr Ken Baird
Dr Brian Gaffney
Mr Martin Mullane
Prof Shay Fanning
Ms Suzanne Doran
Prof Barbara Livingstone

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all Members to the fourth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). Apologies were noted and recorded. The Chair introduced HM, who is on a six month placement at **safefood** based in Public Health and Nutrition.

1. MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE SAC HELD ON 26TH JANUARY 2006.

Agreed: The minutes were adopted with amendments.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Agreed: MH advised that on page 4 under "Healthy Eating for Target Groups" it would be more suitable to use the word "sustainability" in place of "longevity".

Noted: TQ informed the committee that an internal working group has been set up to develop a work plan for the Education Strategy which will evaluate current programmes and develop an end of year implementation plan.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (oral)

Members were reminded to declare interest on topics where appropriate.

5. VTEC PRESENTATION BY DR DERVAL IGOE AND DR BRIAN SMYTH

Noted: Dr Derval Igoe gave a presentation on VTEC from an RoI perspective and Dr Brian Smyth gave a presentation on VTEC in NI.

Noted: CDSC (NI) and HPSC have worked jointly on producing a descriptive study on VTEC 0157 on an all island basis, work is in progress.

Advice: Research should be conducted into the development of standardised methodologies of identification.

Advice: An education programme should be developed to educate professionals and consumers of the risk of other vectors of infection other than food.

Noted: The NI VTEC Action Plan launched September 06 highlights the need for a range of educational initiatives.

6. SAC WORK PLAN

(i) Labelling and Traceability

Noted: MH informed that he had attended an open board meeting of FSA. Labelling was on the agenda. The Minister for Agriculture and Food has set up an advisory group to take forward the agriculture strategy and it has identified that labelling should be taken forward. We need to look at what we can do in terms of added value but will hold off to get more information together and also because of potential changes at EU level.

(ii) Healthy Eating for Target Groups

Noted: CFN informed that there are a number of target groups including disadvantaged and children. This is in line with NI Fit Futures and RoI National Nutrition Policy which is about to be published. A series of open days highlighting the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone are to take place. **safefood** will host a conference on 30th November. The title will be Tackling Childhood Food Poverty.

(iii) Public Health Nutrition Surveillance

Noted: CFN suggested that current activities do not meet needs, in particular in terms of physical and physiological measures i.e. weight, blood pressure, etc.

Agreed: There are a number of groups to which **safefood** could contribute to and where possible should be involved.

Noted: **safefood** has been in discussion with FSAI and FSANI regarding salt. Members welcomed the focus on salt. What is coming through on obesity risk is challenging for health bodies. However methodologies need to keep up with changing eating habits and it is necessary to yield best value on an all island basis.

MH highlighted that **safefood's** role is promoting awareness and has a role in research which is relevant in the case of salt excretion studies as a means of assessing salt intake.

Advice/Action: With respect to how **safefood** could complement existing nutrition surveillance, a mapping study should be conducted on existing activities on the island.

7. CONSUMER FOCUSED REVIEW (CFR)

(i) Fruit and Vegetable

Noted: The report was well received. Members provided comments and noted that the message of 5 a day is not getting through and there is confusion over portion size etc. MH advised that the development of the communications strategy will be on an ongoing basis.

(ii) Update on Fish Review

Noted: Members were briefed on the launch of the report and summary document and the stakeholder programme.

(iii) Matrix and Reviews in 2007

Noted: MH suggested looking at a non food topic i.e. labelling as a subject matter.

Noted: JB advised that there are risks associated with dairy products, consumers are unaware of these risks. There is an opportunity for committee members to have an input and look at the broader issues. Dairy is a huge topic it may be necessary to break down into different areas e.g. cheese.

Noted: Low consumer concern on consumption of ready meals should be an issue.

Action: GQ to rank matrix and MH will take on board input and may come back to committee for further advice.

Noted: Beef CFR - A sub group has been set up for beef CFR. The first meeting will take place on Wednesday 4th October. A focus group is also being held this week and GQ will post information on extranet.

Noted: Pork and pork products CFR will take place early 2007.

8. CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES: *TOUR DE TABLE*

The Chair invited Members to identify issues that they considered to be of note. These included:

- The increased risk from the rise of antimicrobial resistant micro organisms in food stuffs.
- Avian flu - the World Health Organisation has included undercooked products as a risk of infection in its statement.
- There is potential confusion amongst consumers as a result of the differing front of package nutrition labelling.
- The cocktail effect of chemicals/additives in foods.

9. UPDATES

- **Communications**

FG provided an update of current activities in the Marketing & Communication Directorate at **safefood**.

- **Research**

TQ, JMI and DMC provided an update on current research activities at **safefood**, main points included:

- There are currently two toxicological and three microbiological networks ongoing.
- Will participate with FSA in process of looking at listeria in fish. Will undertake four synergy projects next year and asked members for ideas.
- **safefood** has supported surveillance projects and there are databases on emerging pathogens. **safefood** is developing a new corporate strategy and an issue is to look at how research supports **safefood**'s fundamental function. Planning is required.

- **Extranet Site**

There have been teething problems. Software will be refined, GQ and EOC will update skills. Any comments are welcome.

10. PREPARATION IN ADVANCE OF THE NOVEMBER REVIEW MEETING

A meeting to review SAC activities and measure progress against the criteria, as set out in the Code of Practice, will be held on Wednesday 15th November in Clontarf Castle, Dublin.

Noted: DMD to chair the meeting. Meeting to be kept specific to how committee is working and how it might work.

Action: Prompt sheets will be sent out as soon as possible to give those not able to attend time to reply.

11. MEETING DATES FOR 2007

Noted: The meeting dates for 2007 are:

Thursday 25th January 2007
Thursday 26th April 2007
Thursday 27th September 2007

All of the above meetings will be held in the Dublin offices of **safefood** commencing at 10.30am.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

As there was no further business the meeting closed.

The next business meeting of the SAC will be held in **safefood** office at 10.30am on 25th January 2007.

SIGNED: _____

DATED: _____