



Minutes of the first Meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Committee of **safefood**,
held on Friday, 10 September, 2010 at 10.30am
safefood, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

PRESENT:

Dr Ken Baird, Chairperson (KB)
Prof Charles Daly, Vice Chairperson (CD)
Dr Wayne Anderson (WA)
Prof Martin Caraher (MC)
Mr Barny Heywood (BH)
Mr Robert Huey (RH)
Ms Maria Jennings (MJ)
Mr Kenneth Carroll (KC)
Prof Margaret Barbara Elizabeth Livingstone (BL)
Ms Amanda McCloat (AMcC)
Dr Moira Dean (MD)
Prof Seamus Fanning (SF)
Ms Tina Leonard (TL)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)
Mr Ray Dolan, Director, Corporate Operations (RD)
Dr Marian Faughnan, Senior Technical Executive, Human Health & Nutrition (MF)
Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition (CFN)
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director Marketing & Communications (FG)
Dr Gary A. Kearney, Director, Food Science (GK)
Dr David McCleery, Chief Specialist Microbiology (DMcC)
Dr James McIntosh, Chief Specialist Toxicology (JMcI)
Mr Peter Dewhurst, Corporate Operations Manager (PD)
Dr Rachel Halpin, **safefood** Fellow (RHN)
Dr Aileen McGloin, Scientific Support Manager (AMcG)
Ms Alison Dries, Minute Secretary (AD)

APOLOGIES:

None

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairperson welcomed all members to the first meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Committee (SAC). No apologies were noted.

2. MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE SAC HELD ON 22 APRIL 2009.

Members who sat on the previous SAC were asked to validate the minutes. The minutes were adopted without amendment.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters were arising.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (oral)

KB declared an interest in biocides.
CD declared an interest in probiotics.

5. ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SAC (SAC/2010/1)

An overview of the SAC's role, structure and history was given by MH. As in-house expertise has developed over the years, the structure of the SAC was amended to accommodate these developments.

Noted: The SAC originally consisted of 18 members; this has been reduced to 12 members along with a chairman (i.e. 13 in total). These were divided into the following:

- ~3 members representing Public Health and Nutrition
- ~3 members representing Public Health and Food Safety
- ~3 members representing Food Behaviour
- ~3 members representing various other disciplines etc.

Appointees were placed in relevant categories, but the committee essentially represents a group and members could belong to more than one group.

Noted: Two plenary meetings a year will take place, with their primary objective being to sign off on work completed by the sub committees of the SAC.

6. POSSIBLE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR SAC SUBGROUPS (SAC/2010/2)

Noted: The SAC subgroups will cover key issues that have arisen for **safefood** internally and as recommended by the SAC. **safefood** personnel described suggested areas of works identified internally. It was pointed out that the recent public call for expression of interest in membership of the SAC resulted in approximately 70 responses and many were also willing to participate in subgroups.

Noted: Item two on the paper is concerned with both nutrition and food safety.

Noted: MC suggested items 2, 3 and 4 could be addressed collectively; a good starting point would be to review existing worldwide research. Essentially, this would involve assessing situations in other countries (such as Australia).

Noted: Requirement for survey and studies on an Island of Ireland (IOI).

Noted: In relation to the suggested activities listed in **SAC/2010/2**:

1. Nutrition Surveillance

- Due to many surveillance activities on IOI relating to nutrition, there is potential for duplication. This makes comparing data challenging. Thus, any opportunities for harmonisation are welcomed.
- To date, prominent nutrition surveys such as the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS), the Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition (SLAN) and the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (IUNA) have been carried out. Further to this, a number of longitudinal surveys have been conducted, such as those carried out on obesity.
- Although many surveys are ongoing at present, certain areas are being neglected, such as salt excretion.
- A division of labour would be welcomed and is thought of as being long overdue.
- There is also a need to establish whether objectives are being met. Ideally, there should be a body appointed to oversee these projects.
- In summary, there is a prime need to harmonise such studies.

2. The impact of food policy on food related behaviour

- The term 'policy' needs to be defined.
- There is currently little data on food policy across IOI.
- Suggested a good starting point would be to look at international data. MC noted NICE have conducted an 18 month review on what works in policy terms.
- There is a need to identify areas that are not been researched.
- School based food policies were discussed including banning of unhealthy foods, improvement of school menus and subsidisation.
- Potential for harmonisation across IOI to make studies more comparable, it was noted that it is difficult to compare data collected by different methodologies.
- There was considerable discussion around the area of policy relating to food poverty, which may need to be considered separately. Compiling a brief report on **safefood's** food poverty work may be a useful step.
- Noted – MC has a contact in the National Obesity Observatory, UK. Suggested getting in touch.
- Noted – there was huge interest in food poverty in the SAC
- **ACTION** – **safefood** to produce a report on its work in food poverty.

3. The influence of parenting style on food related behaviour in children

- This is an area which needs to be evaluated, in particular with regard to the home environment and psychological aspects to childrens' food behaviour.
- **safefood's** 'Little Steps' campaign aimed to improve the diets of young children, by increasing the knowledge of parents. However, it remains to be determined how this can be progressed.
- Such campaigns should be assessed against a wider backdrop in order to compare and contrast the situation on IOI and other countries (in relation to food policy, food poverty etc.).
- Suggested that initial work would involve preparing a 'review of the reviews'. This would provide us with a broader picture of what is happening internationally, as we are aware there is not much research relating to this subject on the IOI. Noted – an Australian study focusing on resilience – why some people make changes and some don't. Also check any research that may be carried out in universities on IOI.

4. Best practice communication in relation to body weight

- It was noted that parents often do not recognise when their child is overweight (large proportion) and/or obese (smaller proportion). Obesity is a top public health concern in the developed world. Research was quoted from UCD that 80% of parents fail to recognise their child is overweight.
- It must be established how best to communicate with parents of overweight/ obese children (without causing offence). Again, this would involve reviewing international literature, followed by a review of local studies from IOI. Essentially, qualitative research should be carried out.
- The terminology used in communicating with parents could be lightened somewhat, as overweight/ obese are very technical terms.
- It would be useful to have information on whether **safefood's** advertising should be more hard hitting or not.
- It was also pointed out that obese children may have at least one overweight/ obese parent. Therefore, there is a need to let adults know they are overweight so that they can in turn help their children to adopt healthier diets. This is a logical approach, where the parents weight is addressed before targetting children.
- The aim should be to help, not criticise, i.e. to inform people that help and advice are available, rather than chastising parents for having overweight children.
- A committee has been set up in the UK to address this issue, and nudge people towards behaviour change.

5. Guidance on implementation of recommendations from antimicrobial resistance report

- It is suggested that research is conducted **into** potential impacts of (i) minimal processing of foods and (ii) probiotic supplementation of foods. Both of these actions could have an impact on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) within the food chain.
- Food attribution studies on IOI in respect of food/animal AMR should be considered. It is planned that a workshop will take place in 2011, where suitable experts will be engaged to discuss methodologies, priority areas etc.

- It must be determined whether or not there is a consumer dimension to this. A note of caution was expressed against causing unnecessary or unjustified alarm among consumers.
- As a cautionary note, CD pointed out that any potential relationship between AMR and probiotic research is entirely unproven. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that EFSA have published opinions and concerns about probiotics in recent years.
- Another issue centres upon the use of sprays/ disinfectants and their contact with food (chemical safety).
- Although the report recommended the development of a forum, there is little support currently in establishing such a forum **Safefood** is anxious to take the correct approach in communicating these issues, while being aware of the 'risk balance'.

6. Other suggested areas of work

Noted: There may be opportunities available that **safefood** are not taking up, such as working with food artisan sector.

Noted:

- Small businesses sometimes have difficulty implementing fully the regulations that are in place for large businesses.
- Social science/ qualitative reviews need to be carried out for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).
- BH pointed out that SME's want support and not just enforcement, there may opportunity for **safefood** here.
- 'Checklist' surveillance is not what is wanted; as such surveys do not show or tell people what to do.
- The future of agriculture on IOI is reliant on good decision making and also lies in niche food productions so artisans are likely to increase.
- MC referenced the Food Harvest 2020 report
- It was pointed out by MC that a recent study carried out in Italy showed that shorter food chains and local production of foods does not result in fewer incidences of food poisoning. Such a study should be conducted on IOI, taking into consideration that our epidemiological data on food poisoning is not clear. This is a major issue.

Noted: **safefood** have many reasons to support SMEs (such as food poverty, sustainability, diversification issues etc.), and flexibility is encouraged. However, such flexibility must not jeopardise public health. If authorities are criticised, this may lead to fallout. However, **safefood**'s main interest is based around the domestic kitchen and food hygiene.

Noted: Another issue raised at this meeting was that of 'food miles'. From an industrial perspective, a lot of larger players are now sourcing foods from outside of this jurisdiction. This may have a knock-on effect on food safety. Furthermore, this has a negative impact on local producers.

7. INCORPORATION OF WIDER PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES FOR HORIZON SCANNING and RESEARCH PROFILING EXERCISE

Noted: **safefood** has a legislative mandate to fund research and its research portfolio is quite varied. In the past, open calls for projects have been announced with a focus on technical research but more recently, safefood has placed an emphasis on applied research in line with **safefood**'s communications needs.

Noted: It would be useful for regulators/industry to advise us on current & potential gaps in food safety & nutrition knowledge, and focus groups may be useful in that regard.

Noted: It was suggested that a review covering newly emerging food safety risks would be useful with a view to identifying gaps in food safety knowledge. What are the gaps? Our research portfolio should not just include consumer-orientated research. As resources are now more limited, we may need to facilitate a 'link in' with ongoing research involving other funding agencies. An all-island picture is required, for example, we could link up SLAN research and any equivalent organisations carrying out similar studies in NI. **safefood** have often funded research in NI to give an IOI picture where FIRM's budget only applied to ROI.

Noted: **safefood** have established knowledge networks for professionals working in different food safety, food behaviour & food allergy areas. These networks are run on an all-island basis, with the principle aim of connecting all aspects of the food chain by reaching out to industry, researchers, academics etc. The information available *via* these networks will be very useful to identify knowledge gaps and potential collaborations. The networks will connect key players through the distribution of e-newsletters, workshop alerts, initiating discussions on topical issues etc. As part of these **safefood** networks, a Ning communications platform is being established to encourage discussion between members and to enable knowledge transfer. All networks will run for a five year term but shall all be reviewed after the first year to ensure its fit for purpose.

A previous research network consisted of over 500 members and it is hoped that the new network will have more members.

8. CONSUMER FOCUSED REVIEWS (CFR)

Current CFRs: Food Behaviour and Finfish
Planned CFRs: Men's health and Chicken

Noted: **safefood** is currently finalising the food behaviour CFR, and work has begun on updating the finfish CFR. All food chains were reviewed previously, but the data is now five years old and is being updated. It emerged from the food behaviour CFR that men appear to be more at risk in relation to both nutrition and food safety. Thus, the next CFR on food related behaviour will focus on men.

9. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

FG provided an update on the campaigns **safefood** are currently running

Noted: MH pointed out that looking for new ways to communicate effectively is now of key importance, as the power of advertising has waned due to fragmentation, digital recording and the rise in popularity of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Noted: A variety of **safefood** campaigns are ongoing at present, summarised below:

1. Weigh2live.eu

- This campaign has been running since early 2010, and is an online weight-loss resource.
- Feedback obtained to date is positive, and the website has been described as a good resource.
- The 'Weigh2live' advertising campaign has been segmented for male and female audiences, with different messages for each gender group. For males, the message is 'Are you fooling yourself?' (e.g. small fitting XL clothing). For females, the message is 'You do it for a wedding, now do it for life' (relating to weight loss).
- The advertisements for Weigh2live are currently running on TV and billboards. Copies of the 48 sheets (billboards) and 6 sheets (bus shelters) were circulated. In addition, leaflets are being circulated to GP surgeries in both ROI and NI. The Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute (INDI) are also disseminating these leaflets.
- Facebook site:
 - A place where people can communicate with each other regarding weight loss ('My weigh2live'). It has been established that when people support each other, weight loss efforts are more effective.
 - There is also a larger discussion group on weight loss
 - 'Operation Transformation' contestants were also approached and asked to participate in the 'My weigh2live' site.

2. Don't take risks

- This campaign promotes handwashing, basic kitchen hygiene and adequate cooking, and is centred upon a joint study between UCD and UU which assessed the hygiene standards of control and domestic kitchens.
- Messages are disseminated through television advertisements only.

3. Ask your local butcher

- The main objective of this campaign is to encourage customers to ask their local butcher questions about food safety.
- Posters are displayed on walls of butchers' shops.
- Larger retailers are a challenge, but will probably be keener near Christmas time.

4. Little steps

- This campaign is aiming to address obesity.
- Key messages intend to inform how to make behavioural changes.
- Television advertisements are due to run from 27 September, 2007. Radio advertisements will also be running for approximately three weeks.

5. Take on the takeaway

- **safefood** sponsored this programme which ran on RTE in August and September 2010.
- Some important nutritional messages were conveyed, such as the ease of cooking and the nutritional value of home cooking.
- Makers of 'Operation Transformation' have been approached regarding working **safefood's** messages into the upcoming series of this programme (due to air in 2011).

Noted: Social networking aspects of these campaigns are important. It has been shown through our sponsorship of Take on the takeaway people are watching television whilst looking at social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

Noted: Terrestrial channels should be approached with a view to airing **safefood's** messages. UTV would be a key player of these, as it is known to have c. 70% absorption (compared to 40% for RTE). UTV and TV3 would be a good combination.

In addition, online players (e.g. RTE player) are having a positive effect on viewer numbers.

Noted: A new afternoon show is due to begin on RTE; this would be an ideal stage for **safefood's** communications, particularly if they are to be chatting to contestants from Operation Transformation.

10. SAC PROGRESS REPORT DOCUMENT

Noted: Members were given the updated SAC Progress Report document. This contained much information on work that has been generated from previous advisory groups. It was evident from examination of the report that there has been much development on the education side, such as publicity surrounding handwashing in preschools, and a lot of ongoing work to collaborate with home economics teachers. Also, with regard to verocytotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC), the 'Susie Moo' campaign is ongoing to address children who live on/visit farms.

Noted: The progress report will be added to accordingly.

Action: A briefing is to be arranged before Christmas 2010, attendance at which will be optional.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Noted: All members were happy with the items discussed. MH thanked all for their contributions.

Noted: MH thanked the Chair for this assistance and advice, and gave a possible date of 10 March, 2011 for the next SAC meeting.

Noted: Considering many members of the SAC are new to the committee this term MH invited members for a briefing session on the work of **safefood** and requirements of the SAC.

ACTION: It was agreed to exchange email addresses of all SAC member, **safefood** will facilitate this

ACTION: MF will forward the six monthly Nutrition update to all SAC members

ACTION: AmcG will finalise a date by email