



Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee of **safefood**,
held on Thursday 24th April, 2008 at 10.30 am
safefood, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

PRESENT:

Dr Wayne Anderson (WA)
Mr Jim Buckley (JB)
Prof Charles Daly, Chairman (CD)
Dr John Egan (JE)
Mr Barny Heywood (BH)
Mr Bert Houston (BeH)
Dr Derval Igoe (DI)
Prof Barbara Livingstone (BL)
Mr Gerry McCurdy (GMcC)
Ms Patricia McCusker (PMcC)
Prof David McDowell, Vice Chairman (DMcD)
Mr Martin Mullane (MM)
Dr Emer Shelly (ES)
Dr Brian Smyth (BS)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms Emma Corbett, Minute Secretary (EC)
Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition (CFN)
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director Marketing & Communications (FG)
Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)
Dr David McCleery, Chief Specialist Microbiologist (DMcC)
Dr James McIntosh, Chief Specialist Microbiologist (JMcI)
Dr Margaret Patterson (MP)
Dr Geraldine Quinn, Scientific Support Manager (GQ)
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director Food Science (TQ)

APOLOGIES:

Dr Ken Baird
Mr Peter Dewhurst, Financial and Administration Manager
Mr Ray Dolan, Director, Corporate Operations
Ms Catherine Foye
Dr Brian Gaffney
Prof Seamus Fanning

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the ninth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). Emma Corbett was introduced as the secretary taking over from Eileen O'Connor.

Apologies were noted and recorded.

2. MINUTES OF THE EIGHT MEETING OF THE SAC HELD ON 7TH FEBRUARY 2008.

The minutes were agreed and adopted.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (oral)

No questions arose regarding the declaration of interests.

5. PRESENTATION ON 2007 CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

Noted: The Chairman introduced Dr Joy Gaze from the CCFRA Technology Ltd. Dr Gaze gave a presentation outlining the scientific background research which supported the Christmas 2007 campaign. She welcomed questions from Members.

Noted: PMcC stated that **safefood**'s recommendations to consumers should be kept simple and straightforward.

Noted: FG inform the Members that **safefood** are considering using cooking temperature poppers/gauges supplied through retailers as part of the Christmas 2008 campaign.

Action: The campaign details will be circulated to the Members prior to the next SAC meeting in October.

6. ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE IN FOOD (SAC/2008/07)

A draft paper on Antimicrobial Resistance and Food Safety was circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

Noted: DMcD apologised for the lateness of circulation and welcomed questions from the Members.

Action: The Chairman recommended further comments and suggestions be submitted to GQ next two to three weeks, who will then pass on all comments to DMcD and SF for consideration.

Action: The Executive will review the paper as it develops.

- Noted:** The final paper will be circulated in sufficient time prior to the next SAC meeting on 2nd October.
- Noted:** DMcD stated the paper will continue to focus on where AMR is presently, what are the biggest risks and what gaps are present between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. He stated the topic is too large an area to cover controls also, but an AMR controls paper could emerge from this one.
- Noted:** It was agreed that it is important to ensure there is no duplication in research and information, on the topic. Both Codex and EFSA are working in the area.
- Noted:** The question of who the stakeholders are for the paper and dissemination would be critical.
- Noted:** BS stated it was a good start to the paper though it was lacking data on NI. If the data is available he would be happy to supply it.

7. RESEARCH NETWORKS REVIEW

- Noted:** DMcD stated the Networks made a significant contribution in transferring scientific knowledge. He felt **safefood's** funding should be increased to continue with optimal results/benefits.
- Noted:** The term 'research' was discussed as to whether it was critical to the definition of what the Networks aim to achieve. The concern being that the term could impede a more diverse and dynamic group. Omitting the term 'research' could invite more diverse expertises. In the case of a more diverse involvement optimal research controls, such as break-out session for different speciality areas were suggested and the network leaders receive summaries from each speciality area.
- Noted:** WA voiced that it was in **safefood's** interest to increase funding support of Networks, widen its dissemination and work on state of the art summary papers much like the AMR paper.
- Noted:** JB put forward the idea that the Networks also include the Zoonoses committees.
- Noted:** DMcD expressed that if **safefood** was to give more funding to the Network and involved the EHO's in Northern Ireland; EHO's could then drive the information across NI.
- Noted:** DI expressed that the term 'inter-laboratory' should be omitted from collaborations.
- Noted:** The chairman thanked the Members for their support in the Networks and their contribution.

Noted: MH expressed that Ray Dolan, Director of Corporation Operations was unable to attend the meeting. But that **safe food** is working to increase resources and support for the Research Networks.

8. NORTH-SOUTH WORKING GROUP

Noted: MH informed the Members the NSWG will focus on all-island work to enhance North South communication and cooperation. Dr. Margaret Patterson will Chair the group and two members of from the Advisory Board, Lynn Ni Bhaoigheallian and Joe Byrne volunteered their involvement.

Noted: It was confirmed that DMcD, BS and BeH would continue their participation in the group.

9. SURVEILLANCE WORKING GROUP

Noted: DI stated that the Surveillance working groups and sub-groups are progressing well.

10. CONSUMER FOCUSED REVIEW (CFR) (SAC/2008/03)

Noted: GQ informed the Members that the Milk CFR was launched the week commencing 21st April 2008, with good media interest. The Executive summary of the Pork CFR is being finalised and is scheduled to be launched along with the Barbeque consumer message around mid June early July.

Noted: GQ informed the Members that the topic for the next CFRs will focus on the theme "Where does our food come from", in terms of the global nature or the food chain, role of the Food and Veterinary Office, risks, traceability and loss of nutritional value in transport.

Noted: BL suggested that Food Waste could also be considered for a further CFR, though was sceptical whether it fell under the **safe food** remit. MH informed the Members that he was recently contacted by the Department of Agriculture regarding food waste and the environmental impact and that it is a possible issue to be considered for future CFRs.

Noted: DMcD suggested the focus of 'Where our food comes from, what are the different country restrictions and what we do with it once it gets here?' for a CFR.

11. CHALLENGING AND EMERGING ISSUES: TOUR DE TABLE

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

- Baseline study on pigs, turkeys and salmonella. Pigs and Salmonella get more media attention.

- Pork salmonella study and risk management options could be exploited by **safefood**.
- Waterborne disease threats are an issue that should be given attention, maybe through Research Networks with scientist and engineers.
- Bisphenol an organic compound used in the plastic industry has been banned in Canada for baby food and ToysRUs products.
- The E.coli investigation in Wales was due to finish next month. There may well be issues arising from the enquiry which could effect enforcers, industry, training and advice to consumers.
- SLAN the national survey of the lifestyles, attitudes and nutrition of the people in Ireland 2007 will be published at the end of April. It involved 10,000 people under the age of forty five and will have information on blood pressure, BMI, physical measurements.
- The increase cost of food has the implications for malnutrition of the population, the possible shift in food consumption and of deficiencies and disease.
- **safefood** focus on obesity linked into health and its future costs.
 - MH stated there is focus on obesity in the corporate plan developments. An obesity paper will be presented at the NSMC meeting at the end of May for approval. It will not be available for circulation until after it is presented and approved.
 - CFN informed Members that obesity is the biggest area being worked on in media partnership with HPA and HSE. There is cooperation over all NI and Republic bodies.
- No food borne outbreaks have been reported to CDSC in NI in the past year (2007) despite there being a number of reported outbreaks of infectious intestinal disease. There will be a NI health reform taking place from April 2009 which may change the structure of the Health Protection Agency and its work on surveillance.
- C difficile to be included in surveillance data from 4th May.

Noted: The CEO thanked Members for identifying these issues.

12. UPDATES

- **Communications**

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

- **Research**

Members were given an update on current research activities at **safefood**.

13. SAC PROGRESS REPORT DOCUMENT

Noted: Members were given the updated SAC Progress Report document.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Noted:** MH reminded the Members of the SAC mini conference which takes place in Cork on 2nd October 2008 with dinner the previous evening at the Radisson Hotel. The Advisory Board have been invited to the dinner.
- GQ informed the Members that the conference steering group, organising the conference and theme which is on the risk/benefits balance of foods. The speakers will include Dr Andrew Wadge, Chief Scientist, Food Standards Agency, UK; Professor Patrick Wall, Associate Professor of Public Health, [UCD School of Public Health and Population Science](#) and chairman of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA); and Dr Reg Fletcher, Director of Scientific Research Kellogg's Europe. A Journalist/ communication expert with experience in this area is currently being identified.
- Noted:** A decision will be made in the coming months as to how **safefood** will approach the appointment of a new committee.
- Noted:** The CEO thanked Members for their contribution and with no further business closed the meeting.

The next business meeting of the SAC will be held in the Cork office of **safefood** on Thursday 2nd October.