



Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee of **safefood**, the Food Safety Promotion Board, held on Thursday 27th September, 2007 at 10.30 am in the Dublin office of **safefood**, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

PRESENT:

Prof David McDowell (Chair) (DMcD)
Dr Brian Smyth (BS)
Mr Gerry McCurdy (GMcC)
Mr Martin Mullane (MM)
Ms Catherine Foye (CF)
Dr John Egan (JE)
Dr Emer Shelly (ES)
Prof Barbara Livingstone (BL)
Mr Jim Buckley (JB)
Dr Derval Igoe (DI)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)
Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Director, Human Health & Nutrition (CFN)
Dr Geraldine Quinn, Scientific Support Manager (GQ)
Mr Ray Dolan, Director of Corporate Operations (RD)
Dr Thomas Quigley, Director Food Science (TQ)
Ms Suzanne Doran, Director Marketing & Communications (SD)
Ms Eileen O'Connor, Minute Secretary

APOLOGIES:

Prof Charles Daly
Prof Seamus Fanning
Ms Patricia McCusker
Dr Ken Baird
Dr Brian Gaffney
Dr Margaret Patterson
Mr Barny Heywood
Mr Bert Houston
Dr Wayne Anderson
Dr James McIntosh
Dr David McCleery

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all Members to the seventh meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC).

Apologies were noted and recorded.

2. MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE SAC HELD ON 26TH APRIL 2007.

The minutes were agreed and adopted.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (oral)

Members were reminded to declare interest on topics where appropriate.

5. WORK PLAN SEPTEMBER 2007 TO SEPTEMBER 2008 (SAC/2007/13)

Integration of surveillance across all discipline

The SAC considered the information as presented in the document was outdated and needed to be reviewed to inform the Committee of the current situation.

Action: Members agreed that a sub-group should be set up to steer, focus and refine the document. The Executive to nominate members to the group and a meeting will take place prior to the next SAC meeting.

a. Review of 2006-2007 Work Plan as set out in Paper SAC/2006/02

i. Labelling and Traceability

GQ informed members that a working group for labelling and traceability has been established. The group has indicated that children and education are target groups, but work has been deferred until new amendments to the labelling directive are announced, this should be available in January 2008.

Noted: **safefood** realise that some consumers may read labels for reasons other than food safety, e.g. calories, sell by date.

Noted: GQ advised that **safefood** are currently running safetrak research, in order to monitor consumer attitudes and habits in relation to labelling, this will be benchmarked against 2004 data.

Action: Members will be provided with outcome of safetrak, in January 2008.

Noted: Members advised the following:

- Labelling is a huge area, linked to issues such as GM, international politics, legal implications etc. and will be an ongoing subject, it is impossible to give all of the information all of the time.
- FSANI are putting together a tool kit for enforcement officers on labelling.
- When consumers see traceability, they think of country of origin.
- Brazilian beef is still topical and there is also political focus.
- The general public like honesty when being told of origin.

ii. Healthy Eating for Target Groups

CFN gave an update on activity for Healthy Eating for Target Groups. A considerable portion of activities are targeted at families and young children.

In addition to radio and TV coverage a **safefood** campaign in conjunction with Tesco supermarkets is taking place. Other areas which **safefood** are working on include:

- working with nutritionists;
- the salt reduction campaign in the workplace;
- education strategies, i.e. Tastebuds campaign for schools;
- complimentary work in NI and RoI
- a three year project to support five groups whose work is targeted at socially disadvantaged groups.

Noted: ES advised that results from the SLAN survey, in RoI, show high levels of overweight and obesity. MH informed that at a recent meeting at the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) it was noted that the obesity issue is also high on the agenda for NI.

Agreed: Members agreed that obesity is a serious public health challenge. The population of Ireland has changed over recent years, work is needed with socially disadvantaged groups, immigrant groups, schools etc. Opportunities exist for a cohesive and complimentary approach.

Noted: Members agreed that it would be helpful to look at what is taking place in Scotland as they have the second highest levels of obesity in the world, yet has a very advanced approach to addressing the issue. Consider what is not working and what has had a positive effect so far in order to achieve clarity of direction.

Action: Work towards tackling obesity will be written into the strategic and corporate plans.

iii. Research Networks

Noted: DMcD declared an interest.

Noted: JB declared an interest.

Noted: MH informed that **safe food** has identified a need for support in terms of staffing. Contact has been made with academic institutes in the hope of attracting interns or fellows (to develop the networks). Response has been low so far due to summer break; efforts will now be concentrated on those who have shown an interest.

Noted: TQ explained that there are five research networks sponsored by **safe food** to the value of €10,000 each per annum. These include VTEC, Bio-Toxins, Residues, Cryptosporidium and Foodborne Viruses. The Foodborne Viruses network will conclude as the need is limited. The other four are working well. Between all of them there are approximately 350 participants. They meet separately on an annual basis, have a web site in place and produce a newsletter. It is hoped to expand and make the networks more accessible to public and relevant groups. The networks were initially given a five year contract, next year is the fifth year and an evaluation will be carried out.

Action: MH will put together a strategic paper on the networks, including outlining the main successes for the January 2008 SAC.

b. Corporate Plan 2008 – 2010

Noted: MH gave an update on the Corporate Plan 2008 – 2010. Under legislative requirements three yearly Corporate Plans will be presented to NSMC for approval. The plan is currently with the two sponsoring departments for comment. MH welcomed comments from SAC members.

6. CONSUMER FOCUSED REVIEW (CFR)

Noted: GQ gave updates on CFR's as follows:

- Beef CFR – SAC members were given a copy of the summary review. This has not yet been released due to current problems of Blue Tongue and Foot and Mouth disease. Release will be held off until appropriate.
- Dairy CFR – will be released in January. GQ thanked SAC members for their contribution. **safefood** will look at the possibility of involving the National Dairy Council for the launch.
- Pork CFR – work has commenced, it is hoped to have the first meeting of the external group within the next two weeks.

Action: GQ will arrange a presentation from the Food Veterinary Office (FVO) for January meeting to bring SAC members up to date.

Agreed: Members agreed that **safefood** should produce a CFR on traceability as part of the next series.

7. CHALLENGING AND EMERGING ISSUES: *TOUR DE TABLE*

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

- Additives in food – this will probably be raised again by media.
- Work needs to be carried out on lowering obesity levels.
- Urgent need for training on communication of outbreaks.

Action: The Chair asked that members absent be sent the issues above and asked for any further input.

8. UPDATES

• **Anti-microbial Resistance Bacteria in the Food Chain**

The Chairman informed that a candidate has been identified to undertake an in-depth review into anti-microbial resistance bacteria in the food chain. Work will commence within the next few weeks.

It is hoped to have an outline of the review in January and a draft by April.

- **Development of North/South working**

MH informed that the most recent meeting of the North/South working group took place in Belfast on 4th September and was very useful. The main topics included the development of an Enteric Reference Laboratory and the need to concentrate on further developing a network of stakeholders and champions. The next meeting of the group will take place in January.

GQ and Dr James McIntosh are working on a draft paper on funding opportunities, to present to Special EU Programme Body. SEUPB will assist and a meeting will take place within the next few weeks. It is hoped to have a firm proposal for the January meeting of the SAC.

- **Communications**

SD 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**.

- **Extranet Site**

Noted: The site is now up and running. GQ apologised to members for the delay. Passwords and user names have been forwarded to SAC members.

9. SAC PROGRESS REPORT DOCUMENT

Noted: Members were given the updated SAC Progress Report document. GQ will follow up actions and work on gaps in-house.

10. DATES FOR 2008

The dates for SAC meetings in 2008 have been confirmed as follows:

Thursday **31st January** at 10.30 in Dublin Office

Thursday **24th April** at 10.30 am in Dublin Office

Thursday **2nd October** at 10.30 am in Dublin Office

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Noted: Enteric Reference Service – MH informed that there is a provision in its legislation that **safefood** identify the best approach to the establishment of an enteric reference service for the island of Ireland. Since 2002 a working group was set up to consider the best way forward to serve public health and a detailed economic appraisal was submitted and approved by the two sponsoring departments. A fresh look was taken on the subject and a new paper was prepared. This paper will go to the NSMC for approval in November in the form of a business plan and it is hoped to get endorsement from the NSMC to take forward. The process will involve a structured approach for engagement of stakeholders and eventually will become a political decision.

Action: MH will update the SAC in January 2008 and will give them details of the paper to the NSMC.

Noted: MH thanked DMcD for chairing the meeting.

As there was no further business the meeting closed.

The next business meeting of the SAC will be held in the Dublin office of **safefood** on Thursday 31st January, 2008.