

8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Committee  
Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015  
**safefood** Dublin offices

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**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:**

Dr Mary Upton, Chairperson (MU)  
Mr Kenneth Carroll (KC)  
Mr Gary McFarlane (GMcF)  
Ms Maria Jennings (MJ)  
Dr Moira Dean (MD)  
Mr Robert Huey (RH)  
Prof Helen Roche (HR)  
Prof Margaret Patterson (MP)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Ray Dolan, Chief Executive Officer (RD)  
Dr Gary Kearney, Director Food Science (GK)  
Ms Patricia Fitzgerald, Director Corporate Operations (PF)  
Mr James McIntosh, Chief Specialist in Toxicology (JMcl)  
Dr Linda Gordon, Chief Specialist in Food Science (LG)  
Dr Marian Faughnan, Chief Specialist in Nutrition (MF)  
Ms Alison Dries, Secretary, **safefood** (AD)  
Ms Fiona Lickorish, Cranfield University (FL)

**APOLOGIES:**

Prof Martin Caraher (MC)  
Dr Bridget Maher (BM)  
Dr Christine Domegan (CD)  
Dr Claire Kerins (CK)  
Ms Amanda McCloat (AMcC)  
Dr Clíodhna Foley Nolan, Director Human Health and Nutrition (CFN)  
Dr Aileen McGloin (AMG)

### 1. Welcome and apologies

The chairperson welcomed all members to the meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Committee (SAC). The apologies were noted. The chairperson introduced PF as the recently appointed Director of Corporate Operations at **safefood**.

### 2. Minutes of the November 2014 SAC meeting & matters arising

The minutes of the SAC meeting held on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014 were reviewed and there were no matters arising. The minutes were proposed by KC and seconded by MJ.

### 3. Presentation on Strategic Foresight & Resilience for Food Safety & Healthy Eating

Presented by Ms Fiona Lickorish, Head of Institute for Environment, Health, Risks and Futures at Cranfield University.

**Noted:** The presentation focused on horizon scanning and futures research which aims to enable organisations to;

- identify risks in their sector before they happen thus enabling the organisation to proof itself against the risk
- Identify potential opportunities.

**Noted:** Discussion took place around the process of horizon scanning and the value attached to it. Different organisations have different tolerances for uncertainty and this dictates, not only how they react to a predicted scenario, but also their willingness to share outcomes (government agencies being usually more willing than private industry). Concerning the effectiveness of horizon scanning and futures research, there is now a body of academic reports and papers that addresses the utility of foresight work.

**Noted:** The Chair thanked Fiona for her interesting presentation and for her willingness to address any subsequent questions after the meeting.

**Noted:** The members agreed that futures research was resource intensive but nonetheless there was a general need to get to grips with the different drivers that influence food safety and healthy eating and **safefood** had a role to play in this area.

**Noted:** The PowerPoint slides from the presentation were subsequently circulated to all SAC members.

#### 4. Presentation on the Childhood Obesity campaign

Presented by Andrew Castles, Events Management Executive with **safefood**

- Noted:** AC presented the results from the first year of the Childhood obesity campaign and introduced the new phase which will focus around the sleep message.
- Noted:** It was noted that children who do not get adequate sleep are at increased risk of overweight and obesity, however, there is not an established causative relationship. It was agreed that this was one of a number of risk factors and, taking into account this is a multi-component campaign that is also focusing on the other obesity risk factors of sugary drinks consumption, treats, portion size, physical activity and reducing screen time, the messages around inadequate sleep are being communicated in tandem with the others.
- Noted:** There was discussion around the balance of the individual risk factors and the messages surrounding these. It was emphasised that parents and consumers can feel overwhelmed by the volume of health messages.
- Noted:** There was discussion about the metrics that **safefood** is using before, during and after the campaign to see how effective the campaign will be. It was agreed that this was a difficult thing to measure but **safefood** are proactive in applying robust and reliable methodologies in this regard. Furthermore, obesity rates in children are being monitored in the Growing up in Ireland study, so there are undoubtedly learnings for **safefood** from this. Partnership is essential in this regard.
- Noted:** There was discussion around the psychological aspects of behavioural change. There is evidence that awareness is no guarantee that the message will be adopted. Instead information has to be seen to be directly relevant to the individual. The example of having a food allergy was cited: this clearly impacts on the individual who will therefore be susceptible to messages that are focuses on health protection/augmentation. There is also a disconnection between being overweight/obese and the individual's perception of their own health. The message must hit a nerve for it to be meaningful and to engage the individual.
- Noted:** It was agreed that it was important to maintain the level of awareness of healthy eating and the risks of overweight and obesity. It was recognised that **safefood** are competing with industry that are not necessarily selling healthy products and who have far greater budgets compared to **safefood**.
- Noted:** The Chair thanked AC for his presentation.

## 5. Presentation on the evaluation of the first year of the Community Food Initiative Programme

Presented by Dr Marian Faughnan, Chief Specialist in Nutrition with **safefood**

- Noted:** MF gave an overview of the Community Food Initiative (CFI's) Programme which **safefood** are currently funding and highlighted the major findings of the evaluation of the first year of the programme.
- Noted:** CFI's from the previous round of funding still exist but there are funding issues particularly with regard to long term sustainability. Long-term strategic partnerships are important.
- Noted:** MF confirmed that from an NI perspective the PHA, **safefood** and FSA NI are planning to meet to discuss the CFI's so the potential for collaboration was there.
- Noted:** MC had submitted papers concerning community programmes. These are available for the members. GMcF will send information on the sustainable food cities network in Belfast.
- Noted:** The Chair thanked MF for her presentation.

## 6. Discussion session on future SAC work

A thought-starter document had been distributed to the members in advance of the meeting. The topics suggested for discussion were (1) Metrics, (2) Horizon scanning, (3) Research, (4) Strategic partnerships and (5) Targeting diet-related health inequalities.

- Noted:** The power of social media was highlighted as being an element that needs to be fully exploited in terms of its communications potential. Furthermore, the use of Big Data was proffered as being a powerful tool for accessing information quickly. Data integrity would continue to be an issue.
- Noted:** Horizon scanning is obviously a resource intensive process. Therefore, **safefood** should consider working in tandem with other agencies to see what they have done. This would necessitate strategic partnerships in which **safefood** has an admirable track record.
- Noted:** Given current budgetary and structural realities, particularly in NI, inter-agency cooperation and joined-up thinking is presently more difficult.
- Noted:** Members were invited to contact JMI if they wished to further discuss any of the topics.

## 7. Close

MU invited members to tea/coffee and lunch.