

Meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Committee
safefood Office, Little Island, County Cork
Thursday 4th / Friday 5th of May 2023, 10:30 – 13:00

DRAFT MINUTES

SAC members present: Prof Elizabeth Keane (Chair)

Prof Mary Brennan
Prof Mary Corcoran
Mary Daly
Dr Rhodri Evans
Claire Mac Evilly
Prof Frank Monahan
Dr Muiris O 'Céidigh
Dr Martin Rose

SAC apologies: Anne Marie Crowley

Dr Nazih Eldin
Prof Eileen Gibney

safefood staff: Dr James McIntosh

Colette O'Shea
Fiona Gilligan
Dr Mairead McCann
Anne Parle

safefood apologies: Patricia Fitzgerald

Dr Gary Kearney

1. Welcome, introductions & apologies

The chairperson welcomed the safefood Advisory Committee (SAC) members to Cork.

Apologies were noted from Anne Marie Crowley, Dr Nazih Eldin, Prof Eileen Gibney,

Patricia Fitzgerald and Dr Gary Kearney. No comments on the agenda items were received in advance of the meeting.

Noted: There were no conflicts of interest expressed from members regarding the agenda items.

2. Minutes of the SAC meeting of Friday, 21st of October 2022 and matters arising

Noted: The members accepted the minutes. They were proposed by Mary Daly and seconded by Dr Muiris O 'Céidigh.

Noted: There were no matters arising:

3. Consumers' use of smart devices while preparing food in the domestic kitchen on the island of Ireland (Document SAC 05MAY2023 Doc 2)

Presented by Prof. Moira Dean, Queen's University Belfast: introduced by Dr Mairead McCann, Food Safety Directorate at *safefood*.

Noted: The research acknowledged the prevalence with which consumers use mobile devices during cooking and questioned consumers habits and possible health risks from foodborne pathogens in this regard.

Noted: The research was a collaboration between Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and St. Angela's College Sligo.

Noted: The research hypothesis was that the use of smart devices in a kitchen setting impacts on the potential for cross-contamination with foodborne pathogens and ramifications for food safety outcomes. The research consisted of focus groups and surveys, behavioural observations and direct surface microbial testing.

Noted: The findings from the research show that (a) use of smart devices (especially mobile phones) is common during cooking, (b) these devices can harbour microbes that can contribute to cross-contamination, (c) although these are easily disinfected, this generally wasn't observed, (d) even if people are aware of the issues, they don't always put this into practice.

Noted: The fundamental recommendations are (a) advice on sterilising/cleaning smart devices before use (especially pertinent for vulnerable groups), (b) ideally dedicate an older less used device for kitchen purposes. Given that smart devices are now fundamentally an extra appendage, it may be necessary to secure the assistance of social influencers to get the message across.

Noted: The outcomes from the research could be integrated into the information (e.g., recipe) already on the *safefood* website. The findings are also relevant for home economics courses at second level. Also, online / TV cookery champions would be valuable champions for this advice, particularly at Christmas.

4. Community Food Initiatives (Document SAC 05MAY2023 Doc 3)

Presented by Anne Parle, Nutrition Directorate at *safefood*.

Noted: The essential purpose of the CFI programme is to promote positive eating habits particularly amongst low-income families. Different organisations apply for funding through the programme which is awarded for three years.

Noted: Programme metrics are collected and focus groups with the successful community group leaders are carried out as part of the three-year evaluation process.

Noted: The programme has had difficulties in securing qualified nutritionists and dietitians to deliver information sessions – especially true during the pandemic.

Noted: the online delivery of the programme was evaluated and **safefood** concluded that this only works as part of a hybrid approach.

Noted: The CFI 'Home' programme is for organisations not part of the CFI group but who want to run individual unique online projects for people at home. Also, the programme explored the potential for engaging with other nutrition and lifestyle stakeholders.

Noted: The current iteration of the CFI programme involves 9 initiatives in Ireland and 4 in Northern Ireland. The 'CFI at Home' is now a core part of the programme including places like family hubs and migrant centres. However, many of these do not have cooking facilities and English may not be well understood. So the question is how best to support these. We need to take account of cultural differences when inculcating sound nutritional advice, especially for immigrant groups. May be worth checking out the Social Inclusion & Partnership (SICAP) programmes, or the Irish Refugee Council, who are in this space. Also, parent care facilitators who engage with parents in the community could be partnered with and their programmes influenced. It may be possible to repurpose existing empty facilities for these actions.

Noted: How best to secure nutrition & dietetic support for the provision of reliable and correct information as part of the CFI programme? The Slainte Care Health & Community Programme employs nutrition workers who are expected to support the CFI programme. There are other programmes in Northern Ireland that could also be exploited for this purpose. It may be sufficient to engage professional nutrition & dietetic expertise for the purposes of training the trainer. This lowers reliance on these expertise and compensates for the current deficit in nutrition expertise.

Noted: May be worthwhile explore Local Authority in this regard. Also, facilities for probation and prison release are generally excellent when it comes to food preparation so worth looking into.

Noted: Student Volunteer Ireland – centred on UL – worth investigating if these can be influenced to spread the message.

Noted: Consider practical shopping trips with target groups. The retailers may well wish to get behind this.

5. Artificial Intelligence (Document SAC 05MAY2023 Doc 4)

Presented by Fiona Gilligan, Dermot Moriarty and Deirdre Cosgrove.

Noted: Like most agencies, **safefood** is at sea with regard to the potential impact of AI on the organisation including communications, the potential threat to creativity, jobs, what are the ethical principles, etc.

Noted: Servers like Google already use AI technology which has also found a lot of use in advertising. Others such as Siri and Alexa use AI image and sound recognition.

Noted: AI systems are dependent on the quantity and quality of data – if data is biased the AI outputs will be as well. There still needs to be expertise / sound information / knowledge for appropriate input.

Noted: AI can also be used for malevolent purposes that could undermine trust among consumers.

Noted: An actual example of a **safefood**-style press release generated by AI was shown. It was devoid of all the nuances and subtleties of language that would normally pepper a press release or any other sort of prose.

Noted: **safefood** has already used a chatbot for a previous Christmas campaign to free up helpline personnel on Christmas Day.

Noted: The existential threat will be around written content which could potentially lead to deficits in knowledge and expertise being promulgated through each generation. This will in turn will heighten the importance of oral communications.

Noted: It will be important for **safefood** to be aware of AI implementation in its contractors and acknowledge where appropriate if any outputs are generated using AI. We will need to decide whether or not we will tolerate the use of AI in any of our projects.

Noted: Regulation is very far behind developments in AI. New legislation on regulating AI will go before the European Parliament in June. But there are obvious questions including 'whom' gets regulated!

5. AOB & Date of next meeting

Noted: The members were advised that their current term of service concluded on the 2nd of October 2023. We are unsure as to how we can proceed after this date given the ongoing political situation in Northern Ireland.

Noted: The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill is being debated in the House of Lords for the time being.

Noted: The next meeting is tentatively on Friday, 29th of September 2023. Venue TBC in Belfast.

Noted: The Chair thanked the members for their participation and advice and closed the meeting.