

Meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Committee

Thursday 19th October 2017

safefood, 4th Floor, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

MINUTES

SAC members present: Prof Margaret Patterson, Chair

Dermott Jewell

Michael Bell

Therese Coleman

Prof Mary Corcoran

Dr Kirsten Dunbar

Prof Elizabeth Keane

Dr Mary McCarthy

Dr Elaine Mooney

Martin Roper

SAC apologies: Gerry Leen

Prof Joe Hegarty

safefood staff: Dr Gary Kearney

Dr James McIntosh

Dr Clodhna Foley Nolan

Fiona Gilligan

Dr Aileen McGloin

Andrew Castles

Dermot Moriarty

Colette O'Shea

safefood apologies: Ray Dolan, Chief Executive Officer

Invited guests: Ruth Charles, Coru Registered Dietitian

1. Welcome, introductions & apologies

The chairperson welcomed the **safefood** Advisory Committee (SAC) members and **safefood** staff to the meeting at the **safefood** office in Dublin.

Apologies were noted from Gerry Leen, Prof Joe Hegarty and Ray Dolan

There were no conflicts of interest with regard to the agenda items.

2. Minutes of the SAC meeting of Monday 8th May 2017 and matters arising

The minutes from the last SAC meeting held on Monday 8th May 2017 were reviewed and agreed. There were no matters arising.

3. For Information - **safefood** media campaign updates

Updates were given on four **safefood** media campaigns:–

(a) Safe cooking of burgers campaign

Noted: The aim of the **#Burgers** campaign was to highlight the risks to health from eating undercooked burgers.

Noted: The campaign video was disseminated via **safefood** TV on YouTube and received over 150K views. Social media was harnessed to generate an extensive conversation around the campaign.

Noted: Short term behavioural analysis after the campaign showed a dramatic reduction in the number of people ordering rare burgers.

Noted: The **safefood** campaign was carried out in coordination with activities of the FSAI and the Environmental Health Service, thus ensuring that essential food safety advice was provided through both promotional and enforcement channels.

Noted: The campaign was not extended to Northern Ireland. Here, official approval is required in order to sell rare burgers.

(b) 0-4 years food hygiene campaign

Noted: Research found inconsistent application of advice on hand washing; people understand the importance but don't actually follow through on the advice.

Noted: Campaign focus was to get parents to lead by example primarily for 2-4 year old children.

Noted: The main campaign deliverable was a cartoon around 'Rufus the messy monster' and the influence of the monster's dad in inculcating good handwashing practices.

Noted: At this time, the video has had over 320K views, the content page on the **safefood** website has had over 40K views since the campaign was launched in September.

Noted: The campaign will now be integrated in Early Childcare settings in ROI and NI.

(c) Childhood weight campaign

Noted: The new **Healthy Weight for Children** campaign, which will be launching on the 1st November in RoI and NI with the ministers for health or surrogates in both jurisdictions involved in the launch.

Noted: The campaign will run for 5 years and is part of the Healthy Weight for Ireland strategy that was launched in RoI in 2016 and the Fitter Futures strategy in NI.

Noted: The TV segment will be the initial element of the campaign called 'Start' and will launch on 30th October.

(d) Folic acid campaign

Noted: This was on foot of a request by both departments of health to instigate measures to encourage greater uptake of folic acid in women of childbearing age due to a documented increase in the incidence of neural tube defects.

Noted: Target is women aged 18-35 and in particular lower socio-economic groups.

Noted: The strategic approach was to make taking folic acid relevant for this age group by taking advantage of the mechanisms by which this age group is influenced. This included full exploitation of social media channels.

Noted: Campaign launched on 25th September. Due to other factors there was a certain level of push back by the public. As the campaign is currently in the field, there are no reportable results at this stage.

4. Prioritisation of future SAC work

With regard to the Prioritisation of Future SAC Work, a list of current and ongoing issues of importance to the Food Science and Human Health & Nutrition directorates in **safefood** was distributed to the members with a view to forming SAC working groups that could address some of these issues individually. The members were canvassed for their expressions of interest in the different topics (Table doc SAC 19OCT2017 Doc 03). It was emphasised that the expressions of interest were non-binding and participation in any working group would be entirely voluntary.

Noted: The two most popular topics were *Strategic Partnerships* and *Improving the cooking skills of Early School Leavers*.

Noted: Both working groups to report to the SAC meeting in April 2018.

Action: **safefood** to prepare background documents on both topics and disseminate to the members.

Action: **safefood** to draw up terms of reference for each topic with the members.

Action: **safefood** to arrange for meetings on each topic to be held during quarter 1 of 2018.

Action: The offer to join either working group to be extended to all the SAC members.

Action: Members to give a brief outline of their experience/expertise vis-à-vis their chosen topic.

5. For discussion

a) Standing Item: Brexit issues and impact on food safety

Noted: RoI-NI food industries are significantly integrated. Furthermore a significant volumes of food imports and exports travels from RoI through the UK and also from the UK through RoI.

- Noted:** There still is very little clarity as yet in the Brexit negotiations.
- Noted:** Most cross-border on the IoT trade is agrifood. The possibility of technological solutions for the post-Brexit border issues is being discussed (e.g. Trusted Trade Partner) but nothing is implementable at this stage.
- Noted:** However, if there is no agreement, the Great Repeal Bill will not be ready in time by March 2019, in which case the UK will have no regulatory framework for food which provides a huge opportunity for criminality in the food chain and the Border is vulnerable in this regard.
- Noted:** There will be a requirement for a form of customs union encompassing one of three possibilities: RoI-EU, RoI-UK or UK-EU. There may be a recourse to a quota system.
- Noted:** In the event of a no deal, the recourse will be to WTO tariffs which are extremely complicated and based on hard-nosed economics that will be a logistical nightmare for both government and food industry.
- Notes:** Different schools of thought in the UK are proffering different possible outcomes including 'zero' tariffs with all the detrimental effects on British agriculture. This would mean cheap food, lower inflation, and largely public favour. The agrifood industry is against this for obvious reasons. The alternative would be protectionist tariffs that would enhance agrifood production in the UK. Bad news for the RoI which exports 37% of its production to the UK.
- Noted:** In the UK currently 12% of disposable income is spent on food. If this is allowed to go to 14-15% over a 10-year period, this would result in economically viable farms that would not need subsidisation.
- Noted:** The UK government's decision will be published in Fish and Agriculture papers, the former is due for publication in the short term.

7. Knowledge share

Cultivating resilience: Is there a role for urban agriculture?

Presented by: Prof Mary Corcoran, SAC member

- Noted:** The motivations behind UA can be due to adverse circumstances such as unemployment but may also reflect a more deep seated desire for reconnecting with nature and arresting over-consumption.
- Noted:** Urban agriculture is largely advanced by activists and advocacy groups, either pressuring the municipality into co-operative action, or taking the lead in their own right.
- Noted:** Overall policy in regard to urban agriculture is lacking.

Food hypersensitivity in early childhood: logistics, challenges and the future

Presented by: Ruth Charles, Coru Registered Dietitian

- Noted:** Prevalence figures for food hypersensitivity in children under 5 were presented.
- Noted:** The elements of assessing the risk of an adverse reaction in a childcare setting were discussed.

Noted: The success of the **safefood** training programme for Early Childhood Providers in upskilling and correcting misinformation were shown.

Noted: New advice on weaning with regard to allergy prevention measures were discussed.

8. Tour de table

There were no issues of note.

9. AOB & date for next meetings

Noted: A Doodle Poll will be arranged for the next meeting which will be in April 2018. The members will be advised in the short-term.

Noted: The venue of the next meeting is to be decided.

Noted: The Chair thanked the members and closed the meeting.