

Meeting of the **safefood** Advisory CommitteeMonday, 8th May 2017**safefood**, 4th Floor, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

MINUTES**SAC members present:** Prof Margaret Patterson, Chair

Michael Bell

Therese Coleman

Prof Mary Corcoran

Dr Kirsten Dunbar

Prof Joe Hegarty

Dermott Jewell

Prof Elizabeth Keane

Gerry Leen

Dr Mary McCarthy

Dr Elaine Mooney

Martin Roper

SAC apologies: None**safefood staff:** Ray Dolan, Chief Executive Officer

Fiona Gilligan

Dr James McIntosh

Dr Marian O'Reilly

Dr Linda Gordon

Colette O'Shea

safefood apologies: Dr Gary Kearney**Invited guests:** Dr Trevor Donnellan, Teagasc

Dr Ken McKenzie, Target McConnell's

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 Dr Gary Kearney, **safefood**.

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

2. Minutes of the SAC meeting of Thursday 8th September 2016 and matters arising

The minutes from the last SAC meeting held on Thursday, 8th September 2016 were reviewed and agreed. There were no matters arising.

3. Introduction to the **safefood** Advisory Committee

safefood CEO, Ray Dolan, welcomed the new members to the Committee and gave a brief introduction outlining the organisation's structure, legislative remit and the operational challenges faced in meeting these obligations.

4. Role of the **safefood** Advisory Committee

Noted: A discussion followed on possible ways of working to maximise the benefit of the SAC to **safefood** and also to the individual members themselves. The working group model was cited as being one that has proved productive with past SACs. The willingness of the members to contribute to **safefood**'s operations was noted. It was emphasised that the participation of the members should extend beyond attendance at the meetings of which there are two, possibly three, convened per year.

Noted: Specific points addressed were:-

- The new SAC represents a broad diversity of skills, expertise and experience.
- Members may have access to publications in which **safefood** could market its resources, e.g. the Consumer's Association of Ireland publication.
- There is potential for the promotion of **safefood** resources through school's home economics programmes.
- There is a potential to connect with other civil society activities and initiatives such as via the development of urban agriculture and the **safefood** Community Food Initiatives that can be harnessed to promote **safefood** resources.
- Inter-agency working has been successful in the past and should continue.
- **safefood** should continue to develop its presence in the food environment in Northern Ireland.
- Communications have become more difficult in this 'post truth era' and this presents unique challenges for organisations such as **safefood**. Also, the consumer's attention span is continually reducing as their immediate environment becomes information saturated.
- There is a need to think laterally with regard to the mechanisms for communicating to ensure the message is getting to the intended audience and it is being listened to.

- Food safety legislation (e.g. food allergen legislation) continues to present challenges in terms of implementation.
- The principles of quality assurance apply to **safefood**'s operations.
- There is an obvious skills and information deficit in the food environment now. There may be a role for **safefood** in addressing this.
- The issue of metrics and measuring effectiveness and impact is an ongoing issue for **safefood**.
- The example of the development of a Media Literacy Resource for school children following a gap analysis was cited.
- Certain deficits in education, such as the dearth in home economics courses for boys, were cited as potential areas where **safefood** could make a positive difference and to which the SAC members could contribute.

Noted: The importance of direction from **safefood** with regard to the contribution of SAC members was emphasised.

Noted: The Chair suggested that the 'Seven Criteria for Effective Contribution', as proffered by Prof Joseph Hegarty, be disseminated to the members. It was agreed at the meeting that these would be useful as an aide memoir to focus member's thoughts when advising on **safefood**'s operations. The criteria are as follows:-

1. What is SAC trying to do?
2. Why is it trying to do it?
3. How is it doing it?
4. Why is it doing it that way?
5. Why does it think that is the best way of doing it?
6. How does it know it works?
7. How can it be improved?

Action: Members to reflect on the meeting and consider if there are improved ways of working to maximise their impact. This includes considering the structure and content of the agenda. **safefood** to garner the member's opinions in advance of the next meeting.

Action: The SAC agenda to be sent one month in advance of a meeting.

Action: **safefood** to disseminate Prof Hegarty's 'seven criteria' to the SAC members for their consideration and response in advance of the next meeting.

5. **safefood** media campaign updates

Updates were given on four **safefood** media campaigns and the **safefood** Knowledge Network:-

(a) 0-4 years

An update on the latest food safety campaign aimed at the 0-4 years was given.

Noted: The latest iteration of the food safety campaign will focus on 0-4 year olds as these have been identified as a specific vulnerable group.

Noted: 40% of VTEC cases occur in children under the age of 4 and 25% of *campylobacter* cases are also in this age group.

Noted: **safefood** is working with pre-schools and parents on creating a suite of interactive resources suitable for the under 4's on the importance of hand washing.

Noted: The campaign will commence during late August 2017 to coincide with the start of the school year.

(b) Knowledge Networks update.

Noted: A diary notification for a seminar on the Hygiene Hypothesis was given. This is scheduled for the Spencer Hotel, Dublin on 4th July 2017.

(c) Safe cooking of burgers

Noted: This is in response to a trend among consumers for medium-rare burgers and an outbreak of food-borne illness associated with consumption of same.

Noted: The campaign will run in late June 2017 and will advise consumers to always ask for their burgers to be well done.

Noted: The group agreed that there should be no ambiguity in the campaign message.

Noted: The potential of running a similar campaign in Northern Ireland is to be investigated.

(d) New phase of childhood obesity

Noted: A new obesity strategy was launched in ROI in 2016. **safefood** is represented on the new obesity strategy group.

Noted: **safefood** is now investigating potential partnerships with other agencies for the next phase of the obesity campaign.

Noted: A workshop scheduled for Belfast in June 2017 will investigate the psychological impacts of obesity and this will also feed into the next phase of the campaign.

(e) Folic acid campaign

Noted: The health services in ROI and NI have issued Recommended Daily Intakes for folic acid for women of child-bearing age.

Noted: **safefood** is investigating possible solutions to encourage greater uptake of these recommendations. It was acknowledged that getting the message across in this case was extremely difficult.

6. Presentations for discussion

a) The potential impact of climate change on the island of Ireland dairy sector

Presented by guest speaker: Dr Trevor Donnellan, Teagasc – Athenry

Noted: Non-CO₂ emissions (methane and nitrous oxide) are mainly from enteric fermentation, soils, fertilisers & manure.

Noted: Both positive and negative impacts are predicted for the IOI including a longer growing season and more adverse weather events.

Noted: Primary production will be the most impacted part of the dairy supply chain.

Noted: There is good awareness of the issue throughout the dairy supply chain but more buy-in will be needed as collective action across the supply chain is essential.

Noted: The final report is available on the **safefood** website.

b) The development of new healthy eating guidelines for ROI and NI

Presented by: Dr Marian O'Reilly, **safefood**

Noted: The updated Food Pyramid (ROI) and Eatwell Plate (NI) were presented and discussed.

Noted: The evidence base for these updates was presented and the new changes highlighted.

Noted: The pros and cons of using a pyramid as opposed to a plate were discussed.

Noted: Sweets and treat foods have been kept outside the plate whereas they are still on the pyramid.

c) The politics and psychology of risk

Presented by guest speaker: Dr Ken McKenzie, Target McConnell's, Dublin

Noted: Consumers tend to follow adverse behaviours and the reasons for this are unknown.

Noted: Culture is more powerful than communications as an influencing factor.

Noted: Influencers consult experts but there is a disconnect between experts and the people they are trying to influence. The default approach is to increase knowledge and get people to think like experts. The evidence suggests that this is ineffective and that an increase in knowledge does not result in a change in behaviour.

Noted: Co-creation with the target audience is critical as this allows us to identify the triggers for behavioural change.

Noted: In the near future, it is likely that expertise will become just as much about advocacy as the transmission of information.

7. Knowledge share

*The challenge for **safefood**'s food safety and healthy eating operations post Brexit.*

Presented by: Dr James McIntosh, **safefood**

Noted: Brexit may present unique challenges for **safefood** in terms of delivering on its legislative obligations and its day-to-day operations.

Noted: As yet there is no clarity on the course that Brexit will take and the consequences on the IOI. That said, there is a potential for considerable disruption on the current level of agri-food trade both between ROI and UK and cross-border on the IOI.

Noted: There is a need to narrow the focus in terms of *safefood*'s operations.

Noted: The post-Brexit legislative requirements are enormous and will include the need for future policy developments and possible restructuring.

Noted: The group agreed that this issue was too varied and volatile to warrant the formation of a specific Working Group at this stage. Instead, they agreed that 'Brexit' could be a standing item on future agendas under which members could report on developments and other issues.

Action: Members to report relevant developments vis-à-vis Brexit and its impact/potential impact on food safety and healthy eating.

8. Tour de table

Noted: There is a new Chief Executive in the FSA, Dr. Jason Feeney who started in the role on April 11th.

Noted: The FSA is hosting a refocussing event looking at Brexit, future FSA operations in the context of diminishing resources, and fit-for-purpose official controls post-Brexit.

9. AOB & date for next meetings

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

Noted: The venue of the next meeting – Dublin or Belfast – is to be decided.

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