Meeting of the safefood Advisory Committee
Friday 11th May 2018
safefood, 4th Floor, Block B, Abbey Court, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

MINUTES

SAC members present: Prof Margaret Patterson, Chair
  Dermott Jewell
  Michael Bell
  Prof Mary Corcoran
  Dr Mary McCarthy
  Dr Elaine Mooney
  Prof Joe Hegarty
  Martin Roper

SAC apologies: Gerry Leen
  Therese Coleman
  Dr Kirsten Dunbar
  Prof Elizabeth Keane

safefood staff: Ray Dolan, Chief Executive Officer
  Dr Gary Kearney
  Dr James McIntosh
  Dr Aileen McGlone
  Dr Charmaine McGowan
  Colette O’Shea

Invited guests: Peter Whelan, FSAI
1. Welcome, introductions & apologies

The chairperson welcomed the safefood Advisory Committee (SAC) members, safefood staff and the invited guest to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Gerry Leen, Therese Colman, Dr Kirsten Dunbar and Prof Elizabeth Keane

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

2. Minutes of the SAC meeting of Thursday 19th October 2017 and matters arising

The minutes from the last SAC meeting held on Thursday 19th October 2017 were reviewed and agreed. There were no matters arising. However, following a request for an update on the Folic Acid campaign, Dr Aileen McGloin advised that the most recent phase of the campaign had been in September 2017 and this had resulted in a small increase in the number of women taking folic acid supplementation.

3. Knowledge share

*Food Fraud*

Presented by: Peter Whelan, FSAI

**Noted:** Combating criminal activity in the food chain in the Republic of Ireland is the responsibility of the Garda and FSAI in collaboration with relevant government departments.

**Noted:** Criminal activity along the food chain represents a real risk for the reputation of Irish food products.

**Noted:** Criminal activity includes both deliberate fraudulent activity and food operators who may for any reason be bypassing the normal food controls.

**Noted:** The importance of the Protective Disclosure Act for gathering intelligence was emphasised.

4. For discussion

a) Prioritisation of future SAC work

**Noted:** A Working Group to look at the issue of Strategic Partnerships had been set up since the previous SAC meeting in October 2017. This consisted of Michael Bell, Dr Kirsten Dunbar, Prof Joseph Hegarty, Demott Jewell and Prof Elizabeth Keane. The group met in February 2018. The report from the Working Group was sent to all members.

**Noted:** The report stated that the scope for safefood to form strategic partnerships was not limited to the island of Ireland and strategic partnerships could give safefood access to new networks.

**Noted:** safefood’s experience as a trans-border organisation may be of interest at the European level in defining post-Brexit EU-UK relations, particularly with regard to the evolution of the food chain and the associated increase in turbulence.

**Noted:** The focus of the next Corporate Plan will dictate the strategic partnerships that will be necessary to ensure its delivery.
Noted: Under Healthy Ireland, each county is applying for Healthy County status and have received funding for targeting diverse communities, training, etc. However, there is no evaluation method applied to this programme. safefood may be able to provide expertise.

Noted: Some members expressed an interest in participating in a Working Group looking at Improving the cooking skills of Early School Leavers.

Action: safefood to contact the members with regard to establishing a Working Group looking at Improving the cooking skills of Early School Leavers.

b) Standing Item: Brexit issues and potential impact on the IoI agrifood chain

Noted: The Brexit process is ongoing and there still is very little clarity as to what the outcomes will be vis-à-vis regulatory divergence, border evolution, trade, etc.

Noted: Approximately 55% of cross-border trade on the island of Ireland is agrifood in nature. Any disturbance in the current border structure, particularly with regard to the regulatory regime, will have negative impacts on this flow of trade.

Noted: There may be increased regulatory demands on food businesses, especially SMEs who could see a substantial increase in compliance bureaucracy.

Noted: Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) status is an EU system for accrediting agrifood businesses. Essentially no NI agrifood business have this accreditation which takes at least 6 months to achieve. This may prove necessary for cross-border trade post Brexit.

Noted: safefood needs to keep a watching brief on developments as Brexit will have an enormous impact on all aspects of the agrifood industry on the island of Ireland, particularly with regard to the potential for criminal exploitation and any associated impacts on food safety.

c) Research ideas

Noted: safefood relies on its various networks, including the SAC, for the identification of knowledge gaps that would benefit from focussed research, particularly with regard to implementable solutions.

Noted: A number of ideas were broached. However, it was agreed that the members needed more time to think about this issue.

Action: Members to feedback research ideas by end of June.

5. For Information - safefood CEO Report

Noted: The CEO advised that Dr Aileen McGloin had been appointed as the Director of Marketing & Communications at safefood while Fiona Gilligan was on secondment at the Dept. of Health.

Noted: The CEO went through the different elements of the most recent CEO report to the safefood Advisory Board.

Noted: The CEO and Directors of Food Science and Marketing & Nutrition met the EU Environment and Food Safety Committee on their recent visit to Dublin.
Noted: Updates were given on the second phase of the Childhood Healthy Eating (START), Childhood Handwashing and the Mediawise campaigns. The recent phase of the SME food safety training workshops was discussed as was safefood’s involvement in Social Prescribing as an advocate for CFIs and a more holistic perspective of food.

Noted: An update was given on the extent of consumer engagement with current safefood campaigns and also the impacts and ramifications of GDPR in this regard.

Noted: An update was given on two new research projects: Portion Control Tools and Food for Kids in Social Spaces.

8. Tour de table

Noted: The issue of SAC continuity was discussed given that the period of membership of some members was coming to a conclusion at the end of 2018. It was clarified that, given the current political situation in Northern Ireland (i.e. no functioning Assembly and therefore NSMC), clarification would be sought from the sponsoring departments on how best to proceed in this regard.

9. AOB & date for next meetings

Noted: The members were encouraged to feedback with any suggestions for presentations they consider would be of value to the SAC.

Noted: The CHRO19 - International Workshop on Campylobacter, Helicobacter and Related Organisms conference will be in Belfast in September 2019.

Noted: The FSAI is organising a food safety themed conference in June 2019.

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

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