

CONCORDAT BETWEEN THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND *safefood* – THE FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD

Introduction

1. This Concordat sets out an agreed framework for co-operation between the Executive of the Food Standards Agency in NI (FSA in NI) and **safefood** the Food Safety Promotion Board. It is not a legally binding agreement or a contract between the FSA and **safefood**, nor is it intended to cover every detailed aspect of the relationship between the two organisations. Rather, it is a statement of the principles that will guide working level relations between the FSA in NI and **safefood** to ensure sufficient communication and co-ordination to enable each to discharge their respective responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

The Concordat is also intended to contribute to meeting the need of the FSA to promote links with other organisations to ensure effective consultation, as specified in the Food Standards Act 1999. It will assist **safefood** in outlining its liaison with FSA in NI as required under the relevant Northern Ireland and Irish legislation. The concordat will also contribute to fulfilling the FSA's obligations under Section 34 of the Food Standards Act 1999 in relation to **safefood**. The Concordat cannot override the statutory duties and powers of either organisation.

General Principles

2. The FSA Director in NI and the Chief Executive of **safefood** jointly affirm their commitment, in the interests of food safety and consumer protection, to develop effective working relations so as to ensure that the best possible service is delivered. Officials shall maintain regular contact (both formal and informal) in order to discuss business of mutual interest. It is

recognised that good communication will be essential to effective and efficient working within and between both organisations.

3. In particular, the FSA in NI and **safefood** agree:

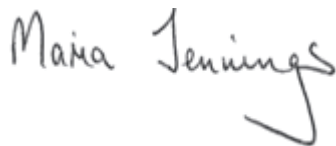
- To keep each other promptly and regularly informed about all work in which the other organisation has an interest;
- To give appropriate consideration to each other's views;
- To give appropriate notice and reasons when requesting advice and information;
- To inform the other body without delay of any relevant information which would require their action;
- To provide each other, where possible, with full, open and timely access to research findings, surveillance data, food alerts, and other relevant information;
- To pursue opportunities for joint planning and co-operate fully where joint programmes or initiatives are appropriate;
- To develop appropriate working relations within an East-West framework;
- To consult to ensure as far as is practicable that the activities of each organisation do not unnecessarily duplicate the activities of the other;
- To ensure that respective roles and responsibilities are clearly set out so as to avoid confusion among consumers, health professionals, industry and enforcement bodies;
- To promote collaboration with other agencies and interested parties;
- To hold appropriate meetings as agreed between senior executives.

FSA and FSPB Responsibilities

4. The remits of the FSA and **safefood** are set out in Annex A.

Operation and Review of Concordat

5. The FSA in NI and **safefood** are committed, wherever possible, to resolving any disagreement under this Concordat through normal administrative channels.
6. This Concordat will be kept under regular review at intervals to be agreed between the FSA in NI and **safefood** and be updated in the light of experience of its operation and practice. Amendments to this Concordat may be made at any time by agreement between the FSA in NI and **safefood**.
7. The FSA in NI and **safefood** hereby consent to concluding this concordat by means of e-signature.



(Signature).....



(Signature)

Maria Jennings
Director for Regulatory Compliance,
People and NI
Food Standards Agency

Ray Dolan
Chief Executive **safefood**

May 2020

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Annex A: The Remits of the Food Standards Agency and *safefood* – Food Safety Promotion Board

The Remit of the Food Standards Agency

1. The FSA is a non-ministerial government department in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and has close working relationships with Food Standards Scotland.
2. The Food Standards Act 1999 sets out the objective of the FSA in NI as the Central Competent Authority for food safety, in carrying out its functions to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food, and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. This legislation includes a clause stating that in NI the FSA must take account of the Food Safety Promotion Board's activities.
3. The FSA in NI is responsible for devolved matters relating to food safety, standards, nutrition and dietary health in Northern Ireland. Its responsibilities include:
 - advising Ministers on food safety and standards issues;
 - developing policy and proposing legislation,
 - providing timely and effective responses to food and feed incidents;
 - setting standards and auditing district councils' food enforcement activities;
 - setting standards and auditing meat hygiene, feeding stuffs, eggs and milk enforcement by DAERA;
 - encouraging food producers and caterers to reduce the levels of saturated fat, salt and calories in food products and
 - giving the public advice on diet and nutrition and food safety issues.

The Remit of the **safefood** – Food Safety Promotion Board

4. The Food Safety Promotion Board is an all island implementation body and its functions are prescribed in the British Irish Agreement Act 1999 and the North South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 as follows:
 - promotion of food safety;
 - research into food safety;
 - promotion of scientific cooperation and linkages between laboratories;
 - surveillance of food-borne diseases, and
 - food alert communication.

5. Under Annex 2, Part 2 of the Exercise of Functions it includes at 1.1(c) *providing food safety advice and guidance (including advice on the nutritional aspects of various foods)*.

6. Provisions in the legislation for the development of a specialised laboratory service on the island of Ireland are also on hold on the direction of the sponsor departments.

7. **safefood** fulfils its functions by building an evidence base of sound and authoritative science which we use to influence policy and to promote behaviour change in the overall interests of improved public health. We have made it a priority to work in partnership with key stakeholders on the island of Ireland and to utilise innovative approaches to support us in:
 - a. communicating clearly, in a direct and supportive manner;
 - b. promoting a better understanding of food safety, nutrition and healthy eating, and,
 - c. encouraging healthier, safer and sustainable food choices by consumers and those involved in the food chain.

This process is supported by **safefood's** Advisory Committee, which brings together experienced experts from food safety, nutrition, healthy eating and associated constituent groups who can advise on key priorities and concerns.

8. In its unique all island remit, **safefood** promotes scientific cooperation and linkages with laboratories and food safety professionals throughout the whole food chain; from producers and processors, to storage companies and distributors as well as those working in research and academia to strengthen the integrity of the food.