



Minutes of the 147th meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board
Held on Thursday, 25 March, 2021 at 10:30am
Zoom

PRESENT:

Ms Helen O'Donnell (HOD) (Chair)
Dr Eddie Rooney (ER)
Mr Brendan Kehoe (BK)
Ms Wendy McIntosh (WMI)
Mr Alan McGrath (AMG)
Dr Mary Upton (MU)
Dr Sinead McCarthy (SMcC)
Mr Alex Attwood (AA)
Ms Teresa Canavan (TC)
Prof Maeve Henchion (MH)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Ray Dolan, Chief Executive (RD)
Dr Gary Kearney, Director, Food Science (GK)
Ms Patricia Fitzgerald, Director, Corporate Operations (PF)
Dr Aileen McGloin, Director, Marketing and Communications
(AMcG)
Dr Catherine Conlon, Director, Human Health and Nutrition (CC)
Ms Alison Dries (AD) Secretary

APOLOGIES:

Mr Stephen Moutray (SM)

1. Meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present

Noted: The Board met in private without the Executive present

2. Matters arising from the private session

Noted: No matters were arising.

3. Introduction and apologies

Noted: The Chair welcomed all members of the Advisory Board to the meeting hosted virtually on the Zoom platform.

Noted: The apologies of SM were noted.

4. Conflicts of interest

Noted: The Chair asked members if there were any conflicts of interest relating to the agenda. No conflicts of interest were raised.

5. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 21 January

Agreed: The minutes were adopted with no amendments

Proposed: SMcC

Seconded: TC

6. Matters arising from the minutes

Noted: No matters arising.

7. Chief Executive's report

Corporate Plan 2017-2019, Business Plans 2018 and 2018 _____

Noted: The Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) in Northern Ireland has advised the Department of Finance NI that, given the unlawful payments which the Department of Health NI had made to **safefood**, the Minister of Finance cannot retrospectively approve those Business Plans and Corporate Plan and as such, the account for those respective years must remain irregular. Board Members thanked Angela Cahill and PF in their handling of the issue on behalf of **safefood**.

Noted: It is understood that **safefood**'s Corporate Plan 2020-2022 and Business Plans for 2019, 2020 and 2021 may be put before the NSMC for approval at its meeting on 26 March.

Noted: safefood employees continue to work remotely in line with the Government's guidelines. **safefood** has commenced development of a future working model for the post-pandemic environment.

Noted: The 2019 Annual Report & Financial Statements were issued to both sponsor departments to be laid before the Oireachtas and the Assembly in March and will be published on the **safefood** website once this has been completed.

Noted: safefood has commenced a tender process to procure Business Continuity and Risk Management services to address issues identified from the Internal Audit, which concluded at the end of 2020.

Noted: safefood's outsourcing of certain ICT & Facilities responsibilities due to difficulties in filling two vacant positions since 2019 which **safefood** has discussed with both sponsor departments. Following a second open recruitment competition, the ICT Executive position has been filled and the successful candidate is due to take up the post shortly.

Noted: The inaugural meeting of the new **safefood** Advisory Committee took place on Friday 12 March. There are ten new members and two returning members. They represent the broad categories of expertise requested in the tender for expressions of interest including Diet & Health, Food Industry, State & Regulatory, Food Science, and Communications & Behavioural Change.

Campaigns/Communications

Noted: AMcG informed of the following taking place in campaigns and customer engagement since the January meeting:

- Qualitative research was conducted with the target audience of the Start campaign to ensure the next phase message is appropriate during these Covid times.
- With the return of primary school education, a low-level promotion of the Rufus handwashing campaign took place to remind students of the importance of hand hygiene at this time.
- Evaluation of the Christmas campaign show visits to the website were down and this is attributed to a new cookie policy. 2020 stats now form a new benchmark for traffic to the website at Christmas.

- Two press releases were issued on the topic of Vitamin D and the promotion of the new education resource titled '**safefood** for life'.

Noted: MU asked if there was any pushback on the vitamin D press release. AMcG informed that a sentence was included to acknowledge people are taking Vitamin D as a preventative measure to Covid-19; however, there is no data to promote this.

- There was a great response to **safefood**'s latest podcast "Obesity and Covid-19" which was launched on World Obesity Day, March 4. Podcasts coming up next cover the topics food fraud and marketing of unhealthy food to kids
- As part of our work supporting parents to make healthy eating and food safety choices, **safefood** launched a video series with dietitian Sarah Keogh showing how to adapt family meals to feed babies who are ready to move on to solid foods. To date the videos have had over 2,400 views on YouTube, and garnered a positive reaction across social media.
- To encourage active play and healthy eating during lockdown, **safefood** developed a series of videos with Northern Ireland vlogger *Get Up and Dad* including making an obstacle course, bowling at home and making pizza.
- Research titled 'The use of meat thermometers in home kitchens on the island of Ireland' was published by **safefood**. The information collected in the research will help inform food safety advisory strategies to encourage the use of meat thermometers.

Noted: SMcC suggested supporting the findings of this report through a campaign with butchers.

- A **safefood** survey looking at the nutrition content of vegetarian meat substitutes was published. The survey found the biggest reason for purchasing the products was health; however, the survey found a quarter of the products surveyed were a source of saturated fat and not a source of protein. The message from **safefood** was to read the label before purchasing, as some products do not offer the nutritional value as their meat equivalent. Excellent media coverage was received from all major stations and papers.

Community food initiative

Noted: The Community Food Initiative hosted a webinar titled 'Delivering Community Food Projects Remotely – Successes and learnings from 2020'. The webinar explored how community organisations shifted from designing and delivering healthy eating programmes in-person to delivering these programmes remotely in 2020.

Noted: A number of Board members attended the webinar and offered their congratulations to all involved.

Education

Noted: The CEO was pleased to announce the re development of the popular education resource '**safefood** for life' is now complete. Now available online, the resource teaches basic food safety and food hygiene skills to students using a blended learning approach. An optional online exam can also be taken by students enabling them to acquire basic certification to work in casual work where food handling is involved.

Noted: safefood is sponsoring a number of projects in the education field. These include Graduate.ie, Veg Power NI and Incredible edibles Ireland.

Healthy eating

Noted: CC informed of the following taking place in the area of nutrition and healthy eating:

- The evaluation of the 'Transform your trolley' healthy eating initiative was very successful.
- **safefood** continues to work with SECAD to deliver the Community Food Initiative Programme. The CFIs are continuing to deliver small projects and community events remotely. We are in the final year of the current programme (2018-2021).
- The first meeting of the Healthy Eating sub-group in Ireland took place on the 8 March. Members discussed the work plans for the year and the group's focus on the following pieces: Healthy Eating Guidelines for over 65s, Guidance for the Provision of Food Parcels and Food and Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Centres. **safefood** will support the technical groups and will assist with the design and publication.
- The Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Health and the Health Research Board launched the Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity. **safefood** will supporting the strategy through the community food Initiative, the Start campaign and **safefood's** new online weight management resources and support via Weigh-to-Live.

Knowledge Network

Noted: GK informed of the following taking place under Knowledge Network:

- Three editions of *Network News* have been published to members.
- Development of eLearning tools for Small Medium Enterprises (SME's) is ongoing.

- A webinar titled 'Food safety support for SME's from **safefood**' was hosted on 15 March.
- Diary notices were given for webinars scheduled for the remainder of March through April.
- Allergen Master Classes have been hosted in Ireland to date for third level catering and hospitality students at five institutes of higher education.

Research

Noted: A research tender call was issued for three projects.

Noted: MH enquired as to the availability of the data sets of **safefood**'s research projects beyond the immediate analysis. MH informed it is standard EU practice that all data collected is available. GK informed **safefood** has no clear policy on raw data. The finished research report is published on the website. If a request were received for raw data, **safefood** would approach the researcher and request them to share.

Noted: The Chair thanked all involved in the work detailed in the CEO report.

Action: **safefood** to consider a policy on open access data.

8. Financial Report

Noted: The Financial report for the first two months of 2021 was tabled and discussed by PF.

9. Governance training

safefood organised for the Institute of Public Administration to provide Governance training to Board members. Tom Ward joined the meeting to work through the training session with Members and PF sought participant agreement to record the training for use with any new Board members as they are appointed. No objections were noted.

10. AOB

Noted: No further business was noted.

Date of next meeting: Thursday, 13 May 2021