

## DIET AND NUTRITION REMIT

### 1. Purpose of the paper

1.1 The Board is asked to

- (i) note the diet and nutrition remit (**Annex A**) that has been agreed with Scottish Government;
- (ii) agree to the proposal to undertake some “baselining” research.

### 2. Background Information

2.1. The Board will be aware that during the passage of the Food (Scotland) Bill there was considerable interest in the role of FSS with respect to diet and nutrition. The remit we have been given now enables us to develop our current role with regards to diet and nutrition and to focus on strengthening our partnership working in this area.

### 3. Discussion

3.1 Now we have the remit agreed, it is our intention to bring a more detailed paper to the board in September that will:

- (i) Assess the current position on diet and health in Scotland
- (ii) Propose strategic priorities that will support progress towards the Scottish Dietary Goals, with the purpose of improving the health outcomes of the Scottish population.

3.2 It is also important to recognise the range of partners involved in delivering improvements in diet and health. It should not be our intention to prevent or stop current activities of those involved in delivering diet and nutrition improvements, but instead to understand and assist coordination of these activities at a more strategic organisational level, for example to re-invigorate consumer interest in the diet debate. Over the next few months we will be talking to a wide range of partners and stakeholders including those in the food industry, the research community and with health and education professionals to seek their views and evidence on how FSS can best fulfil the remit we have been given.

3.3. In terms of development of any future strategy, it is important that we have an understanding of current attitudes. Certainly, anecdotal evidence is that there is consumer fatigue with messages about diet with what is good for you versus what is bad for you being perceived to change on a regular basis. The presentation of diet and nutrition by the media also appears to influence consumer attitudes in this area. It is therefore proposed that in the first instance

we will look to see if there is any existing social attitudes research that could be relevant and useful. Otherwise we propose to undertake research which would:

- (i) seek to understand the role media has on influencing attitudes to diet and nutrition;
- (ii) understand the “willingness to pay” of consumers with regards to diet and nutrition. In health economics terms this is important in understanding the level of personal risk consumers are prepared to tolerate before changing their behaviour;
- (iii) where people get their information from about diet and nutrition.

3.4 This research would need to be a statistically valid sample across ages, gender, social economic groups.

#### **4. Identification of Risks and Issues**

4.1 The main issue will be to re-assure stakeholders and partners that our purpose will not be to take over their activities. It is important that we continue to emphasise the need for a collective and more co-ordinated approach to policy development to assist Scottish consumers through:

- (i) fostering and encouraging partners to share evidence about what works;
- (ii) understanding local level activity and the results it achieves;
- (iii) exploring how behavioural science may be used to influence consumer behaviour;
- (iv) understanding the social, economic and risk behaviours in relation to diet and health, particularly with respect to lower income consumers; and,
- (v) ensuring activities and the direction of travel tackle inequalities.

#### **5. Recommendations**

5.1 The Board is asked to agree to commissioning the social attitudes research to baseline current consumer attitudes to diet and nutrition in Scotland.

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## Annex A

### FOOD STANDARDS SCOTLAND: DIET AND NUTRITION REMIT

The diet and nutrition remit for Food Standards Scotland should be a leadership role and focused on:

- a. Creating an authoritative primary source of evidence-based diet and nutrition advice for Ministers, delivery partners and consumers about diets conducive to good health to support the Scottish Dietary Goals;
- b. Providing a strategic co-ordination of diet and nutrition research and surveillance, through partnership working, to help ensure the effective use and application of resources. To advise on, publicise and develop policy in respect of the Scottish diet;
- c. Providing a single source of diet and nutrition activity to assist in a coherent delivery of dietary health improvement;
- d. Advising Ministers, making recommendations, where appropriate, on actions that improve dietary health.

Ministers expect Food Standards Scotland to lead a co-ordinated approach through working in partnership to:

- build on the existing FSA in Scotland remit for diet and nutrition to ensure that public health nutrition policy protects the health of the Scottish population and puts the consumer first;
- be the primary source of impartial and evidence-based public health nutrition advice for consumers, health and education professionals and policy makers in Scotland;
- be involved in the provision of all consumer focussed diet and nutrition advice to ensure it contributes positively to achieving the Scottish Dietary Goals;
- improve the nutritional quality of food and drink in the Scottish food chain;
- contribute to improvement in health outcomes by providing evidence-based advice on diet and nutrition for all public sector areas such as the NHS, prisons, care homes and schools;
- ensure effective targeting of research and surveillance on diet and nutrition in Scotland to provide information on which to revise and develop dietary policy for Scotland, through an open and transparent tender processes;
- be responsible for co-ordinating all relevant diet and nutrition SG-funded research.