

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1 Chief Executive's engagements

- 1.1 I have been very busy out and about since the last Board meeting, continuing my efforts to introduce myself and FSS to as many of our key stakeholders and partners as possible. From the food production side, I've had useful introductory meetings with the Potato Processors Association, and the SRUC (Scotland's Rural College). I've discussed food safety and nutrition with Waitrose, and attended Scotland Food and Drink's annual Excellence Awards ceremony.
- 1.2 I have also attended the British Veterinary Association's annual dinner, and delivered a presentation on FSS's vision and strategy to the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) annual conference, reaching a wide audience from the enforcement community. I met with Police Scotland, to talk about our approach to food crime, and with Scottish Government colleagues to discuss our respective responsibilities for food labelling.
- 1.3 I've also had a very good discussion with HPS at our annual update meeting, talking about how we can work together to determine the burden and assess the risks relating to foodborne disease in Scotland. And – very important for our consumer-focused organisation – I met with the Chief Policy Adviser and the Head of Campaigns for Which?, and had a wide-ranging discussion covering matters such as the FSS approach to consumer engagement, work planned for healthier choices, effective enforcement, food hygiene ratings, horizon scanning and our plans for a food crime unit. Which! have also agreed to present at future Board seminar. I also attended the QMS Board meeting on 11th June, and continue to meet with a range of SG officials.
- 1.4 Meanwhile, Elspeth Macdonald, Deputy CE, has also been busy meeting stakeholders and making links, including with the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI), the Food and Drink Federation, Marine Scotland, the North East Scotland Agriculture Advisory Group, the United Kingdom Accreditation Service and the British Standards Institution, and Nestle. Elspeth also gave a presentation to the Scottish Government's Regulatory Review Group, and attended, along with some of the FSS Board members, a very useful event aimed at giving Board members and Executives of Delivery Bodies the opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences.

2 Events and Communications

- 2.1 We attended the Taste of Grampian event on Saturday 6 June with a newly-branded stand. I attended the pre-event dinner and presented the EatSafe Awards at the event with the Lord Provost. There was some good advance coverage in the Press and Journal, highlighting our attendance at the event.

- 2.2 We are working to raise the profile of FSS amongst consumers in the run-up to and during the Royal Highland Show (RHS) from 18-21 June. A pre-event press release focusing on food safety around BBQs and summer eating will be issued, with a further release around the opening of the new stand on Thursday 18 June. Media and key stakeholders will be invited to attend the opening. A series of meetings with stakeholders for myself, the Deputy CEO, Operations Director, Chair and Board is planned for during the event itself.
- 2.3 We will also run social media activity before and during the event and are talking to national titles to secure an opinion leader editorial piece. Plans for continuing PR and social media work will be developed following the RHS.
- 2.4 We are also developing a plan for continuing the successful series of stakeholder forums.

3 Marketing and insight

- 3.1 We have engaged an agency to undertake consumer research work. They are taking forward a full evaluation of the RHS activity as well as a bespoke consumer attitudes tracking survey for Scotland to build upon and replace the 'Food and You' survey undertaken by the FSA. They will also undertake 'Citizen's Forums' and 'Teachers' Panels' during the year which will continue to be used to test and evaluate policy and communications.
- 3.2 We are also looking to engage an agency to undertake the rest of FSS's marketing requirements including:
- Segmentation
 - Social marketing (behaviour change) campaign for Diet & Nutrition to dovetail with SG's EatBetterFeelBetter campaign
 - FSS brand advertising (based around food safety messages)
 - Partnerships work
 - FHIS brand development
 - Digital marketing and additional interactive tools/content for the website
 - Field marketing/roadshows

4 Website update

- 4.1 Two months in and the FSS website is engaging people's interest. To the end of May, we had 78,428 page views from 18,265 unique users. This despite the lack of significant promotion to drive traffic to the site as of yet. And it seems that users are finding content which is useful and relevant – bounce-rates (ie people who come onto the site then immediately come off again) are relatively low, and the length of time on site remains at around a minute and a half.

5 Corporate Services

- 5.1 As I mentioned in my previous report to the Board, we are working through some issues relating to the corporate services transition, and in particular the final set-up of our suppliers on the Finance and Procurement systems. This has not impacted on our ability to continue to procure and pay for goods and services, however as staff have been working hard to rectify these issues to ensure business-as-usual continues, we have not yet finalised our detailed financial forecasts for the 2015/16 programme and administration budgets. We anticipate being in a position to start reporting on financial performance to the board from the end of July.
- 5.2 Work is underway to begin the closedown of the New Food Body transition programme and both FSS and Food Standards Agency (FSA) staff are identifying key successes of the project, along with any lessons learned, which will be contained in a final report that will be issued to the Board in due course.
- 5.3 Again as mentioned in my previous report, we have brought in, from 1 April, a new charging system for official controls in meat plants. The Scottish meat charging system has become operational since my last report to the Board, and we have issued our first set of invoices to meat businesses. Invoices will be issued to businesses, based on Business Agreements, for the first two months of each quarter and a full reconciliation will take place in month 3 of the quarter to reflect actual hours worked and to ensure EU minima compliance.

6 Food Safety and Standards

Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC)

- 6.1 I'm happy to report that the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) continues to operate in a similar manner under FSS as it did under FSAS. This is a group that co-ordinates the food law enforcement and sampling and surveillance activities of Scottish local authorities. FSS's regulatory strategy is a standing item on the SFELC meeting agenda.
- 6.2 In its two meetings since FSS was established in April, SFELC has focused on diet, nutrition and health and on operations, and has heard presentations on those themes from FSS staff. In future meetings SFELC will discuss food fraud and related issues and will continue the diet, nutrition and health theme.

Animal feed official control delivery in Scotland

- 6.3 FSS met with the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland at the end of May to discuss alternative options for delivery of feed official controls in Scotland. We are now carrying out a mapping exercise of feed activity in Scotland which will help inform decisions about a way forward. Feed controls remain a risk - this is a priority area and a paper will be presented to the Board in September.

World Class Surveillance System

6.4 ICF submitted their report “Benchmark Standards for a World Recognised Food Surveillance System” on 4 June 2015. This report benchmarks Scotland (and the rest of the UK) against countries that have the best performing food surveillance systems. Recommendations include:

- Developing and implementing a horizon scanning strategy for food fraud, working with industry stakeholders and research institutions and focusing on food subsectors that are of high economic importance to Scotland;
- Adopting a more systematic approach to building skills for food fraud surveillance and investigation and strengthen FSS’s capacity to coordinate food fraud surveillance and investigations;
- Consideration of developing surveillance strategies to control the risk of fraud against Scottish products in export markets;
- Making more effective and systematic use of information sources such as trade and industry data, and social media;
- Fostering information sharing and ‘safe spaces’ for discussion of food fraud issues with the food industry;
- Encouraging better joint working among laboratories, building on SG’s work on a Shared Service strategy;
- Facilitating greater collaboration between Public Analyst laboratories, research institutions and industry;
- Developing and implementing, with UK partners, better integration of data systems;
- Ensuring the FSS continues to have access to multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC).

6.5 This work will be included in a project to develop a risk based surveillance strategy for food safety and standards in Scotland. The pleasing aspect of this report is that it further confirms our views on what needs to be done - we will wrap this work up with Scudamore recommendations and the work we are doing on developing our intelligence and investigation capability and capacity.

FSS Incident Management Plan

6.6 The FSS Incident Management Plan (IMP) was published on the FSS website on 22nd May 2015. This IMP outlines our plans and procedures for fulfilling our responsibilities in response to Scottish non-routine food/feed-related incidents that are led by Food Standards Scotland. This IMP will be reviewed regularly to reflect procedural amendments which may be identified during incident handling, emergency exercises and discussions with stakeholders.

6.7 The FSS IMP is aligned with the Food Standards Agency’s Incident Management Plan, which outlines how UK-wide food/feed incidents are managed.

Public Procurement

6.8 A Public Sector Incident Protocol was developed by FSS in 2014 and tested in a simulated exercise with public procurement bodies on 24 February 2015. The protocol has gone through a final redraft following the exercise. FSS has also developed a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to information sharing

to support the Protocol. FSS has developed standard clauses for sampling, traceability and authenticity, which comply with the requirements of food law, with a view to standardisation across the public sector. These documents received a favourable response at a recent meeting with public sector organisations, and it is now anticipated that they will be issued in mid-June and the Minister updated by the end of June.

- 6.9 FSS is now looking to provide a mechanism for sharing information on sampling and inspection outcomes with the public sector. This will progress over the next few months.

7 Food Protection Science and Surveillance

Shellfish

- 7.1 FSS hosted a workshop on 14 May to review guidance launched in 2014 which aimed to assist businesses in managing the risks associated with marine biotoxins. The workshop was attended by 35 stakeholders including representatives from the wild and farmed shellfish sectors, Local Authorities, scientists and testing laboratories. Discussions were extremely positive, indicating that the guidance has improved awareness of biotoxin risks and knowledge of end product testing across the industry. The workshop generated a number of valuable suggestions for improving guidance for the sector and increasing testing provision for biotoxins. A report of the key discussion points will be published on the FSS website over the next month.

Foodborne disease - Hepatitis E

- 7.2 On 12 May, Health Protection Scotland (HPS) published its Annual summary for 2014 of viral and selected foodborne bacterial pathogens. This highlighted a 12 fold increase in the number of reported cases of Hepatitis E infection in Scotland between 2011 and 2014. The reasons for the increase are currently unknown, and it is unclear what proportion of cases can be attributed to improvements in case ascertainment and what proportion represents a genuine increase in incidence.
- 7.3 Hepatitis E can be transmitted in a number of different ways, including poor sanitation and the consumption of contaminated food such as undercooked or raw pig and game meat, processed pork and shellfish. However there is no evidence to link the current increase observed in Scotland to any particular source, and it is therefore not known to what extent food may have contributed to these figures. FSS and HPS are working with other partners to develop research which will improve our understanding of the main risk factors for Hepatitis E infection in Scotland.

Foodborne disease - Campylobacter

- 7.4 On 26 May, HPS reported that there had been a 13.5% increase in the number of laboratory-confirmed cases of campylobacter in the first 20 weeks of 2015 than during the same period last year, with 2225 laboratory reports compared to 1960. The increase was spread across Scotland, across weeks and ages, with no apparent clustering of cases and no reported outbreaks. FSS is working

with HPS to better understand the increase in Campylobacter this year. In addition, we have raised awareness of Campylobacter by promoting the recent FSA led Food Safety Week and by publicising food hygiene messaging on our website.

- 7.5 On 28 May, the FSA published the final set of results from its year-long survey of Campylobacter on fresh chickens. The results for the full year identified that, out of over 4000 samples of fresh whole chickens on retail sale in the UK, 73% tested positive for Campylobacter, 19% of which were found to be contaminated with high levels. In addition, 7% of the packaging tested positive for the presence of Campylobacter. A paper on how FSS is contributing to the FSA programme on Campylobacter reduction is being presented to the board.

Food Surveillance

- 7.6 FSS has consulted on priorities for food surveillance activities in 2015/16, for which it has allocated grant funding which will be made available to all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland. Local Authorities have been invited to submit bids for sampling work to inform a range of policy priorities covering microbiological quality, chemical safety, allergens, authenticity and labelling. The sampling programme will run from 3 July 2015 - 31 March 2016, and all results will be recorded on the UK Food Surveillance System (UKFSS) database and reviewed by FSS on an on-going basis.

8 Diet and Nutrition

- 8.1 On 29 May, FSS published two linked scientific reports: *Estimation of Food and Nutrient intakes from food purchase data in Scotland 2001 to 2012* and *Contribution of foods to intakes of energy and selected nutrients using food purchase data in Scotland 2001 to 2012*. These reports provide an update of annual trends in food consumption and nutrient intakes for the Scottish Dietary Goals (SDGs) up to 2012.
- 8.2 These updated reports provide further evidence that progress towards a healthier diet in Scotland continues to be very slow. The findings confirm that in Scotland we are still consuming too much fat and sugar. Foods such as confectionery, sweet biscuits and sugar-sweetened beverages are major contributors to calories, fats and sugars; accounting for more than half of the intake of added sugars in the diet of the Scottish population. With nearly two-thirds of adults and a third of children in Scotland overweight or obese, there is a clear need to reduce the consumption of high fat/ high sugar foods and increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables and starchy wholegrain foods, with some meat, fish, eggs, dairy products and/or non-meat sources of protein.
- 8.3 The results continue to demonstrate the need for all parties to take forward the Supporting Healthy Choices Voluntary Framework to help people choose healthier diets as part of their lifestyle. FSS will also use this evidence in developing proposals for policy on diet, working in partnership with others in line with our remit on diet that the Minister agreed recently.

- 8.4 As the Board will no doubt recognise, although we have been operational for only eight weeks, a significant amount of activity is taking place and we have a busy schedule of change too. This gives the senior team great confidence in the capabilities of all our staff who are certainly making the necessary step change required with being a stand-alone organisation.

Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive
Geoff.ogle@fss.scot

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