

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1 Chief Executive's engagements

1.1 Since the last Board meeting on the 20th September 2017, I have attended the Scottish Food Commission Summit accompanied by the Chair and Heather Peace, Head of Nutrition, Science and Policy.

1.2 I have met with the new Chief Executive Officer of Quality Meat Scotland; the Chief Executive Officer of Zero Waste Scotland, British Retail Consortium, representatives from Which? and Police Scotland. I gave a presentation at the Sainsbury's Technical Director's conference that included our approach to incident management. In particular how, in protecting public health, we balance levels of uncertainty with the degree of precaution i.e. the higher the uncertainty the greater the precautionary approach will be.

1.3 I have also attended the Food for Life Advisory Group as well as numerous meetings with Scottish Government officials on a range of issues. I also attended the Food Standards Agency Westminster Parliamentary reception.

1.4 Myself, Ian McWatt, Director of Operations and Katherine Goodwin, Head of Communications and Marketing also met with senior Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland officials and had a very useful and constructive catch up where we discussed a range of issues including Brexit, our Regulatory Strategy, current risks and threats to Local Authority delivery, essential concerns around capacity with a firm commitment from both sides to continue to work through and support Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee and to increase the number of meetings given the significantly changing landscape.

2 Deputy Chief Executive's engagements

2.1 Elspeth MacDonald, Deputy Chief Executive and representatives from a number of FSS branches met with the Head of Public Affairs from Which? to discuss the remit of FSS and provide an update on topics of current interest.

2.2 She attended a number of meetings with a focus on Brexit including the Westminster Food and Nutrition Forum, Keynote Seminar on priorities for UK food labelling policy after Brexit. She attended the Royal Bank of Scotland Food and Drink Conference.

2.3 Along with three Board members and invited guests, she attended the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Awards on the 5th October 2017. FSS sponsored the award for recognising projects addressing inequalities and improving health and she presented the award to the winners, North Ayrshire Council.

3 Food Safety Authority of Ireland and Safefood Conference

3.1 Ian McWatt, Director of Operations and Ron McNaughton, Head of Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit attended the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and Safe Food Conference in Dublin in October. The conference attracted worldwide delegates including experts, scientists, academics and regulators to examine the extent of food fraud and how to tackle it. Ron gave a presentation on his experience in setting up the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit.

4. Scottish Government Obesity Consultation

4.1 Scottish Government launched its consultation on a diet and obesity strategy on 26th October 2017. The consultation is called *A Healthier Future- Actions and Ambitions on Diet, Activity and Healthy Weight*¹, and runs until 31st January 2018.

4.2 It is positive to note that Food Standards Scotland's evidence and advice, previously presented in FSS board papers on diet and health and agreed by the Board, have been recognised and are well reflected in the document.

5 FSS new advice for consumers on eating runny eggs

5.1 On 10th October 2017, FSS issued revised advice to consumers on the consumption of eggs eaten raw or lightly cooked. People in Scotland who are more vulnerable to the effects of food poisoning such as young children, pregnant women and the elderly are being advised they can now safely eat raw or lightly cooked eggs that are produced under the British Lion Code of Practice. The revised advice follows a report from the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food which highlighted the major reduction in the risk from Salmonella in all UK hens' eggs since 2001 and showed a particularly low risk for eggs produced with food safety controls applied by the British Lion Code of Practice.

5.2 We previously advised that people who are at higher risk of becoming very ill if they contract food poisoning should only eat fully cooked or hard-boiled eggs. This scientific review has highlighted the significant progress made by egg producers in Scotland and across the UK in reducing Salmonella in hens.

5.3 The findings provide the assurance FSS needs to change its advice. Whilst healthy consumers can continue to enjoy all UK eggs any way they choose, it's good news that children, pregnant women and the elderly can now safely eat their eggs soft boiled, runny or raw, as long as they're stamped with the British Lion Code mark.

5.4 It is important to note that the revised advice does not apply to the severely immunocompromised who require medically supervised diets.

6 Communications and Marketing

6.1 Food in Scotland Consumer Tracking Survey

6.1.1 On the 7th September 2017, we published the third Food in Scotland Consumer Survey² which was conducted between 8th and 21st December 2016. It shows interesting results, as well as highlighting changes in behaviour and attitudes since our first survey. Of those who were aware of FSS, trust remains stable at 76%.

6.1.2 On the 31st October 2017, we published the fourth Food in Scotland Consumer Survey³ which was conducted between 19th June and 4th July 2017. It shows that the number of people concerned about having a healthy diet is increasing, 65% of people in

¹ https://consult.gov.scot/health-and-social-care/a-healthier-future/user_uploads/00526543.pdf

² http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/Food_in_Scotland_Consumer_Tracking_-_Summary_Report_-_Wave_3_1.pdf

³ http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/FSS_Consumer_Trends_Report_Wave_4_FINAL_%282%29.pdf

Scotland are concerned about having an unhealthy diet, which is a rise of 15% since December 2015.

6.2 Summer Food Safety Campaign – Pink Chicken

6.2.1 In summary, evaluation has shown the 2017 campaign to have built further on last year's promising results. Utilising the media that worked well last year, and exploiting some new media formats appears to have had good impact on reaching our audience, as has introducing some new creative.

6.2.2 This year's media activity saw Pink Chicken appear on radio, outdoor, social media, and a number of digital channels. The campaign has generated some very positive results, showing good progress in achieving the objectives, in particular: *Encourage uptake of specific food hygiene actions and motivate behavioural change amongst the target audience.*

- 94% of campaign recognisers took some action on the back of seeing the advertising (up 10% on 2016)
- An increase of 14% more respondents 'always' ensure chicken is cooked thoroughly by using a meat thermometer compared to 2016
- 9% more respondents agree they are confident they have knowledge and information to help avoid food poisoning when barbecuing compared to 2016
- More respondents know what Campylobacter is: 41% 2017 v 28% 2016

6.3 Success for the FSS Healthy Eating Campaign

6.3.1 FSS received a Gold Award for the healthy eating campaign in the Healthcare category at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Scotland PRide Awards 2017. The Communications and Marketing team worked closely with Nutrition Science and Policy team along with our Public Relations agency, 3x1 to deliver the public relations activity to launch and support the campaign.

6.3.2 The campaign has also made the final three of the UK wide Civil Service Awards for 2017 with the winner announced on 23rd November 2017. There are usually a high number of nominations and to reach the final three is a magnificent achievement of itself. Fingers are crossed for the 23rd November 2017.

6.4 FSS website

6.4.1 The new version of the FSS website was launched in July 2017 based on feedback from our stakeholders, staff and consumers to enhance the user experience and to highlight all the work that we do. Benefiting from an improved search function and easier navigation, stakeholders and consumers are able to find information more easily. Since launching our new site, we have also found that users are spending longer on the site due to the improved content, new layout, and focused topic areas.

6.4.2 Between 1st August 2017 and 20th October 2017, there were 43,767 visitors to the website, who viewed an average of 4 website pages.

- Since the website launch, there has been an increase in returning visitors from 33% to 38%

- Bounce rate, [which is the percentage of visitors to a website who navigate away from the site/leave the site after viewing only one page] has decreased from 48% to 43%, which is positive as it means visitors are staying on the website for a longer period

6.4.3 The website is proving to be very popular to all who have visited it so far, and we have received excellent feedback. The new website allows us to engage even more effectively with stakeholders and consumers, helping us work towards our strategic outcome: FSS is a trusted organisation

6.5 Student Roadshows

6.5.1 During September 2017, FSS embarked on a number of student roadshows, visiting various universities across Scotland, relaying healthy eating and food safety messages and engaging with a wide variety of students from all over the world.

6.5.2 The student roadshows allow FSS staff to engage with the predominantly younger demographic, discussing food and kitchen hygiene in the student halls or in shared accommodation, often catering for themselves for the first time, and highlighting the importance of a healthy diet and good food safety practises. Students' feedback from each location was very positive, with many of them commenting that they learnt something new relating to food hygiene and healthy eating.

6.6 Education Resources

6.6.1 Our new [education resources](#) are available, and we've been promoting these to schools and teachers through a variety of channels, including at the Scottish Learning Festival. The activities, which were developed with teachers, cover themes of food safety and healthy eating and can be used in the classroom or at home. These resources support the Health and Wellbeing area of the Curriculum for Excellence, and are progressive, engaging activities for primary and secondary school children, that include cross-curricular ideas, making them relevant to many subject areas.

7. Healthy Eating Tutorial

7.1 We have recently unveiled our [Healthy Eating tutorial](#), which was developed in collaboration with NHS Health Scotland. The tutorial is aimed at those with no background in nutrition, but who may relay healthy eating messages to others as part of their job, or for those who want to learn more about healthy eating. The tutorial includes an optional assessment module.

8. Leaving the European Union

8.1 We continue to engage with SG and FSA colleagues as well as industry and consumers on this issue which is now increasingly absorbing more resources. A paper is on the agenda for the 15th November 2017 Board meeting, so further comment on leaving the European Union has not been included here.

9. FSS Regulatory Strategy

9.1. The final FSS Regulatory Strategy considered and agreed by Board members on 17th May 2017, was published on the 4th September 2017 and is available [here](#). This is a significant milestone, supporting delivery of our key strategic priority – *responsible food businesses flourish*

10. Update on Fipronil in Eggs

10.1 Investigations by FSA and FSS have continued into tracing the distribution across the UK of any remaining products, potentially affected by Fipronil contaminated egg. On the 21st September 2017, FSS published an updated list of 70 product withdrawals and there have been no new withdrawal notifications since that date. This incident has continued to de-escalate.

10.2 Sampling of Fipronil in UK eggs (including Scotland) by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate now continues as part of its routine surveillance programme. At the cessation of its enhanced sampling programme, 273 samples (35 in Scotland) taken from across the UK had all tested negative for Fipronil.

11. 2 Sisters Food Group

11.1 Following the staff and stock issues identified in September 2017 at the 2 Sisters Food Group in England, an FSS Veterinary Manager has reviewed operational procedures in the Coupar Angus plant and found no areas of concern. FSS has also conducted an unannounced inspection (UAI) of the cutting plant and introduced reality checks by the Official Veterinarian and Meat Hygiene Inspector teams on site. No issues of concern were identified during the UAI.

12. Meat Charging and Contracts

12.1 Ross Finnie, Chair, Ian McWatt, Director of Operations and Garry Mournian, Head of Corporate Services had a very useful initial meeting with Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers representatives on 31st August 2017 with agreement to a joint workshop to take place at Pilgrim House, Aberdeen on 2nd November 2017.

12.2 There is certainly a collective will to ensure revisions to the funding model are sustainable and the plan is to try and finalise changes by the end of January 2018, for the next financial year. Our part time economist has also undertaken some initial useful analysis which will be developed further. Obviously, a change in the contract to “time and materials” rather than “fixed cost” should help incentivise businesses to be more efficient because less time will mean less cost.

12.3 The tender process for the meat official control contracts has now ended and we are now going through the process of bid evaluation. A recommendation will be provided in mid-November 2017 and we anticipate an award of contract in early December 2017.

12.4 The Crown to Crown arrangement for shellfish official controls with Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) is progressing and should proceed to final agreement by December 2017.

13. Scottish Living Wage and Disability Confident Accreditations

13.1 We are delighted to announce that FSS has achieved accreditation from the Scottish Living Wage Foundation. Achieving this accreditation is a real symbol of commitment to our staff, stakeholders and people in Scotland, as part of the strategic direction set out in our Strategy to 2021 and Corporate Plan.

13.2 FSS has signed up to the Disability Confident scheme and we have received a committed accreditation. Through Disability Confident, we as an organisation will continue to work with employees to ensure that disabled people and those with long term health conditions have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations.

13.3 As a Disability Confident Committed employer, we have committed to:

- ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- communicating and promoting vacancies
- offering an interview to disabled people
- anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required
- supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long term health condition, enabling them to stay in work
- at least one activity that will make a difference for disabled people

13.4 We aim to promote our Scottish Living Wage Accreditation and the Disability Confident accreditation on the FSS website, social media channels and incorporate the logo into our FSS templates.

14. FSS Staff Engagement Survey and Planning for 2018-20

14.1 The annual FSS staff engagement survey commenced on 2nd October 2017 and ended on 31st October 2017 with a 91% response rate. This was very encouraging and will give us a high degree of confidence in the results. We expect the initial results mid-November 2017 and the Senior Management Team (SMT) will be analysing these carefully to determine what's working well, and where staff are identifying areas for improvement. As the Board will be aware it has been a very challenging year with a fair amount of pressure from a variety of fronts, and SMT are keenly aware of the need to help manage that pressure.

14.2 A planning day will be held later in November 2017, to map out our requirements for the next 18-24 months, so we understand the full scope of all programme activity and the essential core requirements. This will enable us to identify where the pressure points are; the resources required versus resources available and where necessary come to conclusions on what activities we may need to review. We intend to bring this work to the Board in February 2018 with regard to the next phase of delivering the FSS Strategy.

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