

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1 Chief Executive's engagements

- 1.1 Since the previous Board meetings in September and December, I have been continuing my efforts to meet with a number of stakeholders and delivery partners, including Scottish Government to talk about diet and nutrition, Food Standards Agency, National Farmers Union of Scotland, Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers, Catherine Calderwood, Chief Medical Officer.

2 Stakeholder Engagement

Food Standards Scotland and Scottish Food and Drink Federation (SFDF)

- 2.1 Peter Midgley and Food Standards Scotland regulatory policy, science and nutrition colleagues had a very productive meeting with SFDF in November, in which we discussed our respective priorities and opportunities for collaboration. Among other things, we talked about actions around Supporting Healthy Choices, finding out what influence manufacturers have over retail promotions, modelling to understand the impact of the SACN recommendations, sharing intelligence on food safety and authenticity, traceability and other aspects of the Scudamore recommendations that are aimed at industry, and stakeholder engagement in the development of FSS strategy.
- 2.2 Another meeting was held this month at the SFDF office, this time with Elspeth MacDonald and David Thomson who is the new Chief Executive of SFDF. Respective priorities were discussed, along with the UK conversation around action on sugar and Food and Drink Federation's (FDF) role in this, and how to get more engagement with Supporting Healthy Choices. There was also discussion around FDF's Intelligence sharing programme and the review of Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS). These meetings will continue on a regular basis.

3 Events and Communications

The Future of Food - FSA/FSS Joint Working

- 3.1 On 12 December, the Deputy Chief Executive attended the second wave of consumer research groups held in Edinburgh, to help us understand consumers' views and attitudes on 'food futures'. This was an excellent opportunity to hear what consumers had to say and we are really positive about how the participants engaged with this subject. This work will help to support both our own and FSA's strategies, as we know that the food landscape is likely to change in the future, but we can't yet predict how fast or when things will change. It's important that we understand what consumers think and feel about different future scenarios, to ensure that we are focussed on what matters to them.

- 3.2 This research work paves the way for a larger event in Cardiff on 10 February 2016, involving key influencers and opinion formers from across the UK and FSS will be represented at this event.

4 Marketing and insight

- 4.1 On 14 December, the Festive food safety campaign was launched. We obtained strong coverage across all media channels which was particularly impressive following the coverage of the publication of the FSS situation report. A full evaluation of the campaign is currently underway and we will update you on this in a later Report, but one statistic I can share with you now is that the online film has been viewed 118,000 times – a fantastic result.
- 4.2 A number of research projects are currently underway through Communications & Marketing to give FSS greater insight into the attitudes and behaviours of the people of Scotland in relation to food.
- 4.3 Firstly, qualitative work is underway to inform the forthcoming Healthy Eating campaign. The study aims to delve into consumers' habits, thoughts and feelings around consumption of discretionary foods and the levers that may help us motivate behaviour change through a marketing campaign, due to run mid-2016. The findings will inform creative development, and a number of creative routes will then be taken back to consumers to test their impact and potential to change behaviour.
- 4.4 Secondly, we are engaging with consumers via focus groups to gauge attitudes towards the Strategic Plan. The findings from this will be combined with those from the Stakeholder Forum which ran on 12 January to help us develop and sense-check the Strategy. And finally, we have received top-line results from our new quantitative consumer attitudes survey, data from which forms our benchmark for moving forwards, and will feed into the segmentation. This first-cut data is not checked and is at total sample level only. We will get fuller results this month and we will share those soon, but one interesting finding is that 45% of people say they have heard of FSS and although less than one in five trust us a lot, no-one distrusts us.

5 Website update

- 5.1 We have a new Digital Marketing Manager, Lynsey Gray, who has joined us from NHS Health Scotland. One of Lynsey's first tasks will be to commission a usability study of the website to assess how it is performing from a user perspective – consumers, stakeholders and staff. The findings will inform phase 2 of website development, which will take place in the next financial year.

6 Public Relations

- 6.1 The Communications & Marketing team, together with Consolidated PR, have been working hard to generate media coverage over the past weeks. Between September and December 2015 (4 months), FSS secured 121 pieces of coverage across print, broadcast and trade media. Highlights include

#Lookatthelabel (34 pieces of coverage), Festive Food Safety (33 pieces of coverage) and the Situation Report (35 pieces of coverage).

- 6.6 In total this amounts to £301,532 PR value. Against our 2015 spend on public relations this results in an extremely healthy return on investment of 8:1 which personally I'm delighted with on behalf of the team, especially given that media relations is just one part of our remit.

7 Food Safety and Standards

Report a survey of fish authenticity in the public sector

- 7.1 On 13 January 2016, FSS published a report of a survey which was undertaken in conjunction with Scottish Local Authorities to examine the authenticity of fish products supplied to public sector procurement bodies in Scotland. This survey was taken forward to address recommendations 13 and 18 of the Scudamore review relating to the need for collaboration with public sector procurement bodies and additional surveillance projects to improve intelligence on authenticity issues.
- 7.2 We will be recommending that this issue is given on-going consideration in the verification of products supplied to the public sector and continues to be monitored through LA sampling programmes.

Incident Management

- 7.3 A 'food incident' occurs when there are concerns about threats to the safety or quality of food and/or feed. During an incident, Food Standards Scotland will intervene where necessary to protect consumers' interests. In the four months since 16 September 2015, 43 incidents have been reported to Food Standards Scotland of which 37 were routine. FSS has issued 30 Allergy Alert Notices and 17 Product Recall Information Notices to consumers.
- 7.4 Following the recent E. coli O157 outbreak associated with the consumption of Scottish venison products, Operations Directorate have been working closely with the game sector to consider the impact this will have on working practices and to determine whether or not there is a need to review the current guidance. Ian McWatt has presented the key issues from the recent outbreak to the Scottish Quality Venison Partnership and is due to address the hunters conference next month in Kingussie. Operations and policy colleagues will be working closely with the game industry to ensure guidance and systems of work address cross contamination issues from the field to factory.

Avian influenza

- 7.5 Avian influenza has been formally confirmed on a poultry farm near Dunfermline by Scotland's Chief Veterinary Officer. It comes after laboratory tests identified a very mild form of the H5N1 strain of the virus.
- 7.6 Restrictions on the movement of poultry and birds remain in place for one kilometre around the affected premises, and a humane cull of almost 40,000 birds on the farm has now begun.

- 7.7 On the basis of current scientific evidence, our advice is that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers. The risk of getting bird flu through the food chain is very low. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

8 Corporate Matters

Contingency planning

- 8.1 In light of recent events in Aberdeenshire caused by extensive flooding, I thought it would be prudent to provide the Board with an update as to the current contingency arrangements in place for FSS. We have a well-established business continuity plan in place (including a call-cascade system and emergency telephone line for staff) to ensure that the organisation can still function in the event of severe weather disruption and/or the loss of our building. We are also closely aligned to the wider SG business continuity and disaster recovery plans given our IT servers are hosted by SG.
- 8.2 Whilst this element is well-established, we are currently reviewing and updating our plan to reflect the fact that as we are now part of SCOTS (SG IT network) we can effectively operate out of any SCOTS enabled office. Informal arrangements are in place with other bodies such as Marine Scotland and we are looking to extend this into formal agreements with a wider range of SCOTS enabled organisations in the area (and beyond, should there be any issues within Aberdeenshire itself).
- 8.3 We are also looking to improve our contingency arrangements and plan by undertaking a review of our business readiness priorities and implementing recommendations from the recent IT Security Audit. This will specifically focus on the individual requirements of teams within FSS and prioritise the key staff, services, systems and information that require to be up and running following an incident (and managing the impact of any issues post incident). We are also liaising with FSA regarding their contingency arrangements in place to manage any potential strike action. Once these changes have been made, we shall also be undertaking a documented test of the business continuity plan.

Review of terms and conditions

- 8.4 Negotiations continue with the recognised trade unions (Unison, Prospect and PCS) to seek to harmonise to Scottish Government Main bargaining unit terms and conditions for all FSS staff. Three meetings have taken place so far to discuss various proposals for harmonisation with a further meeting to be held on 22 January 2016.

People Survey

- 8.5 We are working with TNS to issue a version of the Civil Service People Survey later this month. The results will be independently collated and analysed by TNS.

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

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