

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

### **1 Chief Executive's engagements**

1.1 Since the Board meeting in June, I have attended several events including the Royal Highland Show. During this event, accompanied by a number of officials and the Chair, we met with a number of key stakeholders, including Quality Meat Scotland, National Farmers Union of Scotland, Animal and Plant Health Agency and a number of major retailers.

1.2 At the end of June, I attended the Annual Reception of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and British Standards Institute. This is of particular reference because of the role UKAS would play in development of third part accreditation and assurance of 3<sup>rd</sup> party schemes.

1.3 The Chair and I have held a useful introductory meeting with Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity. At the Scotland Food and Drink Board meeting, I gave a presentation on our Diet and Nutrition and the challenges we face in improving Scotland's diet. It was a very useful and encouraging discussion and I was greatly encouraged by the Board's views on the need to consider diet as part of their review of their strategy. At the beginning of July, the Deputy Chief Executive and I attended the Scottish Guild of Agricultural Journalists meeting to provide an update on animal feed delivery of official controls and other current matters of interest. I attended the British Hospitality Association launch of the Food Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice .

### **2 EU Referendum Outcome**

2.1 The outcome of the EU referendum was known on 24<sup>th</sup> June. Since then, we have been working closely with colleagues in Scottish Government and in the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to consider the implications for FSS, although clearly it is still very early days. We have established an internal group of officials to coordinate FSS's work in the context of the referendum outcome and are providing regular updates to staff.

2.2 As the Board will be aware First Minister has set out the Scottish Government position with regards to the EU Referendum but it is worth flagging to the Board that if Brexit does happen to Scotland, then the Board will be aware of the huge impact on FSS given the vast majority of food and feed law is at an EU level. There would undoubtedly be implications for us going forward but it is too early to say at this time what that impact would be.

2.3 The Deputy Chief Executive attended a Post-Referendum stakeholder event, organised by Scottish Government and hosted by Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

### **3 E.Coli 0157 PT21/28 – Update**

3.1 FSS and Health Protection Scotland (HPS) continue to investigate the source of the outbreak of *E. coli* O157 (known as phage type (PT) 21/28). The investigations have indicated an association with two batches of a blue cheese called Dunsyre Blue manufactured by Errington Cheese Company in Lanark. This particular type of blue cheese is made with unpasteurised cows' milk. The number of cases stands at 18.

3.2. The Food Business Operator instigated a precautionary recall of two batches of Dunsyre Blue Cheese and FSS issued a product recall information notice. FSS are liaising closely with HPS and local authorities.

#### **4 Incident management**

4.1 Since 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and up to 08<sup>th</sup> August, 19 routine incidents have been reported to FSS. During this period, FSS has issued two Product Recall information notices to consumers. There were no Allergy Alert notices during this reporting period.

#### **5 Proposals to change consumer advice on safety of raw and lightly cooked eggs**

5.1 A report published by the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) on 25<sup>th</sup> July highlighted the major reduction in the risk from salmonella in UK eggs. Based on recommendations made by ACMSF, FSA and FSS are consulting on proposals to change our long-standing consumer advice on the consumption of raw or lightly cooked eggs. It is proposed that the FSA and FSS will continue to advise that all raw, soft-boiled hen eggs or foods containing lightly cooked hen eggs are unlikely to lead to illness in people who are in good health (who are not in a vulnerable group). In addition, we propose that we will no longer advise against the consumption of raw and lightly cooked eggs by vulnerable groups, provided that they are produced under the Lion code quality assurance scheme.

5.2 The consultation will run until 16<sup>th</sup> September and also seeks views from the industry on the mechanism for UK egg producers which are not currently part of the Lion code Scheme to demonstrate an equivalent level of food safety control.

#### **6 Launch of a new food safety management tool for fresh produce**

6.1 On 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> July, we launched an on-line tool to support growers in identifying and managing microbiological contamination risks associated with fruit and vegetable production. The tool is now publically available on our website (<http://freshproducetool.foodstandards.gov.scot/>) and provides evidence based guidance on the control of microbiological contamination at each stage of the process. To coincide with the launch, we held training workshops in Aberdeen and Edinburgh with ten Local Authorities (LAs) responsible for the enforcement of fruit and vegetable producers in Scotland.

#### **7 Diet and Nutrition**

7.1 Myself and the Deputy CEO met with Department of Health (DH) to discuss their child obesity strategy publication which as the Board are aware has been delayed again. We flagged up to DH that given the delays we will consider the merits of proceeding in certain areas for Scotland. Our intention would be to identify particular areas which we believe would be likely to be included in any UK strategy, for example portion size.

7.2 As the Board will recall we were clear that in certain areas we believe a UK approach remains the best way to address some issues, such as reformulation, and while we have also accepted industry desire to see the UK Government plans, that is becoming less of a sustainable position from our perspective. I raised this as a possibility with a couple of

retailers and they recognise that there is a need for action to be taken across the UK and proceeding with certain elements on a Scotland only basis – at least initially - is unlikely to be wasted effort. I will be writing to CEOs of the major retailers seeking their views.

## **8 Communications and Marketing**

### **8.1 Media Relations**

8.1.1 The FSS Strategy is due to be published on 17<sup>th</sup> August, signalling how we will direct our efforts over the next five years. The document is available in printed form and will also be uploaded to our website along with a brief animated film and infographic explaining what our strategic outcomes mean for consumers. The first FSS Corporate Plan, published at the same time, details the actions we will take over the first three years of the strategy.

### **8.2 Food in Scotland Consumer Tracking Survey**

8.2.1 The fieldwork for our Food in Scotland Wave 2 tracking survey is now complete, with a full results debrief from our research agency, TNS, due at the beginning of September. Topline results indicate that awareness of FSS has increased from Wave 1 (conducted in December 2015) by 6% to 50%, and amongst those aware of us, trust has also increased by 6% to 76%.

### **8.3 Marketing Campaigns**

8.3.1 The Summer Food Safety Campaign 'Pink Chicken' has now ended and results are being collated for evaluation. A summary of these will be provided to the Board. Our new Healthy Eating campaign, focusing on the reduction of discretionary food and drink, launches on 5<sup>th</sup> September.

### **8.4 Events**

8.4.1 We attended the Royal Highland Show at the end of June with our new stand and interactive digital games. An evaluation of the event is being collated and topline results will be shared with the Board in due course.

### **8.5 FSS Website**

8.5.1 A period of user testing of the existing website has now concluded, and the results have been built into a brief for phase 2 improvements to the site. These are scheduled to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

## **9 Chinese Audit of UK Salmon and Trout Industry**

9.1 A delegation from the Chinese Government, led by Deputy Director General of the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, (AQSIQ) visited the UK from the 15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016 to audit controls in our salmon and trout Industries. The opening meeting took place in Glasgow on the 15<sup>th</sup> June, and was chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive. The closing meeting was held at Defra.

9.2 A principal aim of the visit was to audit our system of official controls in relation to Food Businesses exporting salmon to China. The visit was supported by FSS and colleagues

from other Scottish and UK Government departments, LA's, public analysts and industry and FSS will collaborate with those others involved to address any relevant recommendations contained in the final report.

9.3 The audit was a very good opportunity for FSS to work in partnership with others in line with our strategic direction.

## 10 Update on Animal Feed official controls delivery

10.1 Earned recognition in the feed sector (where compliant feed businesses benefit from reduced inspection frequency) was rolled out, beyond primary production, for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. However, it has been confirmed by Local Authorities that very few of them have implemented, or have plans to implement earned recognition, as a result of the uncertainty of the future centralised delivery model. Despite this change – which means the application of feed controls would be less of a burden for LA's – it is disappointing that even this has not been implemented. This continues to be a significant risk. COSLA have also written to Ministers with regards to our proposals.

10.2 A number of industry and enforcement stakeholder meetings have now taken place in order to gather views on what a centralised model should look like. We have met with National Farmers Union Scotland, Agricultural Industries Confederation, assurance schemes, local authorities, Scottish Government and the Animal and Plant Health Agency. Views from stakeholders vary considerably, and attempts to develop a recommended model or model(s) have been made, however, the model, likely to be a hybrid, remains dependant on whether resources currently allocated to LA can be reallocated to FSS to implement a centralised model. This reflects my concerns as Accountable Officer around the proposition of duplicate expenditure for the same purpose, which is inappropriate.

## 11 Audit of Enforcement Authorities – Audit Programme 2016-2019

11.1 Further to the update in the previous Chief Executive's report on the review of the audit system, our Enforcement Authorities Audit Programme for 2016-2019 has now been agreed. Initially, an intelligence gathering exercise will be carried out with a view to gaining a high-level view of delivery of food law and official controls across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. The intelligence gathered from this exercise will then be used to determine our on-site audits and provide us with a more up to date picture on resourcing in LA's.

## 12 Veterinary Audit of Food Business Operators – Partial Audit Pilot

12.1 We are currently piloting a different approach to partial audits (partial audits are carried out following a full audit in meat plants that receive 2 or more major non compliances.) The pilot will look at a different approach to closing non-compliances in plants that receive a **generally satisfactory audit outcome and have regular Official Veterinarian presence within the plant.** During the pilot we would expect the Food Business Operator to be proactive in providing evidence to the Official Veterinarian to demonstrate that compliance has been achieved by the agreed date. The Official Veterinarian will assess the action taken with regard to the non-compliances raised and advise that the actions have been completed.

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