

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1 Chief Executive's engagements

1.1 In early April 2019, I attended a roundtable event in London organised by Which? to discuss the future of food standards. Jason Feeney, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Chief Executive was there along with representatives from the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs, academia and industry. Much of the questions being asked related to both the risks to food safety and standards from Brexit and the opportunities. The strong message coming through from consumer research is that there should be no degradation in food standards and food safety.

1.2 The Chair and I travelled to London for the joint meeting with Heather Hancock, FSA Chair and Jason Feeney, FSA Chief Executive. The topics discussed included food crime, Brexit, the UK-wide allergens consultation, the Advisory Forum on Food and Feed and other priorities. On the 1st of May 2019, Jason visited Pilgrim House speak to staff before his retirement at the end of June 2019.

1.3 Towards the end of April, the Chair and Ian McWatt, Chief Operating Officer attended the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers conference in Glasgow.

1.4 Myself and the four Chief Executive Officers of the Public Analysts laboratories in Scotland have agreed that it would be useful to arrange a meeting to discuss the risks and issues with current laboratory provision. I have also sent a reply to the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing who had asked for our views on public analyst provision in Scotland.

2 Nutrition, Science and Policy

2.1 Consultation on proposals to Improve the Out of Home Food Environment in Scotland

2.1.1 We have had an excellent response to our consultation on 'Proposals to Improve the Out of Home Food Environment in Scotland', which closed on the 28th February 2019. Responses to the measures set out will help inform FSS's recommendations to Scottish Ministers on developing a Scottish Government Out of Home Strategy.

2.1.2 We received 131 responses, with an equal split between individuals and organisations, so this was a great result. Responses from the consultation will be used to develop proposals for an overarching Out of Home Strategy which will be presented to the Board later this year. Following consideration by the Board, the Chair will provide recommendations to Scottish Ministers on an Out of Home Strategy.

3 Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit

3.1 DNP – 2,4-Dinitrophenol

3.1.1 We had some excellent coverage following the release of our survey on DNP or 2,4-Dinitrophenol. The survey found that only 4% of people in Scotland have heard about this potentially deadly substance and know what it is, which is often illegally marketed as a 'fat-burning' food supplement to support weight loss or promote health and fitness. The survey found that a third (35%) of people in Scotland surveyed would buy a food supplement which claimed it could help them lose weight, and the majority (55%) would buy a food

supplement marketed as a health and fitness product. Once aware of what DNP is and knowing that it can be fatal, 95% of respondents said they would not take it.

3.1.2 The story was widely covered by the media across the UK. Ron McNaughton, Head of Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit was interviewed by a number of radio stations and he appeared live on the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire programme where he did an excellent job highlighting the key messages and promoting the Scottish Food Crime hotline number.

3.2 Scottish Partnership against Rural Crime (SPARC)

3.2.1 The Scottish Partnership against Rural Crime (SPARC) has published its first [strategy](#) on preventing and tackling rural crime in Scotland. SPARC is a multi-agency partnership which includes FSS, Scottish Government, Police Scotland, National Farmers Union Scotland and Forestry and Land Scotland, with the aim of '*Protecting rural communities with a focus on prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance*'. The strategy sets out the seven priorities of SPARC which are Agricultural Vehicle, Farm Machinery and Plant theft; Equestrian Incidents; Fly Tipping; Fuel Theft; Heritage Crime; Livestock Offences (including preventing the illegal entry of animal products into the Scottish food chain) and Poaching.

3.3 Efficacy of Recalls and Withdrawals Project

3.3.1 Throughout 2018/2019, multi-stakeholder working groups have worked in collaboration to deliver the agreed outcomes of the Efficacy of Recalls and Withdrawals Project. The project was led by FSS/FSA, and including representatives from the food industry, enforcement authorities, consumers and allergy & patient support organisations, guidance and tools have been developed to help food businesses carry out food safety withdrawals and recalls with greater ease and effectiveness.

3.3.2 In January 2019, a four-week public consultation on the guidance was launched in which FSS and FSA received an encouraging response expressing support and providing useful feedback. On the 12th March 2019, the newly developed 'Guidance on Food Traceability, Withdrawals and Recalls within the UK Food Industry' was published. The [guidance](#) explains what the law requires, how to comply and includes best practice guidance. It provides food businesses with supplementary tools, including editable point of sale notice templates that they may find beneficial when dealing with product recalls and withdrawals.

3.3.3 Work is continuing on the two remaining project workstreams (Systematic Root Cause Analysis and Feedback Loops and Communications and Strategy Planning) as part of the project and a further update will be issued in due course.

4 Communications and Marketing

4.1 No to Upsizing Campaign

4.1.1 In March 2019, we relaunched our healthy eating marketing campaign encouraging people to say 'no' to upsizing. Consumers were challenged to resist the 'upsized' by playing the updated [online game](#) to find out how many calories they could save by saying no. We secured some national press coverage and television adverts, with short videos and infographics advertising featured on social media. Heather Peace, Head of Public Health Nutrition also gave interviews with various broadcast stations and she has taken part in a [Which? Conversation](#) asking people if they are aware of 'unconscious upsizing'. This is a community website where people can debate consumer issues, and is a great way to keep the conversation on upsizing going and engage as many people as possible.

4.1.2 Since the campaign began, over 2,800 people have played the online game and after the website homepage, the campaign landing page has been the most popular page on our website.

4.2 New FSS Food allergy alert service

4.2.1 On the 8th April 2019, we launched the new FSS [food allergy alert service](#), to coincide with World Allergy Week, encouraging those with a food allergy or intolerance to sign up to receive allergy alerts by email or text. The service allows users to subscribe to be notified about specific or all types of allergens, as well as product recall information notices so that they're first to know when there is an issue with missing or incorrect allergen information on food labels. Subscribers can also choose to receive FSS news & statements, blogs and marketing campaigns.

4.2.2 We generated extensive public relations coverage throughout the week with a [press release](#) which used statistics from our consumer tracking survey, as well as social media activity across all our platforms. The aim of the launch activity was to 'increase the overall number of email subscribers to the allergy alert service by 36% (from 367 to 500), and the overall number of text subscribers to the allergy alert service by 50% (from 50 to 100) by the end of April 2019.', compared to 1st April 2019. This was achieved by Tuesday 9th April 2019 and we have now significantly gone over this number. Some of the highlights are:

- Users signing up to the 'all allergens' distribution list increased by **62%** for text and email by **185%** (users who have requested to be notified about all allergens, rather than individual allergens)
- Product recalls - there was a **191%** increase in email subscribers and **510%** increase in text subscribers
- Total subscribers to our alert service (a combination of allergy alerts, product recalls, news, blogs and marketing campaigns)
 - Email – Up **208%** to 1132
 - Text – Up **786%** to 452
- The specific food allergen lists with the highest number of subscribers (% increase is compared to 1st April 2019)

Food Allergen	Numbers of subscribers for Email Alert (% increase)	Numbers of subscribers for Text Alert (% increase)
Peanuts	660 (158%)	298 (548%)
Nuts	638 (151%)	261 (444%)
Gluten	613 (139%)	161 (235%)

Table 1: Figures showing the increase of subscribers signing up to receive the new Food Allergen Alert Service

5 Events

5.1 The Allergy & Free From Show

5.1.1 On the 2nd and 3rd March 2019, FSS colleagues from Regulatory Policy and Communications teams attended this event in Glasgow. The event is the world's largest

'free from' celebration and is aimed at people who either have, or know someone with allergies, intolerances or related conditions. The purpose of our attendance was to raise awareness of the UK-wide Allergens consultation; gather data on attendee's views on allergen labelling for foods which are prepacked for direct sale and encourage attendees with food allergies to sign up for our text and email alert system.

5.1.2 FSS colleagues were based at Allergy UK's stand and engaged with key stakeholders including people with food allergies and businesses who produce free from products throughout the course of the two day event. Visitors to the stand were encouraged to take part in the consultation and were asked to complete a short survey on the four options being consulted on to improve allergen labelling law. In total, 117 visitors took part in the short survey and many signed up to receive our allergy and text alert service, which is a fantastic result. 70% of respondents at the show voted for option 4 – 'make naming the food and full ingredient list on labels mandatory'. The survey results are forming part of the evidence base for the wider UK consultation on food allergen labelling, with recommendations being presented to the Board for consideration, before advice is provided to Scottish Ministers.

5.2 Edinburgh Science Festival

5.2.1 From the 6th April 2019 until the 10th April 2019, we attended the Edinburgh Science Festival. This is our third year at the festival, but our first time at the National Museum of Scotland. Our activity area featured the 'Calorie Countdown' bike challenge; 'No to upsizing' information wall and the new Eatwell Guide magnetic games. Over 10,000 visitors attended the festival on the first day and over the week our activity area was constantly busy with the Calorie Countdown bikes as popular as ever. Early evaluation of the event indicates it was a huge success in meeting our corporate objectives.

6 FSS Website – Events Section

6.1 The [events section](#) on the FSS website has undergone a refresh to make it more user friendly. It features the different upcoming events we will be attending during 2019, as well as the conferences where members of staff will be presenting.

7 Global Food Safety Initiative Conference - 2019

7.1 At the end of February 2019, Elspeth MacDonald, Deputy Chief Executive and Bryan Campbell, Programme Manager, Regulatory Strategy, attended the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Conference in Nice, France. The GFSI was formed some 20 years ago to advance food safety across the industry and provides international standards and certification for third-party assurance schemes. The annual conference attracts not only those from industry, but also a wide range of international regulators and bodies, making it a good opportunity to improve FSS's visibility.

7.2 Elspeth attended a food safety discussion meeting between the UK, European Commission and the QUADS (USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada) and the FSA and she had an informal introductory meeting with the new Deputy Commissioner at the US Food and Drug Administration. He was familiar with the work of FSS and FSA to reduce *Campylobacter* in chicken and was very complimentary about the work of food safety regulators in the UK.

7.3 Bryan and Elspeth met the Chair of Codex, the (World Health Organisation led international body that sets internationally recognised food standards and guidelines). Codex will be increasingly important to the UK in a future outside of the European Union. As well as international networking, they attended sessions covering issues including allergen

management, the role of certification in international trade, food safety culture and addressing emerging risks.

8 Social Impact Pledge

8.1 In April 2018, we made a [Social Impact Pledge](#). The pledge asks public sector organisations across Scotland to increase their social impact by publicly committing to changing three aspects of their current operations or policies. This should be three things that they're not doing currently and haven't done before. We have been working hard on our three commitments throughout the year and have fulfilled them.

8.2. Our first commitment was to employ our first IT Modern Apprentice in Pilgrim House, to support Scottish Government's Year of Young People and provide an opportunity for an individual to gain a qualification while in paid employment. Our IT Modern Apprentice started work with us in January 2019 and he is a great asset to the Corporate Services team. Our second commitment was to promote paid special leave entitlement for volunteering and the Healthy Working Lives team organised volunteering opportunities for staff to take part. For our final commitment, FSS has supported the Year of Young People by helping primary and secondary teachers to deliver healthy eating and food safety messages to their pupils with a suite of engaging and educational online resources. We are also sponsoring the FSS/Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) School Initiative, which provides over 10,000 secondary school students a year with the tools to gain a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Level 5 National Qualification in Food Hygiene.

8.3 We've attended the Edinburgh International Science Festival for the past three years, providing educational activities for young people. We've also visited universities and colleges across Scotland for student roadshows, working with student unions and societies to provide young people with information on safe food and healthy eating. We also partnered up with Young Scot and hosted a 'hub' of information on their website, and ran a competition encouraging students to share their 'fresher's food fails' with us.

9. Raw Milk Cheese Industry – Challenge to Enforcement Officer Guidance

9.1 Despite meeting with the raw milk cheese industry on 6th March 2019 and agreeing to make changes to the Enforcement Officer's guidance, we received a petition from Errington Cheese Ltd and others through judicial review. We have made it clear that it is our intention to finalise the guidance in December 2019 and that changes could be made prior to that date if that was felt appropriate. We have responded to the petition and await the court's decision on whether to grant the industry petition or not.

For queries, please contact:

Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive

Geoff.Ogle@fss.scot

9th May 2019