

**MINUTES OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S CONSUMER STAKEHOLDER
FORUM, Eighth Meeting 2 July 2007**

CHAIR: JOHN HARWOOD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Members attending

Hazel	Gowland	Anaphylaxis Campaign
Alex	Callaghan	British Heart Foundation
Carrie	Bolt	CASH
Joanna	Butten	CASH
Sara	Spiers	Diabetes UK
Susan	Knox	Foodaware
Masood	Khawaja	Halal Food Authority
		National Council of Women of Great
		Britain
Patience	Purdy	NCC
Lucy	Yates	
Sarah	James	Nutrition Society
Joanna	Collins	Soil Association
Jeanette	Longfield	Sustain
Chris	Olivant	Vegetarian Society
Colin	Walker	Which?

FSA Staff Attending

John	Harwood	Chief Executive
Terrence	Collis	Director of Communications
		Director of Consumer Choice and
		Dietary Health
Gill	Fine	Head of Nutrition Division
Rosemary	Hignett	Head of External Affairs
Stephen	Humphreys	Enforcement Division
Philip	Flaherty	Head of Novel Foods, Additives and
		Supplements Division
Claire	Baynton	Chemical Safety Division
Diane	Benford	Labelling, Standards and Allergy
		Division
Alison	Spalding	Nutrition Division
Mark	Bush	Nutrition Division
Corrine	Vaughan	Nutrition Division
Lynda	Harrop	Public Affairs Branch
Adam	Treslove	Secretariat (Consumer Branch)
Micah	McGuire	Secretariat (Consumer Branch)
Stewart	Horne	

1) Notes and Introduction

(13:00)

2) Minutes and Matters arising from the last meeting

1. The minutes of the Seventh meeting were approved
2. Some matters arising from the last meeting were raised by members as items for discussion. There were no further matters arising.

3) Key Developments- Update

(13:15)

i) Consumer Engagement

3. Terrence Collis, Director of Communications introduced the Agency's new model for engaging with consumers consists of 3 main strands:
 - a. Engagement with individual consumers
 - b. Engagement with consumer stakeholders
 - c. Engagement with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
4. The Agency will continue to commission qualitative and quantitative social and market research and also develop new 'Citizen's Forums on Food' so that we can have an on-going dialogue with the public. Tender is being finalised and will go out in the near future.
5. Terrence introduced Stephen Humphreys, the recently appointed new Head of External Affairs who will co-ordinate all the Agency's stakeholder relationships. He also introduced Adam Treslove who will be working with Stephen. Stephen will arrange for all members of the forum to be contacted to collect their views on these meetings.
6. The Agency will work closely with third sector organisations, through funded action research studies to reach groups of consumers that we might not ordinarily hear from. For example, work is currently taking place with Mencap.
7. External challenge to our consumer work will be taken forward by the new Advisory Committee on Consumer Engagement. This committee will report on progress to the Board on an annual basis. Looking for Chair and members for the Committee and this is on track to have the first meeting by the end of the year.
8. We recently held a roundtable discussion to explore what the world might look like in 2025. The event which was held in partnership with the Think Tank Demos looked at possible changes in science and the impact these changes might have on consumers and society in general. Further discussions will take place with the Board and with the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACs) later on this year.
9. Jeanette Longfield of Sustain asked if Terrence could expand on the membership of the ACCE. The Agency is deliberately not looking for members from consumer group, instead we want to recruit experts in engagement practice.

ACTION – Stephen Humphreys to contact members by telephone after the meeting

ii) Saturated Fat and Energy Programme

10. Rosemary Hignett, Head of Nutrition Division, updated members on the consultation which closed on the 19 June. The aim of this programme is to reduce intake of saturated fat to the UK dietary target and that the work on energy intake will contribute to programmes of work on tackling obesity. We are now reviewing the responses and will publish a summary table on the Agency website and the way forward in the Autumn.
11. The four key areas of work proposed in the consultation has been supported by all the responses, ie:
 - a. Improving Consumer Awareness
 - b. Contributing to promoting healthier options (e.g. reduced fat, reduced sugar options)
 - c. Encouraging more appropriate portion size (smaller in many cases)
 - d. Reformulation of products
12. The potential to include voluntary targets for some food categories in the final programme remains open. We will keep the forum up to date with developments.
13. Jeanette Longfield asked if the synergies of sustainable development and health were included in the consultation, and if so what recommendations have been made, for example there is a link between sustainable development and dairy and meat. Rosemary replied that there was a draft sustainable development impact assessment included in the consultation and would welcome comments.

iii) Folic Acid

14. At their meetings in May and June, the Board agreed to recommend mandatory fortification of flour or bread, alongside controls on voluntary fortification and guidance on the use of supplements. The Board did not decide the level of fortification but agreed that Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) should be reduced by 11-18% (i.e. 77-162 NTD pregnancies/year) and that the Executive should take this forward. The Board felt that this was the best way to increase the intake of the vulnerable groups, and also to continue increase folate intake of the population as a whole without at the same time increasing the risk of those who have high intake of folic acid.
15. The Agency is now:
 - a. waiting for a response from health Ministers; and

- b. discussing with industry the details for an implementation plan.
16. Colin Walker of Which? asked if the Board have decided what level of fortification has been set? Rosemary Hignett replied that the Board's decision was that there should be a sufficient increase in folic acid intake to reduce NTD by a defined level. They have defined the level of benefit they want to achieve and the constraint in not exceeding safe levels of intake. Within these constraints the Board has asked the Executive to take forward the measures they felt appropriate.
 17. Hazel Gowland of the Anaphylaxis Campaign mentioned that there had been reports of allergic reactions to Folic Acid, and asked if the intention is that this will be labelled. The Board agreed that Folic Acid should be labelled. The Agency will follow up with Sue Hattersley of Allergy Branch.

ACTION – To check the reports of Allergic reactions to Folic Acid with the Allergy branch.

18. Masood Khawaja of the Halal Food Authority asked if this was UK wide. Rosemary Hignett confirmed that it is.
19. Patience Purdy of the National Council for Women of Great Britain asked if the level of fortification has been decided. Rosemary Hignett explained that the aim is to bring intake levels closer to those (200ug per day) recommended for the population as a whole, which will be a benefit to women on a low intake. Women planning a pregnancy would still be advised to take a folic acid supplement.
20. Chris Olivant of the Vegetarian Society asked if imported flour is exempt from fortification. Rosemary Hignett confirmed that it is, and that wholemeal flour will also not be fortified. John Harwood explained that as flour will be labelled consumers will be able to choose whether to eat it or not.
21. Colin Walker asked what the labelling will look like. Rosemary Hignett said that this would be discussed further and no decision had been taken on the precise format.

iv) Scores on the Doors

22. Phillip Flaherty of Enforcement Division outlined progress on Scores on the Doors. The Agency supported pilots in the Midlands and Scotland launched during 2006 and early 2007. Twelve authorities – including two in Northern Ireland and two in Wales – will launch between June and October. In addition, since 11 June certain London authorities have been issuing scores on the doors certificates and stickers, with a London-wide website and complete roll-out to follow shortly. An update paper is going to the FSA Board in October.

23. The Agency has appointed two organisations to evaluate the schemes. They are Greenstreet Berman (impact on industry and enforcement) and Continental Research (interest and understanding of consumers). The evaluation may run for up to two years, although we will be seeking an earlier conclusion if the evidence is available. Greenstreet Berman are running workshops for Local Authorities in June.
24. Consumer representatives, including Which? and the National Consumer Council, have been invited to join the Agency's Independent Advisory Group. The Group will play a key role in scrutinising the evaluation process, and will also include representatives of enforcement and industry groups.
25. Hazel Gowland asked if the scheme covers food hygiene issues only or others such as contamination of allergens and how information is handled. Phillip responded that the scheme focuses on food hygiene and allergens were not included. John Harwood added that Allergen Control was important but that these schemes were about improving food hygiene and safety in retail catering. Comparing our latest research data with Audit Commission data from the early 1990's shows that there has been very little progress in reducing incidents of foodborne illness. Similar schemes run elsewhere have been very effective raising standards.
26. Susan Knox asked if the outcome of the EU proposals to review HASSOP were important to this. John Harwood responded that they were and the Agency had argued against any weakening of these regulations.
27. Masood Khawaja said he is aware of some retail and fast food outlets that have poor hygiene. John Harwood stressed that HASSOP still applies to restaurants and SME's. Businesses are subject to environmental health regulations. This is about easy access to information about hygiene standards and identifying a system based on consumer pressure that rewards businesses that do well.
28. Colin Walsh commented that the draft pilots are using different symbols. Phillip Flaherty responded that the evaluation is aimed at looking to find a solution to this.

v) Food Safety Week

29. Terrence Collis updated members on Food Safety Week. The Agency has taken over the role of lead co-ordinator for Food Safety Week from the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), which has led the initiative since 1993 and will remain involved as a Food Safety Week partner organisation

30. The Food Standards Agency announced its new role as lead sponsor for Food Safety Week on 12 June. Food Safety Week 2007 ran from 11-17 June. The Agency announced its new role to co-ordinate and deliver Food Safety Week at a Parliamentary reception on 12 June and promoted the campaign theme 'Bugs like it hot!'
31. During Food Safety Week, In addition to the parliamentary reception, the Agency also launched its work with the 'Life Channel', an independent TV channel which will be running a short food hygiene film titled 'Bugs Like it hot!' in over 1000 doctors' surgeries throughout the UK. The Agency will shortly begin work to plan activities for Food Safety Week 2008.
32. Jeanette Longfield asked how the FSA will do things differently from the FDF. Terrence explained that we will use information from the Consumer Attitudes Survey and other information to evaluate the scheme, for example most people get their information from food retailer so we would like to do much more activity in store and at point of sale. There will be more of a focus on what happens next, and a particular interest in older people who are a high risk group.
33. Susan Knox of Foodaware also commented that it is not just older people who should be targeted, but other groups for example working women who shop during their lunch hour and cannot refrigerate their food. Terrence Collis agreed that these and other groups should be considered.
34. Jeanette Longfield commented that the Agency ought to work closely with stakeholders and with the voluntary sector on this work, although she was confident that the Agency would do so. Terrence Collis agreed and highlighted the Salt Campaign as an example of collaborative work, but to realise that the retailers have a key role.
35. Masood Khawaja asked if there was an information campaign about food taught in schools. Terrence Collis responded that it is not currently in the curriculum, but that the Agency would like to work with schools on this issue.
36. Patience Purdy asked if statistics are kept about how many people suffer from this. Terrence Collis replied that statistics are kept but only for those people who are hospitalised. .

4) Specific Issues Raised by Members

(14:00)

i) Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey

37. Jeanette Longfield outlined her reasons for raising the Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey on the agenda. The survey has taken 3 years and cost in the region of £4million. Jeanette was disappointed that as a key

stakeholder she only found out about a Stakeholder meeting about the LIDNS by accident. She was disappointed that there was not more preparation taken in presenting the findings given the Agency's experience and the importance of this work, and she wanted to note this for the record. .

38. Mark Bush of Nutrition Division explained that some meetings were being arranged with stakeholder consumer groups, one before publication and one later in the year. It was important that all those concerned had an opportunity to read the research report first. The report is due out on 15 July, and the results are being presented at the Nutrition Society Conference
39. Mark gave some background to the survey. It included over 3,500 people, both adults and children throughout the UK, and aimed at the bottom 15% of incomes. Fieldwork carried out 2003-05. Sample 'boosted' in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to allow comparisons between the four UK countries. It collected detailed quantitative information on food consumption and nutrient intake. Other components are physical measurements, a blood sample for analysis of nutritional status indices, a detailed interview to collect information on socio-economic, demographic and lifestyle characteristics, and assessments of physical activity and oral health. The Survey also collected information on social factors that may impact on the survey population's ability to obtain or to choose a healthy balanced diet, including:
 - Access to shops and cooking/preparation/storage facilities;
 - Knowledge and skills (cooking and shopping);
 - Knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in relation to food and healthy eating.
40. Rosemary Hignett added that this was a huge task, a novel survey that developed and used a number of innovative approaches, and collated a huge amount of different data. It would be important to go through the implications with stakeholders, but this would need to await publication and consideration of the full findings.
41. Patience Purdy asked if the survey would reveal information about additive intakes. Mark Bush explained that the data collected was about intakes of food and of certain nutrients but not additives per se. Diane Benford added that the National Diet and Nutrition Survey is used to infer information on levels of additive intakes and that the LIDNS survey could be used in the same way.
42. Jeanette Longfield commented that this is a big issue, and although this will tell us in detail what people eat the point is to find out what action can be taken. The outcomes are not likely to be a surprise, and felt that more should be done to publicise the findings.

ii) Agency advice on Fish

43. Jeanette Longfield raised the issue of the Agency's advice on fish consumption following the last meeting when a consultation was promised for the spring. No consultation has yet taken place.
44. Rosemary Hignett responded that the delay had been partially caused by the work on Folic Acid, as the team working on this issue also deals with the Agency's advice on Fish. There are also wider discussions taking place, led by the Agency, this summer about how best to deal with sustainability issues, and those discussions needed to be taken into account. Gill Fine, Director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health added that priority had to be given to the Folic Acid issue and given the wider discussions no guarantee could be given on timing of the consultation.
45. Susan Knox asked if the Agency will be looking at the Defra consultation on the Sustainable Development of fishing, Rosemary Hignett confirmed that the Agency is doing this.

iii) Signpost labelling

46. Jeanette Longfield asked for an update on Signpost Labelling, specifically about Asda who had announced some time ago that they were joining the scheme.
47. Rosemary Hignett responded saying that she couldn't comment about individual businesses unless they make announcements, however Boots and Virgin Trains had both recently announced they would join the Agency's scheme. There is solid support for the Agency Scheme from consumer groups and health professionals. The independent panel has agreed the specification for the evaluation work of the impact on consumer behaviour which will be published later in July, and this will be going out to potential contractors. The panel and Agency will be working over the summer to identify the preferred contractor with a view to the study beginning towards the end of the year.
48. Colin Walker expressed a concern that some elements of the food industry have been attempting to skew the evaluation. Rosemary Hignett responded that the panel is independent, and has received advice from stakeholders. The decision will be made by the panel who will be looking to identify what is best for consumers with respect to their behaviour. Colin said that Which? research points to confusion amongst consumers caused by the different schemes. John Harwood assured members that the research would consider what is actually happening not preferences. Rosemary Hignett added that the panel is aware of the issue of potential confusion and the evaluation.
49. Colin Walker asked if there was any progress in whole milk, following the failure of Asda's to pass the nutrient profiling test. Rosemary

Hignett explained that we had received some data from ASDA and Dairy UK and we are awaiting further details. John Harwood explained that when the nutrient profiling model was designed it was intended to allow whole milk to be advertised to children, and that remains the position the Agency would like to see.

iv) Sandwich Labelling

50. Jeanette Longfield raised this item on the agenda, following a discussion at the last meeting about whether some language on sandwich labelling was misleading. She considers it unacceptable that there is no clear position on Sandwich Labelling.
51. Alison Spalding from the Agency's Labelling, Standards and Allergy division explained that the work is being carried out by LACORS, and the Agency has provided advice to LACORS on labelling. This advised that the name of the product should indicate the type and quality of meat (e.g. formed/reformed). This advice was submitted despite the fact that there was no consensus. A stakeholder meeting had been held before the advice was drafted and consensus could not be reached. Consumer groups wished the Agency to go further and much of industry felt that we had gone too far.
52. Alison Spalding noted that a question on whether consumers look at the ingredients of a ham sandwich was asked in an Omnibus consumer survey. The result was that 70% said that they rarely or never do. Jeanette commented that survey questions could be drafted out of context and so the answer may not have been realistic. Alison responded that the question had been well set in context, the previous questions all having been about ham labelling and the fact that water can be added to ham products. It was interesting that one of the key things about ham that people look for is fat content.
53. Jeanette Longfield commented that this was the 4 year anniversary of the raising of the issue, and that the response of the FSA as a consumer champion was disappointing. The issue continues to go round and round. Alison Spalding responded that LACORS have a new version of the draft guidance and that it would be discussed at a meeting in July. It appears however that Sustain had not been invited to the meeting. Jeanette pointed out that this may be because a new person at LACORS is handling the issue and does not have her contact details.
54. John Harwood commented that this is an issue that Trading Standards could already take action on. Alison Spalding explained that the proposals are "gold plating" over and above legislative requirements. John Harwood continued to say that if Trading Standards can prosecute butchers for selling Welsh Dragon sausages that contain no dragons then they ought to be able to take action on this – however the law is not as clear as we may like it to be. John Harwood said that he

would be happy to share the LACORS consultation paper with members. It was noted, however, that the Agency did not have sight of the LACORS paper, but would contact LACORS to see if a copy could be obtained.

ACTION – LACORS to be contacted to see if a copy of the consultation paper on Sandwich labelling could be shared with members.

55. Patience Purdy asked if the present labelling was illegal. Jeanette Longfield responded saying that it could be seen as misleading. Hazel Gowland suggested contacting Buckinghamshire Trading Standards, as they have experience in cases involving labelling of products.
56. Masood Khawaja mentioned the Times article referring to water content of some imported chicken, and he asked if these articles are defined as they ought to be. John Harwood responded that as food becomes more complicated there are issues over the naming of foods. Action is being taken in the case of the chicken.

v) Aspartame

57. Patience Purdy and Jeanette Longfield raised this as an item for the agenda. Patience Purdy is compiling a report on Aspartame that she will distribute after the meeting. She raised an issue with a product called “Fruit Shoots” as she considers the labelling to be misleading. She is concerned about whether a taste can be considered a flavouring, referring some observations that Aspartame has a detectable taste.
58. Patience Purdy pointed out further that although the Agency advises against baking with Aspartame, packets of Silver Spoon half sugar containing Aspartame encourage people to bake using the product.
59. Jeanette Longfield asked about enforcement action taken about table top sweeteners. Clair Baynton, Head of Novel Foods, Additives and Supplements Division, explained that the Agency became aware of products containing both sugar and sweeteners being manufactured by British Sugar and Tate & Lyle which were being marketed as ‘sugar products’, not table top sweeteners (TTS). This was a breach of the Sweeteners in Food Regulations 1995 (as amended), as there is no provisions for such products in these Regulations other than table top sweeteners. Agency colleagues responsible for enforcement issues contacted both Home Authorities regarding the Agency’s concerns with these products, and the Home Authorities pursued our concerns with the companies in question. This led to a positive outcome with Tate & Lyle agreeing to amend their packaging to comply with the requirements of the Sweeteners Regulations. British Sugar have also fully complied. Tate & Lyle have assured Newham Home Authority that

the correct packaging will be in use from June 2007, of which we will monitor progress.

60. Jeanette Longfield commented that these are both large multinationals who are not adhering to the law, and there ought to have at least been some publicity, as the worst thing they have received is a quiet word. John Harwood pointed out that the objective was that the businesses are now compliant with the law, and that if prosecutions are to be brought government departments have to follow Crown Prosecution Service guidance and be realistic about the chances of success. Clair Baynton added that she would discuss this further with the Director of Communications.

ACTION – Clair Baynton to discuss with Director of Communications

61. Patience Purdy explained that she had not been happy with the response she had had from officials regarding Fruit Shoots. The letter said that the company had been taken to court, not about the packaging but about the children's advert. She added that the replies did not say anything new. John Harwood commented that the product is labelled according to the law. Patience Purdy commented that she hoped the Agency would change the law. John Harwood responded that it is Parliament that has to change the legislation. He added that if Patience is unhappy with the reply she received that a fuller response will be sent.

ACTION – Agency to provide a full response to Patience Purdy on the labelling of Fruit Shoots addressing her points raised in the meeting.

62. Susan Knox asked if one of the outcomes of the Saturated Fats and Energy Intake work is to reduce sugar, but Aspartame is much sweeter than sugar and encourages a sweet tooth. Rosemary Hignett replied that an analogy could be drawn with the salt work, in that the aim is to reduce demand for sweetness, and to reduce sugar without replacing sugar with sweeteners.
63. Patience Purdy asked what was being done about the adverse affects of Aspartame. Diane Benford explained that it is extremely difficult to explain the relationship between symptoms and intake, an increase of a healthy diet could be responsible for any improvement.

5) AOB

64. Hazel Gowland notified the members of a working group of Advisors on food information on catering.
65. Hazel Gowland has also been involved in running workshops for Trading Standards Officers and Environmental Health Officers. There will have been 6 hours of training given to 900 food officers supported

and paid for by the Agency. Members agreed it was good that this was happening.

66. Masood Khawaja raised a concern that cloned meat was being sold, and that the EU was going to allow much more GM food. He asked what the state of affairs was around cloning and GM food. John Harwood responded that cloned meat is not for sale in EU, so no one should be eating cloned meat – if there is any evidence this should be passed to the Agency for investigation. John Harwood added that he would be happy to discuss both issues at the next meeting.

ACTION – Cloned Animals and GM food to be discussed at the next meeting.

6) Date of Next meeting

67. The date of the next meeting is December 17 2007.