

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for Information: Government Update on Nutrition
Related Activities - The Scottish
Executive Health Department**

Agenda Item 11

Please see attached paper for information.

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Government Update on Nutrition related activities – The Scottish Executive Health Department

1. The **Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit** was launched on 24th May 2002. It will be led by Margaret McGhie, a former teacher with experience in the field of health education. The unit was created in partnership with the Health Education Board for Scotland, Learning and Teaching Scotland, and COSLA, and will:-
 - provide leadership and support to local authorities, schools, development advisors and NHS Boards, in the creation of health promoting schools (HPSs) throughout Scotland;
 - provide guidance on measuring the impact and effectiveness of HPSs; and
 - work with partner organisations to ensure the Unit's work complements that of existing initiatives, for example the National Priorities for Education, Education for Citizenship, New Community Schools, HEBS programmes and Starting Well.
2. In May 2002 the Scottish Executive announced funding for the appointment of a scientific co-ordinator for the **Berry Scotland Project**. This project aims to increase production, sales and consumption of Scottish soft fruits.
3. Scottish Executive initiative on **school meals** is progressing. Development of Product specifications is part of the package and is to be undertaken by the FSA Scotland. A full consultation on proposals will take place in early June 2002. The new nutritional standards for school meals will be nutrient based and grounded in a whole school approach.
4. A **Vitamin D Working Group** have been reviewing the provision of Vitamin D supplements in care homes. A report is due for publication in early June 2002.
5. The Health Education Board for Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Development Department, Scottish Natural Heritage, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Consumer Council, Scottish Community Diet Project and Scotland's Food Futures projects, have commissioned research to review the **local food sector** in Scotland. The aim of research is to review the economic, environmental, health and social value of the local food sector in Scotland in order to assess and disseminate information about potential benefits of this sector and opportunities for further development. A report is expected by September 2002.
6. A major initiative is being developed across the Scottish Executive as a whole, to improve health in Scotland. A **Health Improvement Action Plan** is currently being drafted which will provide a framework for improved co-ordination between the various health programmes including diet, exercise, drugs, and workplace health. It will lead to

significant additional measures being taken to improve the country's health including promoting healthy eating. In this context, the Scottish Executive Health Department has been working with a range of private and public sector agencies in further developing programmes flowing from the Scottish Diet Action Plan. These discussions have recognised the need for action on saturated fat as well as fruit and vegetables.

7. The NHS **Performance Assessment Framework** will now assess health improvement in addition to services. Diet is a key area, based on objectives for the NHS contained within the Scottish Diet Action Plan "Eating for Health". NHS Boards are being asked to indicate progress in implementing the Scottish Diet Action Plan in their area. SEHD will review this, feed back to them areas requiring improvement and collate the results to help plan futures action (see above).
8. Reducing levels of fat in the food chain is a priority of the Scottish Diet Action Plan. **CHARIS** Innovative Food Services is a new a joint venture between Hannah Research Institute and Scottish Agricultural College, with funding from Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department and Scottish Enterprise, to provide an innovative and technical service for food companies to develop new products and processes through knowledge and technology transfer.
9. The Scottish Diet and Health Co-ordinator is also involved in the **Health-Enhancing Foods initiative** which provides practical advice and support to bring new products to the market. In a joint venture with the Rowett Research Institute, a Health-Enhancing Foods Centre is being established as a specialist resource, for the benefit of industry and the wider Scottish community. This will allow the food industry to exploit technical/scientific advances in food production, allowing them to reduce levels of saturated fat more easily and again develop healthier products and processes.
10. SEHD has been working with other Government Agencies on **folic acid fortification**. Currently SEHD is in favour of fortification at the level concluded by COMA while recognising the need to reduce any potential morbidity resulting from this measure.
11. The Executive recently published its plan for action on alcohol problems. As part of the process of developing the plan, a review of the effectiveness of preventive measures was undertaken. This highlighted that **thiamine fortification of alcohol beverages** has been identified as a cost effective measure to reduce the incidence of Wernicke's Encephalopathy, a brain disorder related to thiamine deficiency occurring as result of chronic alcohol abuse. SEHD has written to the Food Standards Agency requesting that the issue be reviewed.