



**Paper for information: Government Updates on Nutrition
Related Activities
FSA**

Agenda Item: 8

Please see attached paper for information.

Nutrition Strategy Branch

1. A new Branch – the Nutrition Strategy Branch – was set up in Nutrition Division in mid-February. The remit of the Branch is to take forward work with the food industry on salt, fat and sugar reductions in foods; to work on cross government initiatives on food, health and diet; and to continue the Agency’s work with LaCORS and the LGA on Food: The Local Vision. Jacqui Webster is the Head of Branch, having previously worked in the Consumer Branch of the Food Standards Agency.

FSA Strategic Plan

2. SACN Committee members were invited to submit comments on the Agency’s new strategic plan (2005-2010). Members were sent a copy of the Chief Executive’s letter entitled “Consultation On “Putting Consumers First : The Food Standards Agency Draft Strategic Plan” and a copy of the strategic plan. The Agency has consulted widely on the strategic plan by involving key stakeholders and those organisation who may have a vested interest. Members were asked to comment individually rather than as a Committee.

Written review of the psycho-social basis of food choice

3. The British Nutrition Foundation have been commissioned to write a review of the evidence on the psycho-social basis of food choice, identifying factors which can be used to influence positive food choices, examples of where positive changes have been achieved and gaps in the evidence base. The project started in January 2003 and the final report (submitted 30th March 2004) is undergoing peer review.

Working in Education

Getting to Grips with Grub: Food-Related Knowledge and Practical Skills (Competencies) of 14 – 16 Year Olds - Publication of Summary of Responses

4. If young people are to eat more healthily they need to understand what constitutes a healthy diet and have the practical skills to put this knowledge into practice (competencies).
5. The Agency jointly with Department for Education and Skills publicly consulted during July-October 2003 on the identified competencies to seek views on how to address gaps and take forward the competencies in a sustainable way at a local level. The Agency also sought the views of young people through the National Children’s Bureau. It is anticipated that a summary of responses to the consultation and the NCB report will be published on the Agency’s website during June 2004. The Getting to Grips with Grub consultation document is on the Agency’s website at: www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/grubgrips.pdf.
6. The proceedings of the joint FSA/DATA workshop for teachers held at the Agency on 4 November 2003 will be published on the FSA and DATA web sites.

Joint FSA/OFSTED Survey of Good Practice in Whole School Approaches to Food and Nutrition in Primary Schools and Early Year Settings

7. The Agency and DfES have jointly funded the above in England. A report is currently being finalised for publication in late June/early July. Results will be disseminated to school Governors, head teachers, caterers, other Government Departments, and others with an interest in school nutrition.

Drinks Vending in Schools

8. The Agency has published the results of the Health Education Trust's work on piloting and evaluating economically viable healthier drinks vending in secondary schools – see www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/vendingreport.pdf. The results show that healthier drinks vending can be economically viable if managed effectively. Seventy thousand drinks were sold over the course of the project's 20 week life. Guidelines for healthier drinks vending, which will be disseminated with support from the National Dairy Council, are in preparation.

Out-of-Hours Learning Cookery Clubs (*Cook It*)

9. ContinYou has been commissioned to pilot and evaluate this activity with lower secondary school aged children. Cookery clubs ('Food citizenship') will include associated skills such as budgeting, meal planning, shopping, reading labels and preparing the food in a hygienic manner as well as practical cookery. If successful, the results will help provide guidance to what works that can be adopted more widely. The project started 1 October 2003 and finishes mid-January 2005. ContinYou will prepare a 'How to' guide based on the results, which will be disseminated on ContinYou and FSA web sites.

School Lunch Box Survey 2004

10. The Agency has commissioned the Community Nutrition Group (British Dietetics Association) to undertake a second survey to collect information on the food and nutrient content of primary school lunch boxes in five regions of England. The output of this work is due for dissemination in September 2004.
11. The Agency has also commissioned the British Nutrition Foundation to develop a month's worth of daily menus along with nutrient information. This will be published on the Agency's website in time for the new school year.

School Governors

National Governors Council (NGC)

12. The NGC acts a voice for the 250,000 governors in England putting their point of view to the Department of Education and Skills and other Government departments. Working jointly with the Agency, NGC produced and disseminated an 'information pack'. Feedback from Governors collated by NGC has been

published as a report on NGC and the Agency's web sites – see www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/ngcreport.pdf.

13. Its main conclusions were:

- Most governors felt schools should have policies to encourage healthy eating but there was some confusion about the role that governing bodies should play. Some governors were anxious about trespassing onto the day-to-day management role of the head teacher.
- There was little opposition to guidelines promoting fruit for snacks and restricting items like fizzy drinks where governing bodies had involved parents and children in developing these guidelines.
- Implementing food policy was reported to be much more difficult in secondary schools than primary schools.
- A recurrent theme was concern about catering companies and the quality of school meals, including Private Finance Initiatives.

14. The NGC will be working with the Food Standards Agency to draw up a framework illustrating governing body responsibility for policy-development and monitoring in relation to food in schools, to clarify the policy and management roles of governing bodies and head teachers respectively.

Informing Public, Dissemination and Media Activity

15. A stand alone Agency website on diet and health is currently being developed and user tested. The launch of this is anticipated to be in the summer.
16. The Agency research project N08017 'How can we identify schoolgirls at risk of low iron status and what dietary advice should we be giving?' was published on May 17th. Included in the media exposure plan was a feature story and fact sheet for long lead consumer media, which targeted teenage, women's and health and lifestyle press. A separate news release was also distributed to national and regional news media. The purpose of this strategy was to achieve coverage in both the consumer media and news media approximately at the same time, enabling the dissemination of specific healthy eating messages at the intended audience.

Nutrition Forum

17. The Nutrition Forum held a meeting on 3 March 2004 where the Industry of Grocery Distribution presented their Survey of the Future Food Supply, and updates on the Food and Health Action Plan and Nutrition Strategies from FSA Wales and Northern Ireland were discussed. A copy of the minutes of this meeting will be placed on the Agency's and Department of Health's website in due course.
18. The next meeting of the Nutrition Forum will be held on 22 June 2004.
19. The first stage of the informal review of the Nutrition Forum has been undertaken. The review examined members views on the remit and work (to date) of the Forum. The key findings of the review are being considered. A number of proposals for improving the effectiveness of the Forum – covering both quick and simple changes to the way that Forum meetings are held, and other possible longer-term changes – will be formulated and passed to members for their consideration, in due course.

Conference on Micronutrient Interactions and Public Health

20. The FSA and the Nutrition Society jointly convened a conference on micronutrient interactions and public health at the Institute of Child Health, London, on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 February 2004.
21. The conference provided the FSA with an opportunity to highlight some of the most interesting FSA-funded research on micronutrients.
22. The conference was attended by about 160 delegates.
23. FSA staff were involved in the first day's proceedings, giving an overview of the division's nutrition remit and research activities. The final presentation of the first day was a workshop, in which the Research Co-ordination Unit and statistical

staff also participated, aimed at informing attendees of the research application process and expectations concerning the quality of proposals.

24. Other presentations focused on: iron and copper, particularly in relation to fetal development; the role of folate and vitamin B12 in protecting against DNA damage; the role of micronutrients in cancer prevention; the bioavailability of folates; and, from an industry perspective, the role of food fortification on public health.

Update on Activity Following Salt and Health Report

Salt Campaign

25. The Agency is committed to reducing salt intakes in line with the SACN recommendations. Reducing salt intake to the recommended levels will not be achieved without a concerted effort. Research commissioned by the Agency suggests that a public awareness and knowledge raising campaign is required as a step towards behaviour change in salt intake reduction. This campaign will complement the work with industry currently ongoing. An update will be provided when the Campaign is launched.

Reformulation of Foods by the Food Industry

26. The Agency and the Department of Health are continuing the follow-up programme of meetings on the basis of the returns received, and also follow-up with key companies that have not made returns. The purpose of the meetings is to both consolidate initial progress and encourage further commitment to salt reductions. Some further commitments have been made by some companies since this programme of follow-up work commenced.

Update on the Nutrition and Health Claims Proposal

27. Progress will resume once the Parliament elections have finished. It is anticipated that this will be in the last quarter of the year.

Food: The Local Vision: UK Wide Review Projects

28. The two reviews examined local food and health initiatives within leisure service settings and those involving children and young people. Project reports and detailed information on selected case studies were published on the dedicated Food Vision website in February 2004. These will help inspire, motivate and enable local authorities and other organisations to develop a more strategic and holistic approach to addressing food issues locally.

Research and Surveys

NDNS

29. The final summary volume in the series on the NDNS adults 19-64 years is being prepared for publication later this year.
30. Work to investigate the extent and degree of under-reporting in the NDNS adults dataset has been commissioned with MRC Human Nutrition Research and is in progress.

Progress on Promotion of Foods to Children

31. Following the agreement at the March open meeting of the Agency's Action Plan on Food Promotions and Children's Diets, the Action Plan has now been issued for public consultation, along with an accompanying Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment. Stakeholders' views are sought on how the elements of the Plan can be made to work best in practice, and the appropriate timescales for action by all parties. The consultation closes on 22 June and can be viewed on the Agency's website.
32. The Action Plan distinguishes between 'foods high in fat, salt or sugar' and 'healthier options'. The Agency is therefore funding a short project to develop options for defining these terms. A team of consultants has been commissioned to undertake the work, which will be overseen by an ad hoc project management group, comprising independent nutritionists and dieticians (including nominees from industry and consumer groups) in addition to Agency and Department of Health officials. A report of the project is expected in August. During discussions at March open meeting, Board Members requested that the consultation process take account of the views of children and young people. We are arranging discussions involving schoolchildren of various ages.

FSA Scotland

Food Access in Scotland

33. There is a need to understand the issues influencing food choice which are central to overcoming barriers to dietary behaviour change, including the need for further investigation of food access in Scotland.
34. FSA Scotland and the Scottish Executive Health Department (SEHD) are interested in establishing “a national retailing map of Scotland”. It is envisaged that it will have several interacting components. As a minimum the map will define in different geographical locations:
- the size, type and number of stores or other outlets
 - the availability and cost of a “healthy” food basket
35. Whilst FSA Scotland recognises that culture and skills are very important aspects of food access, for the purposes of this project the Agency in Scotland will focus on the issues of availability and affordability, more specifically “the access to good quality nutritious food at affordable prices, within a reasonable distance from home”.
36. Proposals are sought by the 2nd July 2004 (full details can be found on the FSA website at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/rrd14>) and should include provision for a discussion covering comparison of similar research or surveillance data collected previously within the final report.

Nutrient Specifications for Manufactured Products Used in School Meals

37. FSA Scotland was part of the Scottish Executive’s Panel on School Meals which was established by Scottish Ministers in November 2001 to provide costed recommendations and a fully developed implementation strategy to establish standards for the nutritional content of school meals. The final report of this Expert Panel, Hungry for Success, was published in November 2002.
38. As part of these new Scottish guidelines FSA Scotland was asked by the Expert Panel to prepare target nutrient specifications for manufactured products. FSA Scotland drafted target specifications for the maximum total fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugar in manufactured products in school meals and then consulted with Scottish Local Authorities, their suppliers and businesses which manufacture products supplied to Scottish schools, to assess any implications before finalising the specifications. The specifications were published on the 25th May 2004 and can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/education/schoolmeals. The Agency in Scotland will continue to be involved in the implementation of Hungry for Success.

Working Group on Monitoring Progress Towards the Scottish Dietary Targets

39. The renewed impetus on diet and health in Scotland has focussed on the need to monitor progress towards an improved diet, in particular the Scottish Diet Action Plan targets, in more detail than has been available in the past. In partnership with the Scottish Executive Health Department, FSAS have established a Working Group to assess the requirements for nutritional surveillance in Scotland and monitor progress towards the Scottish Diet Action Plan and other diet related targets. The Group is chaired by Dr. Drew Walker, Tayside Health Board, and is comprised of experts from a variety of backgrounds. The Group has met five times since June 2003 and it is anticipated that a final report detailing a number of options available for nutritional surveillance in Scotland will be produced by June 2004.

Food Standards Agency Scotland Diet and Nutrition Strategy: Our Role in Implementing the Scottish Diet Action Plan 2003-2006

40. FSA Scotland's Diet and Nutrition Strategy has been developed to set out how FSA Scotland plans to take forward the Agency's overall diet and nutrition objectives in Scotland while complementing the activities of partners in Scotland in taking forward the recommendations of the Scottish Diet Action Plan.
41. The Strategy was published on the FSA website (www.food.gov.uk/scotland/pressreleases/nutritionplanscotlandpress) on the 22 April 2004. It sets out FSA Scotland's main diet and nutrition objectives for 2003-2006 and details the planned activities to take them forward. These objectives and activities have been prioritised and set out under the three key actions for healthy eating outlined in the Scottish Executive's 'Improving Health in Scotland: The Challenge', concentrating on the areas where the Agency's remit enables us to be most effective.
42. The future direction of the Strategy will be reviewed in 2005 in line with the Agency new Strategic Plan for 2005-2010. This will also enable the relationship with the Scottish Executive's framework for the implementation of the Scottish Diet Action Plan to be maintained.

FSA Update – Wales

Food and Well Being, a Nutrition Strategy for Wales – Continued Progress

43. One year after the launch of the strategy, good progress continues to be made on implementing the strategy in Wales at both national and local level.

Nutrition Conferences

44. Two stakeholder conferences have been held in May 2004 (one each in North and South Wales) to review the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan. Together, the conferences were attended by over 300 delegates and provided opportunities for disseminating good practice, including the presentation of the AFAL awards, building networks and improving communication between key players. There was also a focus on the priorities for action for the coming year and discussion on the development of a nutrition network for Wales.

AFAL (Awards for Food Action Locally)

45. The AFAL award scheme was launched in December 2003 to recognise local initiatives that have made a positive impact on diet and nutrition in the community they serve. The awards are also intended to highlight best practice and inspire others to undertake similar activities. The winners and runners up in each of 5 categories received their awards – a monetary grant, fruit bowl and certificate - at the nutrition conferences. FSA Wales is committed to running these Awards again in the coming year.

A Nutrition Network for Wales

46. Scoping work has been commissioned on establishing a nutrition network for Wales. The need for a network was identified by stakeholders during the development of 'Food and Well Being'. The network will help key players, including health professionals, policy decision makers, teachers and voluntary organisations, to more readily access relevant information that will assist them in improving the diet of the population of Wales and will provide a platform for sharing experiences and supporting communication between players.

47. Following an initial consultation exercise involving a wide range of partners across the health, local government and voluntary sectors in Wales, the key recommendations arising from this consultation were discussed by a broader range of stakeholders at the nutrition strategy implementation conferences.

Examples of other initiatives that are being taken forward include.

Initiatives to Tackle Overweight and Obesity

48. FSA was involved in a BBC Wales/Welsh Assembly Government social action campaign on overweight and obesity entitled 'The Big Fat Problem'. The first week of the campaign raised public awareness with intensive TV and radio

coverage and was followed by a two week roadshow, at which the FSA Wales pantechinon was present.

Community Cooking Project

49. A second phase enhanced pilot of a community cooking project 'Get Cooking!', a six week course aimed at teaching young people basic cooking skills in a non-school setting, ran until April this year and is currently being evaluated. The primary emphasis of this initiative is on enjoyment, whilst imparting basic cooking skills, an understanding of what constitutes a balanced diet and shopping on a budget. The results of the evaluation are expected in the summer and will inform the potential roll-out of this initiative.

School Based Initiatives

50. FSA Wales is exploring working in partnership with the WRU to promote healthy eating messages in Wales. One approach that will be school based is the development of a series of six lesson plans focussed at key stage 2, combining physical activities designed to develop co-ordination, balance and other skills, with general messages on the importance of a healthy balanced diet.

FSA Update – Northern Ireland**Food & Nutrition Strategy Northern Ireland**

51. The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland is a key partner on the Department of Health-led Working Group responsible for developing a Food & Nutrition Strategy for Northern Ireland. A draft is currently being prepared to go out for consultation in September this year, which sets out key nutritional targets on the reduction of salt, fat and sugars.