



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

Agenda Item: 9

Please see attached paper for information.

DEFRA AND THE DIET AND NUTRITION AGENDA

- 1) Defra has played an important role in the development and taking forward of Government policy on diet and nutrition. Along with other interested Departments, Defra has provided policy input into the development of the *Choosing Health* White Paper and its delivery document: *Choosing a Better Diet: a food and health action plan*.
- 2) Through membership of the various steering and working groups set up by the Department of Health (DH) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Defra's Food and Drink Industry Division (FDID) serves as a conduit by which the Department provided input to these Departments on a range of policy issues from fat in meat and milk to procurement. Specific examples of these inputs are shown at **Annex I**. FDID officials also contributed to various DH/FSA official level steering and working groups that fed into the White Paper's development. We will contribute to delivery of the White Paper across Government through membership of new groups now being set up by DH to drive forward delivery of diet and nutrition commitments.
- 3) Defra's other function in this agenda centres on its role as sponsor of the food and drink industry. The industry plays a key part in the UK economy (turnover of £69.4 billion; 15.5% of the UK manufacturing sector, employing around 500,000 people; exports of around £9.7 billion). Defra sponsors the industry in a manner consistent with the Department's sustainability aims and objectives and strategic priorities set by our Secretary of State for the Department to achieve during 2004-2006. We work to ensure that the industry's voice is fully reflected in the development of Government policy, acting as its 'critical friend' to encourage the industry's long-term sustainability. The development of the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (FISS) provides this approach (see para 6). The industry is still adjusting to this new form of sponsorship, which takes much greater account of the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability than previously.
- 4) Food and drink industry trade bodies are key stakeholders in this agenda. As industry sponsor, Defra plays a key role in facilitating engagement and enhancing communications between key industry officials and DH, FSA and other Departments with lead policy and regulatory responsibility. *Choosing Health* recognised the commitment and progress already made by industry as highlighted in the Food and Drink Federation's *Food and Health Manifesto*. *Choosing Health* highlighted key areas with scope for further action by the food and drink industry, principal amongst which is work to reduce levels of salt, fat and sugar in processed foods. This builds on positive progress already made by industry. We continue to encourage industry to play a full part in the achievement of White Paper objectives and we believe they are doing so. We have worked to ensure that key industry officials have been invited to take part in working/steering groups being set up to drive forward delivery of these objectives.
- 5) The 'whole-system' approach to tackling obesity is acknowledged as one of the Key Priorities of the Defra/DH Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) currently

being developed. The SPA recognises the close links between environmental factors, the food chain and public health, and how these impact on the quality of life and well being of individuals and communities. The SPA sets out a Statement of Purpose, identifies Key Priorities for joint working and supporting arrangements. Defra's facilitation of industry action to reduce salt, fat and sugar in processed foods through jointly sponsored scientific scooping studies and research and our work to develop and promote guidance on public sector food procurement are seen as key actions in helping reduce incidences of obesity and the adoption of healthy lifestyles.

- 6) The nutrition and health agenda features importantly in the FISS. FISS is both a Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food and Labour Party Rural Manifesto commitment. It sets out how all those involved in the food industry can, through the widespread adoption of best practice, contribute to the delivery of sustainable development. FISS sets out a challenge for the food and drink manufacturing industry *"to work in partnership with Government and other stakeholders, over the coming years, to help bring about lasting improvements to the nutrition and health of the people of England."*

ANNEX I**EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC DEFRA INPUT INTO DIET AND NUTRITION POLICY MAKING****1. Promotional activities**

Defra sponsored NDPBs such as the Milk Development Council, Meat and Livestock Commission, Sea Fish Industry Authority, Home Grown Cereals Authority and the British Potato Council promote, raise awareness and provide consumers and key opinion formers with accurate information on the nutritional and health benefits of the inclusion in the diet of potatoes, lean meat, dairy produce, fish and seafood, cereals and oilseeds.

2. Fruit & Vegetables

Defra officials have worked closely with the DH on the development of the **5 a Day** programme and the **School Fruit & Vegetable Scheme**. Involvement has ranged from the provision of ad-hoc advice, facilitating contacts with internal and external stakeholders, through to jointly funded projects to help further the development of the programme.

3. Livestock and Dairy

Defra officials have communicated to the dairy and livestock industries best practice procedures arising from research into **optimising fatty acid composition of meat and milk** to achieve a reduction in intake of saturated fatty acids and increase dietary levels of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid.

The **EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme**, under which nursery and primary schools may claim the payment of a EU subsidy, topped up by a national subsidy, for the provision of school milk - including semi-skimmed - is administered by a Defra executive agency; the Rural Payments Agency.

4. School Meals

Through membership of official level working groups, Defra contributed to the development of both the **Healthy Living Blueprint for Schools** and the **Food in Schools Programme**. Both these initiatives help to deliver the healthy eating/improving school meal standards strands of the Public Health White Paper. We continue to input into this area, most recently on the work of the School Meals Review Panel.

5. Food Procurement

The public sector in England spends £1.8 billion on food and catering services. The Government aims to use this buying power to help deliver the principle aims of the Government's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (SSFF) in England. That is,

to deliver a world-class sustainable farming and food sector that contributes to a better environment and healthier and prosperous communities.

As part of this strategy, Defra's Food Procurement Unit (FPU) has developed the **Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative**. Its five priority objectives are to:

- Raise production and process standards.
- Increase tenders from small and local producers.
- Increase consumption of healthy and nutritious food.
- Reduce adverse environmental impacts of production and supply.
- Increase capacity of small and local suppliers to meet demand.

Its benefits include: more sustainable UK rural local economies, more competitive small and medium sized suppliers, improved animal welfare, healthier and better performing students and workforce, a more sustainable environment, savings from minimising waste, reduced hospital stays and greater choice for ethnic and religious groups. To assist public sector organisations introduce catering agreements, which address these areas FPU are developing a 'Catering Services and Food Procurement Toolkit.'

6. Research & Development (LINK programme)

Part of Defra's Food Technology Unit's remit is to stimulate technical innovation in the food industry. Programming in this area helps to contribute to a sustainable food industry that provides a competitive and safe food supply chain, which meets consumers' requirements. The overall aim is to help the food industry improve its performance through development and implementation of the best and most appropriate technology. Funds are spent almost exclusively in co-funding arrangements with industry. Two programmes of particular interest with regards to the food industry:

- LINK is collaborative pre-commercial research linking industry and the science base - typically 50% Government funded. There are two active programme areas:

The **Advanced Food Manufacturing (AFM)** LINK programme aims to respond to the growing emphasis in food manufacture on hygiene. Sustainable production is at the heart of the AFM programme supporting novel processes and advanced manufacturing techniques leading to minimisation of energy inputs and waste generation.

The **Food Quality and Safety** programme helps to provide food and drink of consistently high quality in terms of safety and eating properties. It supports projects concerned with measuring and controlling key quality and safety attributes. It will also embrace projects, which seek to understand how the structural, functional and textural properties of foods arise from the interactions of their components. A further interest of the programme is in identifying the most

effective control points in the food chain for the enhancement of end product quality.

- The Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), formerly the Teaching Company Scheme, was developed to support innovation in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The main purpose of KTP is to bring scientific and technical expertise into SMEs.