

Health and Sport Committee
Food (Scotland) Bill: visit to Aberdeen

26 May 2014

The following members took part in the visit to Aberdeen: **Duncan McNeil** (Convener), **Rhoda Grant**, **Colin Keir**, **Richard Lyle**, **Aileen McLeod**, **Nanette Milne**, **Richard Simpson**.

1000 Food Standards Agency Scotland

Members held discussions with the following FSA staff:

Charles Milne – Director

Ian McWatt – Head of Operational Delivery

Elspeth Macdonald – On secondment to London Regulatory project, prior to this Head of Policy and Operations

Peter Midgley – Head of Policy and Operations

Lorna Murray – Head of Communications & External Engagement

Garry Mournian – Head of Corporate Support

Andy Morrison – Acting Head of Enforcement

Bill Adamson – Head of Regulatory Policy

Jacqui McElhiney – Head of Food Safety Monitoring & Policy

Susan Pryde – Head of Nutrition Science & Policy

Peter Morgan – Director, Rowett Institute

Alex Johnstone – Rowett institute

Professor Hugh Pennington

Presentation by Charles Milne:

- FSS has the opportunity to address the following pressures:
 - That local authorities are under pressure
 - International issues such as trade
 - Horsemeat incidents and food /organised crime
 - Social challenges of diet and nutrition
- FSS will be able to:
 - Be more flexible and focussed
 - Underpin economic growth
 - Work closely with the meat industry
 - Provide greater clarity of role, for example in working with the health service
- In general FSA Scotland is content with the contents of the Bill. Although concerns relate to:
 - The name of the organisation - FSS!
 - Ensuring there are enough resources for the expanded remit
 - The drivers of diet and nutrition (was not sure what he meant by that!)
 - No powers of entry to a dwelling (section 20)
- FSA Scotland has an enforcement branch that largely works with local authorities. It works with local authorities to support use of the “food law code of practice”.

- There is a food safety unit working on shellfish sampling; food borne disease strategy (where they monitor risks, and carry out research because of Scotland's high incident of food borne disease).
- The point was made that most regulation originates in Europe
- The diet and nutrition branch within the FSA Scotland cuts across government departments. Susan Pryde talked about monitoring the food and drink sector and the "responsibility deal" in Westminster. Tesco recently made an announcement about moving confectionary and drinks from till points.
- The operational delivery branch conduct the "official controls" in 117 meat establishments. It also carried out animal controls for other government department. The FSA charges for vet and inspection services. It is a large and flexible service and would have a significant in animal disease control, for example in the event of a foot and mouth outbreak.

Discussion

- Current budget is about £11 million (RESAS research is not included in that and LA budgets for inspections is not included in that).
- Scotland has TB free status
- A food business needs to be registered before it opens. It does not have to be licenced. It will be inspected in due course.
- Vet medicine regulation is reserved.
- Penalties for food fraud are small, but the potential rewards are large.

Rowett Institute

- The Rowett institute's role is to provide scientific advice. It works on subjects across the board from molecular issues to human behaviour.
- The Institute receives around £9 million per annum research funding from RESAS in the Scottish Government to deal with nutrition and food.
- They link with the other research institutes including, Morden, James Hutton Institute and SRUC (formerly SAC), which gives them a field to fork perspective.
- Two reports were mentioned: first, Myers et al (2014) in Nature about decreasing CO2 in agriculture is leading to a decrease in nutritional quality of food; Second, the "Livewell" report about reducing meat consumption in order to reduce Climate change.
- Alex Johnstone talked about her work with Marks and Spencer "fuller for longer" range of food.

Professor Hugh Pennington

- Prof Pennington said that the biggest problem in Scotland is campylobacter because there are more incidents of this than other diseases, but this is not a particularly Scottish problem.
- Private water supplies are a problem for food borne diseases. These are regulated by SEPA.

- Ecoli is a particularly Scottish problem, and especially a North east of Scotland problem – but no-one seems to know why that is the case.
- He argued there is a need for co-ordinated research on these bugs, especially as the research can be very expensive.

Discussion

- It was felt that the FSA (or FSS) should not co-ordinate all research in the food area because research needs to be independent, and there is a need to maintain links with other research institutes.
- The links to UK FSA advisory committees must be maintained. FSS Scotland said these links would indeed be maintained.
- Hugh Pennington was not clear why the Bill held back on the food hygiene information scheme. He said there was evidence from the USA that such a scheme was effective.

1100 Joseph Robertson (Aberdeen) Ltd

Michael Robertson, Managing Director

- The company concerned about increasing costs associated with the Bill that might come from different systems in Scotland and the rest of the UK. This would increase costs and decrease competitiveness. Labelling and regulation must be the same in the rest of the UK and Scotland.
- There was some discussion about inspections and that local authority inspection was not as high quality as the retailers own inspection. Was there a need for local authority inspection if the industry was inspecting itself?
- Turnover increased from £10.2 million in 2008 to £22 million (estimated) in 2014.

1230 CFINE

Dave Simmers, Chief Executive

Presentation content:

- CFINE improves health and well being, contributes to regeneration, increases employability and creates employment in and with disadvantaged and excluded geographical and interest communities by promoting the consumption of fruit, veg, pulses, healthy snacks and encouraging and supporting volunteering which brings a range of personal, family and community benefits. CFINE now operates in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and West Lothian.
- Presently c100 Community Food Outlets (CFO's) located in regeneration areas, facilities for people with disabilities and sheltered housing complexes; prices as affordable as possible.
- FareShare whereby supermarkets'/food producers' surplus produce are collected and distributed to people in food poverty, for example, facilities for people who are homeless and women who have experienced domestic abuse. More than 400 tonnes distributed saving 200 tonnes of carbon emissions.

- CFINE has recently become the lead partner in the Food Banks Partnership Aberdeen involving 19 partners. FBP is providing emergency food parcels to those in need but also offering support and information on money, health and well-being and employability to support people out of their dependency; FareShare now within the Partnership.
- CFINE, as a social enterprise, sells fruit/ veg/ other produce on a commercial/ competitive basis; is now supplying fruit to companies including around 80 from the oil sector (many in the Healthy Working Lives scheme), restaurants, sandwich bars etc. All profits are invested in the health and community development work CFINE carries out in disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable communities.
- CFINE bases: CFINE purchased the Fruit Mart at Longside, North Aberdeenshire in November 2010 with support from Aberdeenshire Fairer Scotland and Social Firms Scotland. It now has a unit in Stoneyburn, West Lothian and premises in 4 Poynerook Road, Aberdeen, purchased with BIG investment in 2009.
- CFINE staff team 36 strong, (8 f/t, 28 p/t; 26 (78%)) recruited from the priority communities – and more than 130 volunteers and 28 adults with learning difficulties in work, supported placements: 17 at the Fruit Mart, 7 in Aberdeen and 6 in West Lothian.