



Minutes of the 150<sup>th</sup> meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board  
Held on Thursday, 9 September 2021 at 10:30am  
Teams and Cork VC

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**PRESENT:**

Ms Helen O'Donnell (HOD) (Chair) (Dublin)  
Dr Eddie Rooney (ER) (Teams)  
Mr Brendan Kehoe (BK) (Dublin)  
Ms Wendy McIntosh (WMI) (Teams)  
Dr Mary Upton (MU) (Teams)  
Dr Sinead McCarthy (SMcC) (Teams)  
Mr Alex Attwood (AA) (Dublin)  
Prof Maeve Henchion (MH) (Teams)  
Mr Alan Lewis (AL) (Dublin)  
Ms Teresa Canavan (TC) (Teams)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Ray Dolan, Chief Executive (RD) (Dublin)  
Dr Gary Kearney, Director, Food Science (GK) (Dublin)  
Ms Patricia Fitzgerald, Director, Corporate Operations (PF)  
(Dublin)  
Dr Aileen McGloin, Director, Marketing and Communications  
(AMcG) (Dublin)  
Dr Charmaine McGowan, Scientific Officer, **safefood** (CMcG)  
(Teams) (Item 7 only)  
Ms Alison Dries (AD) Secretary (Dublin).

**APOLOGIES:**

Mr Stephen Moutray (SM)  
Mr Alan McGrath (AMG)

## **1. Meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present**

**Noted:** The Board agreed to forgo the meeting without the Executive present due to hybrid nature of the meeting.

## **2. Introduction and apologies**

**Noted:** The Chair welcomed members of the Advisory Board to the meeting hosted virtually on the Teams platform and in the Dublin office. The Chair welcomed AL as a new member of the **safefood** Advisory Board. Round the table introductions took place.

**Noted:** The apologies of SM and AMcG were noted.

## **4. Conflicts of interest**

**Noted:** The Chair asked members if there were any conflicts of interest relating to the agenda. No conflicts of interest were raised.

## **5. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 17 June.**

**Proposed:** MU

**Seconded:** SMcC

## **6. Matters arising from the minutes**

**Noted:** The Chair informed that the action from the minutes of the 149<sup>th</sup> meeting held on Thursday, 17 June relating to ethics involved with the practice of tracking people's eye reaction to **safefood** advertisements had been discussed between AMG and SMcC. SMcC confirmed she was happy with the response.

## **7. Presentation on Plant-based meat substitutes**

**Noted:** Dr Charmaine McGowan, Scientific officer with **safefood** presented on the topic of plant-based meat substitutes. The presentation gave an overview of **safefood** research launched earlier in 2021 on plant-based meat substitutes, the products available in supermarkets on the island of Ireland and consumer behaviours and perceptions of them.

**Action:** AD to share presentation slides with board members via email.

**Noted:** The Chair thanked Charmaine for an interesting presentation and opened to the floor for questions.

**Noted:** SMcC asked if cost was considered in the research. CMcG confirmed that the cost of each product in Euro (€) or pound Sterling (£) was recorded per pack and per 100g depending on which jurisdiction (ROI/NI) the supermarket was located. The cost of products per pack ranged from €1.80-6.50 and £1.00-5.00. The cost of the products per 100g ranged from €0.44-2.50 and £0.34-2.50. There was a wide range in cost per pack and per 100g in every product category.

**Noted:** MU informed there was not enough data on micronutrients in these products. CMcG confirmed this nutritional data was not required by law and therefore it is difficult to compare with a meat alternative.

## **8. Chief Executive's report**

### **Corporate**

**Noted:** The Chair, ER and PF held a virtual meeting with both sponsor departments on 25 June at which the Advisory Board's concerns regarding the delays in progressing the recruitment of a new CEO were discussed. The CEO, Director of Corporate Operations and Corporate Operations Manager also met virtually with both sponsor departments on 25 June during which a wide variety of matters were discussed including status of Corporate Plan and Business Plan approvals, Financial Memo., Staffing issues, Dublin office lease, Advisory Board retirements etc. Following on from the meetings the process for the CEO recruitment has been approved. An external organisation has been appointed to oversee the recruitment and the Chair has accepted an invitation from the Sponsor Departments to sit on the interview panel and Chair.

**Noted: *safefood*'s** Corporate Plan 2020-2022 and Business Plans for 2019 and 2020 have been submitted by the sponsor departments to the NSMC for approval at a future meeting.

**Noted:** The next North South Ministerial Council meeting for Health will take place on 14 October. The Chair will attend and, in the CEO's absence (due to annual leave), PF will present the CEO's progress report to the NSMC.

**Noted: *safefood*** has begun its budget planning for 2022. Formal Guidance from the sponsor departments is awaited which prescribes the budget and other parameters that North-South Bodies must adhere to in preparing their 2022 Business Plans.

**Noted: *safefood*** continues to adhere to Public Health restrictions and align with Government guidance. The Government issued guidance which proposes a phased return to working in offices commencing in September through to March 2022. All ***safefood***

staff will be working in the office from 1 day per week from 20 September up to 3 days per week from 14 November. **safefood** then expects to implement a blended working policy in 2022 in line with the policy which is currently in development by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

### **Campaigns/Communications**

**Noted:** AMcG updated on the following:

- Phase ten of the START campaign will launch week commencing 18 October with a repeat of the 'Treats' campaign message. Research with the target audience 'parents' showed that the campaign is still relevant.
- The 'Rufus' handwashing campaign will see packs arrive in pre-school & primary schools from w/c 5 September. Approximately 2,500 (NI) and 4,250 (ROI) packs will be distributed.
- The new food safety campaign encouraging home cooks to use a meat thermometer which launched on 9 July (NI) and 13 July (ROI) is currently being evaluated. Strong media coverage for the campaign was secured on broadcast and print with highlights including the Frank Mitchell Show on U105, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Virgin Media TV, RTE online and Irish Independent.
- Two press releases were issued since the last Board meeting.
- Recorded web traffic for June to August was down about 39% down on the previous three months with an average of 92,888 views per month which could be attributed to summer holidays and less ads running.
- Work has commenced on the development of an Irish language version of the **safefood** for life.

**Noted:** GK gave an overview of the CFI's for the benefit of new members and advised a CFI event will take place on 20 October. Planning has commenced for the next three-year term of the CFI programme (2022-2024).

**Action:** AD to send details of above event.

**Noted:** GK informed that the evaluation of the Transform your Trolley initiative is now Complete. The initiative saw 13 healthy living centres take part in the programme, with each delivering a 6 week online nutritional programme alongside a social media campaign. Over 40,000 people were exposed to the campaign messages through different social media channels. The programme is due to roll out again in Northern Ireland shortly with 20 healthy living centres involved.

**Noted:** SMcC asked what is **safefood's** position on a sustainable diet? and can people living on a tight budget afford this? AMcG informed **safefood** have a research piece on sustainability currently in field. Along with this and the UN's report on 'Healthy and sustainable diets' **safefood** will be better positioned to answer this.

**Action:** Following a brief round table discussion it was agreed there is more discussion at Board level required on sustainability and food and this should be further discussed following receipt of the research project.

#### Research

**Noted:** GK informed **safefood** issues two research tender calls per year (Spring and Autumn). Following the research tender call in February, all external independent tender evaluation sessions have now been carried out. Draft contracts have now been issued for the following three projects: -

- Mycotoxin control in cereals: safeguarding human food
- Establishing a strong food safety culture in small food businesses: attitudes, barriers, and facilitators
- Consumers' use of smart devices while preparing food in the domestic kitchen on the island of Ireland.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tender call of 2021 was issued on 3 September with a closing date of 3 October.

**Noted:** The Chair thanked the CEO for a comprehensive report.

#### **10. Financial Report**

**Noted:** The Financial report for the first seven months of 2021 was tabled and presented by PF. No queries arose.

#### **11. AOB**

No other business was raised.

**Date of next meeting: Thursday, 21 October 2021**