

HM Government

Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

Note of meeting with IGD

Location: Defra, Nobel House

Date: 26 June 2013

Attendees:

Joanne Denney-Finch - Chief Executive - IGD

James Northen - Director of Industry Programmes – IGD

Professor Chris Elliott – Independent Reviewer – Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

Mary Newman – Secretary - Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

David Foot – Assistant Secretary - Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

1. Chris Elliott introduction

CE explained that the intention of the Review was to look forward and to identify ways to improve the integrity of food supply networks and not to look backwards and focus on the horsemeat incident given that industry had already responded to deal with the specific problems which had arisen. The role of the Review was not to criticise industry for their role in the horsemeat incident.

CE noted that European food law controls had historically been focussed on food safety. These controls had proved to be very effective and Europe probably had the safest food in the World. The horsemeat incident had not been about food safety and therefore no one had been looking for it. The next phase for European food controls would focus on issues related to food standards and authenticity. CE said that steps had to be taken to make the UK a harder place to commit fraud. Industry had to ensure robust supply chain controls. His Review needed to come up with recommendations to achieve practical and workable improvements.

2. IGD's role

IGD provides leadership to the food and consumer goods industry, helping it prepare for, and face up to, the strategic challenges ahead. A research and education charity, IGD holds a trusted position at the heart of the industry and often acts as a bridge between industry, government and consumers. IGD uses its research and expertise to develop people and companies around the world - helping them grow and do a better job for consumers. Much of IGD's work contributes to delivering more secure, sustainable supply chains.

During the horsemeat incident IGD used its consumer research capability to track shopper trust, share information with industry and government, and play a 'critical friend' role, with the aim of helping industry regain shopper trust as quickly as possible.

All companies were tarnished by the fraudulent actions of a few. IGD saw its role as forward looking: working with industry, government and others to improve consumer confidence in what they eat and ensure lessons are learned.

3. Sharing of information/intelligence on food fraud/adulteration. Categorisation/prioritisation of risk

The challenge was how best to facilitate the sharing of information and intelligence within a competitive environment.

There had been a willingness to share information during the horsemeat incident because it had transcended competitive issues. Industry may now be more open to sharing information with each other and industry, but as always it depends on what is shared and how it is used.

CE described the system in place in Northern Ireland and the role of the Institute for Global Security as a 'safe haven' to handle samples and to share information with companies on emerging risks. CE commented that the system in place in NI had led to DARD and the FSA having an improved view of industry controls. It was noted that whilst a similar system might have applicability in Britain it was not likely that a 'name and shame' system would be successful in achieving the desired aims.

4. Engaging with industry during the Review

It was noted that some companies may be cautious in giving open feedback to the review, given their perceptions of the style of communication from government during the horsemeat crisis.

For the review to be successful in delivering practical, forward looking recommendations that help reduce fraud, it was therefore imperative that Prof Elliott should be open and transparent in his aims, any preconceptions he holds etc. It was also important to be clear

on how information received in meetings would be used. The call for written evidence had set out the position on how information would be used.

IGD agreed to facilitate a meeting with key industry stakeholders (technical/corporate affairs directors) on 17 July to enable CE to outline his thinking and hear first hand industry views

5. Other matters discussed

IGD sought clarification of the Review's scope, including the EU dimension. CE said that engaging with the European Commission would be key given the EU response to the horsemeat incident which was being developed under Commissioner Borg's Five Point Plan. He also clarified that the Review would relate to post harvest/slaughter/farm gate controls. It would need to consider other issues such as the relationship between Defra and FSA and the role of Public Analysts.

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