

HM Government

## Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

### Note of meeting with Pat Troop

**Location:** Defra, Nobel House

**Date:** 26 June

**Attendees:**

Pat Troop - Independent Reviewer, Review into the Food Standards Agency Response to the incident of contamination of beef products with horse and pork meat and DNA

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 (CE) introduction**

CE said that his Review would be looking forward to consider how the integrity of food supply networks could be improved. It would not dwell on the horsemeat incident or consider in detail the response of FSA and other enforcement authorities. It would be helpful to learn of key findings which were likely to feature in the report, timetable for publication, to discuss how his Review would take account of Pat Troop's (PT) report and how PT might be involved in his Review to enable it to also benefit from her public health expertise.

#### **2. FSA review key findings**

PT said that the review for the FSA had clarified that FSA Ireland had not had a specific tip-off about horsemeat adulteration. They had had a general concern about the number of horses going for slaughter. But when they had launched their investigation they had expected to find adulteration with pork rather than horsemeat. The evidence she had seen demonstrated that the issue of potential adulteration had not been on UK FSA's radar at all.

There was a need for FSA to consider new systems which could raise awareness of potential problems. FSA had an emerging threats system which relied on industry and enforcement information. FSA needed to improve its major incidents plan.

There were issues to address around enforcement. PT noted that local authority enforcement officers had limited powers of entry. Concerns had been raised that businesses could remove documentation before enforcement officers could gain access. If documentation was moved to someone's home then the Police had to be involved to gain entry. FSA had not found it easy to engage some Police forces, e.g. the Metropolitan Police. There could usefully be a lead Police force to liaise with FSA during future incidents.

Her review had confirmed that while FSA did try to encourage whistle blowing to help detect fraud it was not working well and tip-offs were normally at a low level.

There was a clear need for greater sharing of information between enforcement authorities and industry. Industry might share more information with FSA but they had concerns that FSA had a naming and shaming approach. The handling of the horsemeat incident had damaged the relationship between industry and FSA. For example industry had found FSA demands to increase the level of testing unhelpful when they had already significantly increased testing on their own initiative. FSA had to build bridges with industry, something which the Chief Executive was already taking forward as a priority.

FSA's relationship with local authorities was pretty good but FSA found it difficult to engage effectively with the large number of authorities in England.

FSA was now rather confused about its remit. This was evidenced by the fact that their approach to authenticity sampling had lost its consumer focus following the machinery of government change in 2010. A lack of clarity about their food fraud responsibilities had meant that FSA's response to the horsemeat incident has been rather confused until mid-February. The key joint meeting between Defra Ministers and FSA with industry during the incident had caused confusion in the industry about who was leading the Government response – Defra or FSA. That said, most of the external stakeholders that PT had spoken to during her review had been satisfied with how FSA had handled the incident overall.

### **3. Categorisation of risk and prioritisation for action**

CE raised the issue of categorisation of risk and prioritisation of action. CE suggested that risk categorisation could be one way to have a shared understanding of how to prioritise action in response to food fraud. He said one approach could be a categorisation matrix which prioritised frauds which had a direct impact on health. Lower prioritisation could apply to frauds with an indirect impact such as those leading to lower than expected nutritional value or those which impacted on religious beliefs (halal/kosher foods). He

noted that a researcher in the USA (Dr John Spink) had developed a categorisation system for food fraud. PT offered to speak to him to obtain further information.

#### **4. Next steps**

PT said that her report would be issued in July and would be discussed by the FSA Board. PT indicated she would welcome involvement in the Review to feed in lessons learned from her review and to offer her public health experience.

11 September 2013