

Pigmeat Supply Chain Task Force – Improving Food Labelling Sub-Group

Note of fourth meeting held on Monday 18 January 2010

Present:

Mick Sloyan, BPEX (Chair)
Jim Brisby, Cranswick
Susan Knox, Consumer Interests
Sian Philpott, Tesco
Rob Smith, Vion
Chris Brown, Asda
Les Bailey, LACORS
Rob McFarlane, Brake Bros
Lucas Daghish, Whitbread
[REDACTED], FSA
Sue Henderson, Sainsburys
[REDACTED], Defra
[REDACTED], Defra
Duncan Prior, Task Force Secretary

Apologies for Absence:

Sue Woodall, Ladies in Pigs

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 Mick Sloyan welcomed those present and noted apologies received from Sue Woodall. The Sub-Group acknowledged Susan Knox's OBE, awarded in the Queen's New Year Honours.

2. Review of minutes and matters arising

2.1 The Sub-Group agreed the minutes of the last meeting as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising that were not covered by the meeting agenda.

3. FSA Consumer Research

3.1 [REDACTED] confirmed that the FSA's five separate research workstreams, which had been undertaken last year, were published on FSA's website on 14 January: as individual reports under cover of an overarching synthesis. The research had been based on exploratory questions, including country of origin labelling. Generally, consumers were found to have a high awareness of country of origin as an issue, but it did not score as a high priority relative to product price. They regularly assumed that country of origin meant where the product came from, not where last underwent significant change. That supported the need for clearer food labelling. British consumers assumed that British produce achieved high quality, good hygiene, and so on – though the same was true of other nationals in respect of produce from their own countries. The research also found a significant increase in country of origin labelling on meat products over recent years – from 19% a few years ago to 44% now.

3.2 The publication of the research last week had drawn some media interest, but not a lot.

4. Pigmeat Labelling Code of Practice (and definitions for non-indoor pig production)

4.1 Mick Sloyan introduced the latest draft Code of Practice. He thanked everyone for their comments on the first draft, which related mostly to drafting rather than substantive content. He had visited most of the major retailers (a meeting with Tesco was planned later in the week),

and had also discussed the Code with the British Retail Consortium and the British Meat Processors Association. Discussions to date had raised some issues that Mick had circulated before the meeting in a separate schedule.

4.2 After reminding the meeting that the proposed Code would set minimum standards (ie allowing higher standards to be adopted by practitioners if they wished) aimed at providing clearer labelling information to consumers, the meeting discussed the draft Code in detail. The key points made and agreements reached are annotated on the attached copy.

4.3 **Action: Mick Sloyan** would revise the text to reflect points made, and circulate a new version to the Sub-Group by close on Tuesday 19 January. **Action: Sub-Group members** should send final comments on the revised draft to Mick Sloyan not later than close on Friday 22 January: silence would be taken as consent. A further version of the draft Code would then be circulated to a wider stakeholder community (including, BRC, BMPA, and the pig industry) for comment by 29 January (or at least substantive points of concern should be notified by that date to allow them to be reported to the Task Force meeting on 1 February). **Action: Mick Sloyan** to conduct wider consultation and report substantive responses to the Task Force. It was anticipated that the Task Force should be in a position to sign-off the main principles of a Code of Practice, even if some tidying-up drafting was required after 1 February.

4.4 Mick Sloyan hoped that by mid-February, it would be possible to organise a formal launch of the Code. Ministers would be invited to participate in a launch, but if their presence was not possible, industry would proceed so as not to lose momentum towards implementation.

5. FSA update on EU developments on country of origin labelling

5.1 ██████████ explained that there had been virtually no development on the EC FIR proposals since the last meeting. No substantive discussions had taken place at EU level. It was likely that the Spanish Presidency would run with the dossier; but meanwhile the FSA continued to consult domestic stakeholders on the current proposals.

6. Task Force Final Report

6.1 Mick Sloyan explained that the Task Force anticipated issuing a final report after their last meeting on 1 February. The Sub-Group agreed that Mick should draft and submit direct to the task Force a short contribution covering the work of the Sub-Group. **Action: Mick Sloyan** to prepare contribution as soon as possible.

7. Communications and Publicity

7.1 Duncan Prior thanked the Sub-Group for its contributions towards a draft 'core script' of key messages which the Task Force considered at its last meeting. It was anticipated that the final Task Force meeting on 1 February would adopt a final 'core script' that identified the key achievements of the Task Force. That document would be circulated after 1 February to all Sub-Group participants to provide a useful aide memoir and consistency of messages when dealing with media interest.

7.2 The Sub-Group suggested that it was important – in respect of the Code of Practice – to prepare a media handling brief with Q&A. The brief should be coordinated by Defra with press officers in the organisations of the major Task Force retailers and others where requested. A key aim would be to allow individual members the ability to respond to media enquiries from an agreed brief that reduced the risk of members being played-off against each other by journalists. Key points to include would be: stages and timetable for implementation; compliance/enforcement; and abuse by non-supporters. **Action: Defra** to consider how best to

coordinate a media handling brief in consultation with those Task Force members most likely to be approached by the media. Julia Wrathall said that the RSPCA would intend to publicise the Code (especially its definitions of outdoor production methods) when the Code had been formally launched.

8. Issues Log and Risk Register

8.1 The Sub-Group reviewed the latest issues log and risk register. It was agreed that no new issues had been identified, and the identified risks should remain open but not modified.

9. Conclusion

9.1 It was agreed that the Sub-Group had taken its work to a point where the formal group could be disbanded. However, many of those involved in the Sub-Group were, in any case, supply chain colleagues; and it was anticipated that BPEX would continue to collaborate with colleagues as necessary in the implementation stages of the final Code and its governance.

9.2 In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked all participants for their contributions during the past year.

Task Force Secretariat
January 2010