

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Food and Drink Sector Council

Summary of Meeting, Tuesday 24 May 2022

Co-Chairs

Joint Interim Industry Co-Chairs:

Ian Wright Previous Chief Executive, Food and Drink Federation

Terry Jones Director General, National Farmers' Union

Government Co-Chair

The Rt Hon Victoria Prentis MP, Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (from 2.15pm)

David Kennedy, Director General, Food, Farming and Biosecurity, Defra (until 2.15pm)

FDSC Members:

Minette Batters President, National Farmers' Union

Karen Betts Chief Executive, Food and Drink Federation (until 2.30pm)

James Bielby Chief Executive, Federation of Wholesale Distributors

Sarah Bradbury Group Technical Director, Tesco

Joe Clarke UNITE, National Officer

John Farrand Guild of Fine Food

Kate Nicholls Chief Executive, UKHospitality

Andrew Opie Director of Food and Sustainability, British Retail Consortium

Nicholas Saphir Chair, Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board

Cassandra Stavrou Founder, Propercorn

Andy Richardson Head of Corporate Affairs, Volac

Nick Whelan Group Chief Executive, Dale Farm Ltd

Apologies

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| Stefano Agostini | Chief Executive Officer, Nestlé UK and Ireland |
| Lord Deben | Chairman, Sancroft |
| George Weston | CEO AB Foods |

Introduction:

Ian Wright and Terry Jones opened the meeting. They first welcomed Sarah Bradbury, Group Technical Director at Tesco, who had joined the FDSC to represent the retail sector. They then thanked members who had recently stepped down - Judith Batchelor, Andrew Clappen, Gavin Darby and Graham Hutcheon. Finally they thanked Ian Rayson for his contribution as Director of the Industry Secretariat as he too had stepped down.

Ian and Terry reflected on the forthcoming agenda, highlighting continuation of crises for the industry and the war in Ukraine, and also the role of industry in levelling up.

Opening Remarks

Terry invited David Kennedy to make opening remarks on behalf of Minister Prentis, Minister of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Government Co-Chair, who would be joining at 2.15pm.

David Kennedy thanked Ian and Terry for their leadership of the FDSC over the previous two years. He highlighted that they had originally stepped in as interim Industry Co-Chairs but had served a full 2 year term and been pivotal in moving the FDSC forward. Looking ahead to the new Industry Co-Chair, David highlighted that the advert for open recruitment had been published, and asked members to publicise the opportunity through their networks to generate the best possible field. He then explained that Defra was in the process of securing cross-Government agreement to the forthcoming Government Food Strategy, which he knew was of major interest to the FDSC. He emphasised that government would be looking to work with industry on implementation. Finally, he emphasised that this FDSC meeting was an opportunity to step back from immediate issues and consider long term strategic perspectives.

Improving Food Supply Chain Resilience in the Longer Term

Ian Wright set out that with challenges facing the supply chain and the war in Ukraine, industry's capacity to deal with shocks was in sharp focus. Resilience and capacity were under pressure, combined with high consumer expectations on price and availability. This could create instability and impact global and UK markets. In this context, Ian suggested that food crisis was deeper than fuel crisis. He asked the FDSC to consider key concerns, identify cross-sector commonalities and measures industry could take.

Members shared concerns about the cumulative effects of EU Exit, Covid-19, Ukraine, energy prices and labour shortages straining the supply chain. Members called for greater support and flexibility and greater access to labour, the domestic workforce and innovation. Members highlighted pig and poultry contracts as an area where support was needed. Members also highlighted agricultural reforms and concerns about the potential impact on land use and food production.

David Kennedy thanked members for rising to cumulative challenges. He said that an update on pig and poultry contracts would be provided at the next meeting. He also said that agricultural reform was not targeted at reducing land for food production and asked members for views on domestic production and approach to imports.

Levelling Up White Paper

Terry introduced Chris Gray, Deputy Director for Levelling Up Strategy from the Levelling Up Taskforce. Terry thanked Chris for providing a bespoke briefing to FDSC members in advance of this meeting. Terry observed that industry, being geographically dispersed, was well-placed to contribute to the levelling up agenda.

Chris emphasised that levelling up was part of the long-term answer to challenges, such as on innovation and access to skills. He outlined the Levelling Up White Paper and the interdependence of challenges which needed to be tackled together. He reflected on the role of industry, on areas such as innovation, private sector investment and skills. He then sought views on opportunities and on where government could support.

Members observed that the food and drink manufacturing sector had a role to play on the national footprint of workforce at every level of education. Members recognised the business case for innovation, skills and productivity but thought it came at a difficult time, especially for SMEs. Members said they would welcome a more detailed conversation with government, and support on how to access funding, for example. Members also highlighted particular interest in levelling up opportunities in Northern Ireland. Finally, members reflected on applying a levelling up lens to FDSC workstreams.

FDSC Net Zero Workstream

Ian introduced this item, welcomed Minister Prentis to the meeting and introduced 3 Keel consultancy.

Minister Prentis announced the appointment of Karen Betts, CEO of the Food and Drink Federation, as Workstream Chair (since joined by Tom Bradshaw of the National Farmers Union as workstream Deputy Chair).

3 Keel, with the Broadway Initiative, presented the initial findings of scoping work to initiate the FDSC's Net Zero Workstream. 3 Keel explained that they had examined emissions across the agri food chain, interdependencies and common issues, and made recommendations for priority areas of work.

Members observed that clarity was needed on the added value of the workstream in the context of other commitments such as Courtauld; and consistency between Sector Councils with members in common.

Food Data Transparency Partnership

Terry introduced this item and invited Defra's Government Food Strategy Team to update the FDSC on the development of the Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP). Defra emphasised that this was the start of a conversation; the ambition was to announce the FDTP in the government's forthcoming Food Strategy. The intention was that the FDSC would have a formal advisory role in the governance of the Partnership. The timescales would be long term, and the partnership would consider different interventions to improve food data, including mandatory reporting.

Members reflected that pressure on industry was at an all-time high and questioned the timing of introducing additional regulation. Members also called for efforts to avoid duplication and voiced concerns about a divergence in regulation across UK nations.

Updates from Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Ian introduced this item. He welcomed officials from the Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who would for the first time update the FDSC on approach and activity in those nations. He highlighted this strengthening of the FDSC's relationship with all four nations and its reflection of the cross-border nature of the agri food chain.

The Scottish Government highlighted its Food Security and Supply Task Force which would feed into longer term food security; Good Food Nation Bill likely to establish a Food Commission; and review of its ambition to double industry turnover by 2030.

The Government of Northern Ireland highlighted its Food Strategy Framework, regional food programme, and work on supply chain security considering the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Welsh Government highlighted its mission to promote Wales as a global food nation, its new target to support innovation to grow the industry sustainably to at least £8.5bn turnover by 2025, improve productivity, achieve ever higher standards of food hygiene and certification, and ensure policies deliver aspirations for the workforce to be paid the Living Wage.

Members thanked the Governments for their updates.

Final Comments and Close

The Co-Chairs thanked members for attending and for contributing to the meeting.

David Kennedy repeated his thanks to Ian and Terry for their leadership of the FDSC as Industry Co-Chairs and for evolving the FDSC into a key strategic body to work in partnership with Government.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 29 September 2022 (since postponed to 23 November).

Annex A

Presenters

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| Tom Brown | 3Keel |
| Julian Cottee | 3Keel |
| Simon Miller | 3Keel |
| Ed Lockhart | Broadway Initiative, interim Chair of Net Zero Workstream |
| David Moon | WRAP, Interim Chair of Net Zero Workstream |

Observers from Industry:

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| Jayne Almond | Food and Drink Federation |
| Jim Cathcart | UK Hospitality |
| Angela Christison | Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board |
| Helen Ferrier | National Farmers' Union |
| Lewis van Diggele | Nestlé |
| Amy Glass | Food and Drink Federation (<i>Food Strategy agenda item only</i>) |
| Dominic Goudie | Food and Drink Federation (<i>Exports agenda item</i>) |
| Philip Hambling | National Farmers' Union |
| Caroline Keohane | Food and Drink Federation |
| Ian Mace | ABF |
| Guy Robinson | Tesco |

Observers from Government

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| Alison Ismail | Director, Agri-Food Chain Directorate, Defra |
| Jonathan Back | Retail, Wholesale and Growth and Government Secretariat |
| Catherine Frayne | Food Supply, Defra (Item 4 – Net Zero Workstream) |
| Kevin Kitching | Acting Deputy Director, Food Exports, Promotion and Partnerships, Defra |

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| Gill Laisley | Deputy Director, Food Resilience, Supply Chain and Access to Food and Government Secretariat |
| Aaron Milton | Private Office, Minister of State |
| Tim Mordan | Deputy Director, Innovation, Productivity & Science, Defra |
| Bunmi O'Tola | Exports Strategy Team Leader (Agenda Item 5 on Exports) |
| Danny Roff | Deputy Director, Food Strategy, Defra |
| Lindsay Roome | Government Food Strategy, Defra (Item 5 – Food Data Transparency Partnership – Speaker) |
| Charlotte Linacre | External Comms, Defra |
| Daniel Barnes | Press Office, Defra |
| Anna Kidd | SMEs and Manufacturing Engagement, Defra |
| Paul Edmunton | Agri-Food Chain Stakeholder Engagement, Defra |

Other Government Departments

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| Chris Gray | Deputy Director, Levelling Up Strategy, Levelling Up Taskforce, Department for Levelling Up (Item 3 – Levelling Up - Speaker) |
| Adam Leeder | Policy Strategy and Private Office, BEIS (Item 3 – Levelling Up) |
| Craig Thornley | Department for Education (Item 3 – Levelling Up) |
| Zoe McNulty | Diet, Obesity and Healthy Behaviours, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) (Item 5 – Food Data Transparency Partnership) |
| Prof. Susan Jebb | Chair, Food Standards Agency |

Attendees from Government (Devolved Administrations)

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| Eileen Bearhop | Food and Drink Industry Growth, Scottish Government |
| Brian Luke | Food Supply Security, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland |
| David Morris | Welsh Government |

Secretariat

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| Tanya Barringer | Industry Secretariat Executive |
| Alex Howell | Government Secretariat, Defra |
| Helen Matthews | Government Secretariat, Defra |
| Clare Whittaker | Government Secretariat, Defra |