

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Food and Drink Sector Council

Summary of meeting, Tuesday 15 October 2019

Attendees

Judith Batchelar - Sainsbury's

Minette Batters - NFU

Gavin Darby

Leendert den Hollander - Cola-Cola

Iain Ferguson (Co-chair)

Sir Peter Kendall - AHDB

Dame Fiona Kendrick

Kate Nicholls - UKHospitality (Stand in for Nick Varney)

Liz Quigley - AB Foods (Stand in for George Weston)

Andy Richardson - Volac

Cassandra Stavrou – Propercorn

Ian Wright - Food and Drink Federation

Nick Whelan - Dale Farm

Apologies:

Graham Hutcheon (Edrington), Nick Varney (Merlin Entertainments) Jo Whitfield (Co-op Food), George Weston (AB Foods), Ursula Lidbetter (Greater Lincolnshire LEP), The Rt Hon. John Gummer, Lord Deben (Sancroft)

Supporting council members:

Tom Hind - AHDB

Secretariat:

Ian Rayson - Nestlé UK & I

Caroline Keohane - Food and Drink Federation

Angela Coleshill - Food and Drink Federation

Clare Whittaker - Agri-Food Chain Industrial Strategy, Defra

Christopher Todd - Agri-Food Chain Industrial Strategy, Defra

Government:

Henry Dimbleby - Lead Non-Executive Director, Defra (attended part of the meeting)

David Kennedy (Co-Chair) - Director-General for Food, Farming and Biosecurity, Defra

Alison Ismail - Acting Director for Agri-Food Chain Directorate, Defra

Tim Mordan - Deputy Director, Agri-Food Chain - Innovation, Productivity & Science

Ananda Guha - Deputy Director for Exports and EU Exit, Defra

Maggie Charnley - Assistant Deputy Director: Farming Productivity and Innovation

Tamsin Cooper - National Food Strategy, Defra

Caroline Evitt - Agri-Food Chain Stakeholder team, Defra

Steve Moorcroft - Exports & EU Exit, Defra

Sue Bishop - Head, Creative, Lifestyle and Learning, DiT

Rory Wallace - Deputy Director for Energy Intensive Industries, BEIS

Additional attendees:

Susan Barratt – Institute of Grocery Distribution

Introduction:

The co-Chairs welcomed attendees to the seventh meeting of the Food and Drink Sector Council. They noted that the Council is supported by a series of working groups and that this will be the first time the wider Council is asked to endorse reports from these groups, namely Agricultural Productivity and Workforce and Skills.

Agricultural productivity report

Sir Peter Kendall presented the Agricultural Productivity Working Group report to the Council and thanked those who had contributed to it. Sir Peter gave an overview of the report's recommendations and the key priorities for both industry and Government that it

sets out, highlighting that this covers thinking about productivity in a post CAP environment. The report provides a clear direction of travel rather than a definite destination, and further work will be needed to convert the recommendations into a clear set of actions and associated key performance indicators. This work will continue in the working group in preparation for publication.

It was noted that the report provided a strong evidence base in support of the government and industry's approach to achieving "net zero" carbon emissions by 2050. There was also a broad welcome for the wide ranging approach and joined-up perspective that the Working Group had brought to its work. The Council agreed to endorse the report.

Workforce and skills report

Dame Fiona Kendrick presented the Workforce and Skills Working Group report. Dame Fiona noted that the report contains "first stage" recommendations, which are necessary to kick-start the work, and are importantly cross-Government in scope. The detailed action required to deliver each of the recommendations will be developed in future meetings. Dame Fiona stressed that the Working Group goals are complex and will require drive and energy to fulfil. Agreement of the Council to endorse and publish the report would demonstrate its support for those goals.

The Council welcomed the report and the proposal to publish. There was recognition that increasing productivity through capital investment in the food sector has many associated difficulties. Therefore developing a more skilled workforce is an essential step. The Council agreed to endorse and publish the report.

EU Exit preparations:

The Council was provided with an update on EU Exit. Government continues to prepare for all scenarios and has developed a number of contingency plans to mitigate the effects of the UK leaving the EU without a transition period, and has carried out a number of exercises piloting the arrangements. The Council was thanked for the support they have given to EU Exit preparations.

Council members highlighted issues that would arise if the UK left the EU at the end of the month without a deal including on the impact on the internal market. It was agreed that Government would continue to work with FDSC members and the wider industry on preparations and mitigations.

Workshop feedback:

Ian Rayson presented feedback and the recommended actions from the FDSC Workshop held on 24 September. After review, the Council agreed to implement these recommendations which include a number of desired outcomes which would strengthen the work of the Council, one of which will be to review the current working groups.

National Food Strategy:

Henry Dimbleby, Non-Executive Director at Defra, updated the Council on the National Food Strategy before hosting a workshop session. The session focused on what 'Success' would be for the NFS and how the Council could support it going forward. In commenting, members recognised the importance of the NFS being ambitious and making sure bold action was taken in this unique opportunity.

As part of the workshop the Council members agreed to form a smaller dedicated group who could act as a point of contact for the Council. This group will help to develop an FDSC 'shared' vision and priorities for the NFS and to help support NFS engagement.

Final comments and close

Iain Ferguson and David Kennedy thanked everyone for coming and contributing to the meeting. The next meeting of the Food and Drink Sector Council has yet to be confirmed.