

NFB 040

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20th May 2013

Karen McCallum-Smith
Public Health Division
Directorate for Chief Medical Officer and Public Health
Room 3.E
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Ms McCallum-Smith

A Healthier Scotland: Consultation on Creating a New Food Body

Thank you for providing the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) with the opportunity to comment on the above consultation document.

SEPA works closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in a number of areas which include; monitoring, the implementation of a number of regulatory regimes for example the Radioactive Substances Act 1993, the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations, where FSA is in many cases a statutory consultee, and on specific issues such as the radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay. We are keen to work with the New Food Body (NFB) to build on these good working relationships.

There are also opportunities which merit further discussion with the NFB and these relate to the areas of monitoring, inspections and labelling.

Monitoring

SEPA monitors shellfish growing waters under the European Community Shellfish Waters Directive. The FSA monitors and classifies Shellfish Harvesting Areas, identified under the terms of the Shellfish Hygiene Directive. FSA then provides data for E.Coli to SEPA who then combine the FSA data, where Shellfish Harvesting Areas and Shellfish Growing Waters overlap, with its own sampling data to calculate an annual compliance for each Shellfish Growing Water. It would be appropriate to ensure that this monitoring process is, as far as practicable, integrated and roles and responsibilities clear.

In Scotland SEPA and FSA have a joint program of food and environmental monitoring for radioactivity around nuclear installations. In addition our joint monitoring results are combined with those of the Environment Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and published in the annual Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE) annual report for the UK and there may be scope to consider further opportunities to share monitoring information.

Similarly SEPA has a comprehensive monitoring programme for hazardous substances in both the environment and biota, there may also be scope to share information here.

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However by far the greatest potential lies in the involvement of the FSA, and the subsequent NFB with the Shared Scientific Services Programme which is being led by the improvement service, in partnership with the four public analyst laboratories and SEPA. The aim is to ensure the sustainability of the Scottish service while continuing to deliver scientific analysis and advice to support regulatory commitments, ensuring the safety and quality of food, water and the environment. The vision is to have modern centres of excellence capable of delivering superior services that reinforces Scottish Government's aspirations for a smart, successful Scotland which remains at the forefront of scientific innovation and creativity. I represent SEPA on the Programme Board and would be happy to be involved in any subsequent discussions on this subject.

Inspections

One of the areas that SEPA wishes to continue to focus efforts on relates to poorly performing sites with the aim of bringing these into compliance with licence conditions. It is often the case that where a site is poorly performing it will be poorly performing in a number of areas and there could be the potential for the results of inspections/intelligence to be shared between the different delivery bodies and we would be happy to be involved in such discussions. We have commented separately to the consultation on the proposed enabling primary food and feed legislative provisions.

Labelling

This is an area where there is the potential for shared interests between different delivery bodies and the multi-benefits that could be realised, while recognising the challenges of ensuring that the labelling is easily read and understood by the consumer. Examples could be the inclusion of carbon and water use footprint information.

As a public body committed to openness and transparency, SEPA feels it is appropriate that this response be placed on the public record. If you require further clarification on any aspect of this correspondence, please contact Janice Milne, Head of National Operations, SEPA Corporate Office, at the address shown on the first page.

Yours sincerely

David Pirie
Executive Director