

# SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE INTERIM MEETING OF THE AHDB PORK BOARD



ON 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## TELECONFERENCE

**PRESENT:** Mike Sheldon (MS) - Chair, Richard Buckle (RBU), Mark Houghton (MH), Simon Watchorn (SW), Robert Beckett (RBe), Rupinder Ashworth (RA), Robin Thompson (RT), Tim Bradshaw (TB), Robert Mutimer (RM), William De Klein (WDK), Adam Cheale (ACH)

**APOLOGIES:** Chris Aldersley (ChA)

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Angela Christison (AC) - Strategy director – AHDB Pork, Mandy Nevel (MN) – Head of Animal Health & Welfare, Stasha Napior-Kowska (SN) – Senior Account Manager, Liam Byrne (LB) - Head of Marketing (Pork, Beef & Lamb), Debbie Wilson (DW) - Ladies in Pigs, Christine Watts (CW) – Chief Communications & Market Development Officer, Kim Matthews (KM) – Head of Animal Breeding & Product Quality  
Kim Malley (KMy) – Senior Retail Insight Manager, Gareth Renowden (GR) – Senior Marketing Manager (Beef & Lamb), Lenka Rihova (LR) – Personal Assistant (Minutes)

### AGENDA ITEM 1 – Apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 10am and welcomed those in attendance. Apologies were received from ChA.

### AGENDA ITEM 2 - Declarations of Interest

RM has declared his new appointment as new NPA chairman. The Chair, on behalf of the Board congratulated him.

### AGENDA ITEM 3 – Minutes from the meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The minutes from the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were accepted as a true record and will be signed by the Chair.

### AGENDA ITEM 4 – Matters arising

All the matters arising, and action points were either completed, on the agenda or in hand.

Jon Foot will join the July Board meeting to report on Environment.

SW suggested that Stephen Hall may have a useful idea to contribute regarding measuring carbon footprint for the sow herd.

### AGENDA ITEM 5 – Director's Report

The report was taken as read.

query was raised regarding the management accounts board paper (variance table/central costs). This seemed to be a typing error.

The pension deficit stems from the MLC legacy pension scheme. Every three years the MLC pension is revalued by the actuaries. If there is a deficit, the employer (AHDB) has to agree a plan with the trustee to make up the deficit. It is shared between Beef & Lamb and Pork (2:1). The Chair described how a pension deficit is the gap between the future liabilities of the scheme on the one hand, and the current asset value and expected investment returns on the other. Any deficit stems from legally-binding pension commitments made to employees in the past, together with pension contributions made in the past, but where actual pension payments lie in the future. All liabilities are hypothecated to their own sector, and this is written into statute. This means that the pork sector cannot be responsible for liabilities arising in another sector, and vice versa. If AHDB as a whole were to close down, any assets and liabilities would revert to Defra. It is not clear what happens if any one sector were to close down. The triennial valuation should be complete by autumn. Once more information is available, the Board will be informed.

### AGENDA ITEM 6 – Carcase Classification Trials

The report was taken as read.



AC reported on the project and informed the Board, in strict confidence, that one of the large processors is not intending to use either of the devices that are currently planned for trial. They believe they have been superseded by new technology. The new technology referred to is not yet available on the market.

This programme has experienced multiple delays; the trial still cannot be initiated due to multiple factors (but most notably Covid-19 restricting plant access). The Board discussed whether they wished to continue with the project.

There is a possibility of a request for further funding (from Spalding site), as costs are likely to be higher than anticipated.

This project has to remain in competition with other opportunities. AHDB's role is that of a representative of the levy payer, not to evaluate the equipment on behalf of commercial operators. The aim was to have a system that everyone would adopt and that commercial companies would make decisions based on the outcome of the trial. The Board agreed that likelihood has diminished.

Current AHDB desk research does not suggest that any new system for predicting lean meat content is close to market.

The Board agreed not to proceed with the Carcass Classification trial as currently designed, budgeted and authorised. The Board further agreed that the team should maintain its surveillance of new devices coming to market. The Board agreed to release the budget allocated to the project, while retaining sufficient funds for continuing desk research). The project is on hold for 12 months and this will be communicated to all suppliers.

The Board requested that MH should furnish a full reappraisal of the costs that would be required to do the trial at Spalding.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7 - Free Farrowing**

A board paper had been distributed prior to the meeting.

MN reported on Free Farrowing. The issue of sows being confined during the farrowing and lactation period is increasing in political & consumer awareness. All the political parties have indicated that they want to look at this subject.

The proposal is to commission a 'rapid evidence assessment'. We would collate research and field evidence in order to get a view of the likely costs, performance and impact of different systems, timeframe, unintended consequences and any environmental impacts. The purpose of the board paper was to put out a table of what the options are, as we stand now, in terms of improving piglet survival.

The Board expressed concern regarding the lack of data from commercial use of 'alternative farrowing systems'.

We are working collaboratively with NPA and the wider industry. The Board has agreed that there is an urgency to inform Defra about the welfare differences between free farrowing and temporary confinement.

Agreed AHDB key roles are:

- To provide evidence to Defra to inform their decision particularly in relation to free farrowing vs temporary confinement.
- To make case studies available to facilitate farmer-to-farmer learning -by working with those who have already introduced free farrowing/temporary crating systems, establishing strategic farms and subsequent digital resources.

There was no demand for AHDB to commission further research at this stage nor advise farmers on which system is 'best'. AHDB's primary role is to extract value from the collation of data. The aim is to provide the best possible information we can, make it available for producers so that they can make a decision on their own behalf as to what is right for their business.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked MN and Jen Waters and their teams for the work and progress made.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8 – Results Mix up Midweek 20/21**

The purpose of this item was to run through the 20/21 domestic marketing campaign results and seek the Board's approval for 21/22 plans. Full details were included in the board papers.

KMy presented on the results of the Year 4 Pork Campaign. The campaign is extremely well received by consumers and has strong potential for another year. The results were very well received.

LB presented on the campaign proposal for 21/22. A PESTLE analysis was presented. The challenges to develop relevance for consumers remain Affordability, Health & Sustainability and farmed with care. The plans will focus on protecting long-term consumer attitudes & intent to purchase pork (5-year strategic objective) and meat reducers (audience).

- Mix up midweek Yr5 Pork Campaign
- Reputation Campaign
- Social & Project Q
- Re-think Retails

LB reported on the timeline. ADHB will be collaborating with Red Tractor, who also have consumer communications scheduled.

## **AGENDA ITEM 9 – Improving the meat shopping experience - Retailer project**

SNK presented on the 'Re-thinking retail' project, which focuses on improving meat shoppers' experience. Positive outcome received from retailer workshops/research and industry engagement. Next steps are meetings with processors & retailers.

## **AGENDA ITEM 10 – LIPS update**

DW presented on recent activities of LIPS. There has been an increase in LIPS' social media reach and engagement. LIPS have been building a close relationship with AHDB. LIPS offer tailored educational days, simple butchery demonstrations, teaching training webinars on making sausages and other. LIPS are celebrating 30 years of existence this year. The Chair, on behalf of the Board wished LIPS all the best.

CHW commented on the complaints received by the Advertising Standards Authority following AHDB's Eat Balanced campaign. AHDB has responded in detail. The outcome will be shared with the Board.

The group briefly discussed improved recyclable packaging and its funding.

The Chair announced that Gareth Renowden (Senior Marketing manager) is leaving AHDB. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked him for his work and wished him the best of luck.