



INDEPENDENT RETAILERS CONFEDERATION (IRC): Douglas was not at all impressed with the meeting he attended in January, it was very lightweight. IRC are looking for £600 in membership fees which is quite steep. A few days later they came forward with their plans for submissions to government throughout the year. The points were listed on the blue paper circulated. Supporting employer investment in skills, limiting overall regulation, competition from the multiples. If we are going to get some movement on these issues we need to be in there supporting the IRC. It was agreed that this year we pay our subscription but watch carefully what we are getting out of the IRC.

SAMW LUNCH: On 19<sup>th</sup> January SAMW had an address from Peter Russell, the Head of the Agriculture Department and Alan Burns Chairman of Scotland Food and Drink. There was not an awful lot raised of specific interest to retail butchers.

QMS MARKETING CONFERENCE: Both Alan Kennedy and Jamie Chapman, Richard Johnston, James Allan and Frank Yorke had attended the day conference at Murrayshall. There was quite a mixture of sectors there. The first presentation was by Richard Lowe on the *Green Roots* which is a look at all the trends that are happening in industry in terms of consumers. [Copies are available direct from QMS.] *Green Shoots* talks about certain anomalies - why people don't cook, yet there is greater interest in cooking, creating an awareness of what we eat and yet we still have high obesity rates. A third of what we purchased is discarded as waste. He will get this information typed up and included in the Newsletter.

The second speaker was Edward Gardner from TNS world panel. He was extremely interesting and went through each of the multiples and what their view was and how they traded and how they saw the way forward.

In the afternoon session there were a couple of workshops. Fred A'Court talked about buying factors. It was not a good presentation with a huge opportunity missed. He had been around all these shops judging butcher shop of the year and he must have lots of pictures of displays. He instead decided to throw up topics on a power point presentation without giving the evidence he had no doubt seen in the shops. He said there were buying factors, certain health nutritional values, parents choosing for people, lunch boxes are important and days of the week are important, weekends are more indulgent, quality and eating out. He went through working displays for each of these reasons. He apologised afterwards as he had been briefed that he would be addressing farmers and farm shops.

SAMW MEETING: A meeting was held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January with Alistair Donaldson and Ian Anderson who is taking over the Executive Manager's role at SAMW. It was good to talk to him first hand on what our views are. He has been in contact regularly to ask a few things.

SPECIALITY FINE FOOD FAIR: Scotweigh attended on the basis of the fair being highlighted in our Newsletter. They said quite a lot of our members had gone through the exhibition in the SECC. Member, Andrew Ramsay had a stand. Douglas looked in on his way to the Regional Meeting in Kilmarnock and brought back suppliers' business cards for Bruce to contact about attending our trade fair next time round. It was more about accessories and condiments etc.

FOOD AND HEALTHY ALLIANCE: Accessing healthy food, Food for life schools action pack from the Soil Association. Healthy living neighbourhood shop from the Scottish Grocers Federation. There are a number of things happening round the country to try to support healthy eating. On the pink paper Douglas recommended that we should be active contributors to the National Food Policy and he will draft something for the next meeting.

SCOTLAND FOOD AND DRINK CONFERENCE: It was held yesterday and today. A paper was circulated. QMS is a member of Scotland Food and Drink and were allowed to take along two guests for the day so Uel Morton included Douglas Scott and Ian Anderson. They felt the venue was totally wrong for an organisation trying to get money out of people that they went to the most expensive venue in Scotland and engaged some very elaborate speakers. Richard Lockhead gave

an address supporting the development of Scotland's National Food Policy; Paul McLaughlan (SF&D) outlined Scotland Food and Drink's objectives.

Martin Copeland from Marks and Spencers gave a presentation on their Plan A - it is called plan A as there is no plan B! They have 35,000 product lines use 20,000 farmers, 20,000 factories and 1/4 million people employed in the operation of Marks and Spencers. M&S have looked at how there customers want them to be green. They have a one hundred point action plan on things they are looking at to reduce their carbon footprint and affect climate change. It started off with car pool, encouraging diesel, recyclable energy, digestion on farms, green stores eg. Galashiels and Silverburn. Their trucks are now 10% bigger with a 10% reduction on carbon emissions. They are hoping to be HFC free refrigeration units before the end of the year. They will label their air freighted products so customers know. M&S are lowering temperatures for washing clothes. It was a very impressive and comprehensive template to address the problem. Douglas did not think that was why M&S were invited there to talk about, but that was how they chose to use the time. They were taken up on the friendly free range pork as the Oakham brand produced is not where all the pork comes from. The Salmon is the worst of them all as they say it is from Loch Muir and this is a fictitious place. The conclusion was if you are going to make claims you should back them up. It all looked good until the audience started to pick holes in the presentation. It was an interesting day but Douglas was not sure what it did for the Federation and for QMS so we need to watch this space.

**MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT:** Bruce McCall reported.

MEMBERSHIP: 266 members have paid to date.  
Information packs have been sent to:

Aberfoyle Deli  
Adam Family Butcher, Rutherglen  
Bels Butcher, Edzell  
Chris's Butcher, Alva  
Denis Paterson, Aberdeen  
William Lindsay, Creetown  
Fife Butchers, East Weymss

Hamilton Butcher, Ayr  
Lawrences, South Uist  
Lochalsh Butcher, Kyle  
Neilson Brothers, Dalbeattie  
The Store, Foveran  
William McKay & Sons, Thurso

New members

Hamilton butchers, Ayr; John McCallum, Auchterarder; Neilson Brothers Dalbeattie  
Kelly of Kilcreggan was taken over by Kevin Walker

3 resignations

Frank Boyle, Easterhouse, - finances are very tight for him and he cannot afford it this year.  
A Christie, Balfon - not continuing with the farm shop.  
Forth Meat Supplies - no longer operating from Galashiels.

MEMBERS ONLY WEBSITE: When members renew their subscription they are issued with a username and password for access to this site. Lots of documents are available for members to read and use. We will keep adding to it as we go along each month. There are contracts of employment, Health & Safety documents and recipes. Anything you wish to put on we will consider adding.

CORPORATE MEMBERS:

Invoices have been sent out for our existing corporate members.  
Trunet Packaging (Scotland) Ltd and ACE Refrigeration Ltd have joined.

REGIONAL MEETINGS:

A two course dinner was held at Buccleuch Arms, St Boswells 13 members attended and at the Park Hotel Kilmarnock 12 members attended. Colin Hewitson of KRH gave a presentation at the South Queensferry meeting where 14 attended it focused on the Rationale ovens. John Gunster

attended the Borders and Queensferry meetings. The meetings provided a very good platform for members to air current concerns and views.

The next three meetings are at

|                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> February | Swallow Hotel, Bellahouston, Glasgow |
| Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> February | Invercarse Hotel, Dundee             |
| Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March     | Caledonian Hotel, Oban               |

### HANDBOOK

£2765 has been secured in advertising income.

The Handbook will be put together during the next month and printed in time for distribution with the April Newsletter.

George Lees asked if there was any feedback from the regional meetings. Jamie Chapman said they are all quite unhappy with Park Packaging with lack of supply of bags, broken promises. Concerns were raised about chickens with the Channel 4 campaign. Douglas said at these meetings the theme last year had been fears of the shortage of staff, this year the biggest concern and worry is over the escalating price of beef and lamb and how much you can put the price up. For example 30p a pound on lamb how much can you put your prices up? It has been well heralded by most of the media about 3 months now that food prices are on the way up consumers are almost expecting it.

Jack Meade said under corporate membership he has not been happy with the service from Bizerba and he has gone back to Avery Berkel as it has gone on for over 12 months. Jamie said he has Bizerba scales and dealt with John Allan. Jack Meade said that John Allan has been fantastic but the problem is with the programmer. Jamie said that he gets KRH to look after them and they get someone to turn up when there is a problem.

Jamie Chapman said that he had ACE refrigeration for a year on contract but had nothing but problems. Stuart Christie said he got new scales from Scotweigh and they are excellent.

Ian Faulds said the Kilmarnock Regional Meeting was good and there is always a benefit of talking to your peers. He cannot understand why more people won't come out. He said it was also encouraging to hear about the number of membership packs that are going out. Douglas said the reason why so many packs went out is because we write to all non members at the beginning of January with an invitation to join. We send them a Newsletter, list of services and joining form if they request a pack.

Duncan Mackenzie asked if we had a cost for printing the handbook. Douglas said not yet but it will be around the same cost as last time. He said the content is not going to change very much. He questioned how long we would continue to print it with having the member's only website that is easier and cheaper to update. The only changes are going to be the President's speeches, office bearers and adverts.

**FINANCE REPORT:** Douglas Scott reported.

It is the first time Stuart Christie had been at the meeting and it was full explained to him just what the Committee's role and work entailed. Principally the task was to manage the finances and to ensure that there was sufficient funds to see both Member Services and Scottish Meat Training through to the end of the year.

**MEMBER SERVICES:** We are looking at bringing in subscriptions over £90k if members pay up by the deadline of the end of March and 7<sup>th</sup> March for listing in the SFMTA handbook.

On corporate membership we had given up chasing Park Packaging. There has been a lot of negative comment about them at the Regional meetings but Bruce McCall said that Park Packaging have informed us that they will be paying. We have a projection of £9,500 from

corporate members but we are gaining a few corporate members and subsequently we are predicting a surplus on this account. The one large item is expenditure on advertising and promotions. We can decide what we want to spend on that as we go through the year.

**SCOTTISH MEAT TRAINING:** The most important part is the figures coming in Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands and ESF in both areas. Sandra will tell you how we are progressing with ESF. There is some doubt there whether we can get a project next year. From that point of view it is important that we can get other income in from Northern Ireland and Northern England. Total income projected is over £300k with expenses projected. Hopefully if we get projects we can claim back from European Structural funds. We are projecting a surplus as we did run in deficit last year.

We did look at bank reconciliation's as we ran into problems with cashflow in December and we do not want to be in that situation again.

Ian Faulds said that Park Packaging were not particularly good in any guise. Is there any way getting East of Scotland Contracts (EOSC) aware of it as EOSC are very good. Duncan Mackenzie said EOSC diminished a little bit because they were not doing Federation bags and Park Packaging took that mantle on and gained a few customers. David Lindsay said he went for that reason and has no problems with Park Packaging. Duncan Mackenzie said they have a problem saying they can do something and they don't have them in stock. Douglas said Park Packaging took cold feet when we changed our logo and there was also some doubt about the Q Guild one at that time. It is disappointing as they did come up with quality goods. Douglas said he could ask them to revisit it. He said that Park Packaging had run out of stock and it won't be back in stock for a couple of weeks.

**LIVESTOCK REPORT:** Alan Kennedy reported.

Firstly I would like to thank Stuart for filling this post so well for the past years and also congratulate him for jumping ship just as all hell breaks loose.

Given the uncertainty of the current markets I have gone back a year to give a realistic picture of the trend that stock prices have followed. Last week at Forfar steers averaged £1.437 per kg and heifers were £1.378 per kg. Today they went to £1.474 and £1.435 respectively this week alone has gone to 11.3% and 8.5% rise year on year live at Forfar. The previous year these figures were £1.324 and £1,328 respectively, representing rises of 7.8% and 3.6% over the year. This trend seems set to continue as wholesale prices for beef are showing an approximate 3% rise on the week, which in fairness is the first large jump we have seen this year. This however tells part of the story-taking a selective look at this week's prices; fillets for example have taken a rise of up to £2 a kg a 10% rise. This is unusual for the season, and does not bode well for later in the year. He thinks there is going to be a shortage of beef later in the year because there are no imports coming in to fill the gap.

The lamb trade has recovered dramatically, and Scottish Premier are quoting £3.09 per kg this week. Last year's price was £2.68 - a 13% increase on the year. Most of this increase has been predictably applied to the fores and gigots, as you would expect at this time of year. Live market prices taken from last Wednesday show a 15% rise on the year.

The pork market remains stable with prices comparable to a year ago, with pigs still costing £1.60 per kg deadweight.

As usual there are savings to be made by offsetting wholesalers lists e.g. Sides ex Scottish Premier £2.87 per kg, Mathers £3.09 per kg. This 22p difference represents a £33 saving on a 150kg side. One boneless example would be topsides - Ex Scottish Premier £4.85 per kg, Mathers £5.51 per kg - 66ppk more.

The Convenor then referred to a costing sheet for the breakdown of a side of beef.

Here are some direct comparisons on prices in the last year. He took a mean average on a side of beef at £3 a kilo being somewhere between Scotch Premier and the price of Mathers. Last year the equivalent average was £2.65. Which shows more than a 10% rise in the costs of a side of beef ex wholesalers. However the costs of sides of beef buying in the ring have only gone up 7% so the wholesalers are looking for a larger margin.

What surprised Alan was that sirloin had not gone up much but rib-eye has rocketed. Fillet has gone up £4 a 25% rise on the year and it has no sign of slowing at all. The table is there for purely reference purposes. The wholesalers are trying to make up lost ground or widen margins and there is money to be made or saved by buying live.

Taking no account of sausages, trim, etc the savings are self evident, and over the next few months I will try to identify other cost savings which are available.

Finally, hides and skins show little change at £19 for hides and no return for lamb skins from St Andrews. Jamie Chapman reported receiving £22 for hides and 40p for lamb skins.

Duncan Mackenzie said no disrespect to Stuart Christie but Alan had given a different type of report, very interesting and very exciting.

Jamie Chapman said he was at a North of England Mart a week past Tuesday and Dungannon meats from Ireland they just wanted to buy everything. Cattle were £170 a kilo live he had been 1.45 to 1.50 for were 1.65 to 1.70 and they were starting 1.50 a kilo so he had his lunch and came home. He said that at Forfar today Woodheads buyer was regularly starting cattle off at the previous price of £1.45 or £1.46 and taking quite a few over £1.60. What that means in the context of Morrisons and other multiples having to add this margin on to their prices is quite a good thing. Some supermarkets down this way are £18 for sirloin and £26 for fillets is not far behind what we would be expecting to charge. Jamie Chapman advised members not to be shy as price increases cannot continue to be on absorbed.

Douglas circulated the letter from George Jarron reference St Andrews Abattoir Company informing the resolution put to the recent EGM required a 75% majority that had not been reached. The board could not therefore sanction the sale of the assets of the company to Lawrie & Symington. Douglas said that the most important issue that came out the last meeting was the abattoir facility was under threat. This letter does not give us any assurance and representation from SFMTA will always be to maintain the facility. Jamie asked if they wanted to sell to the developer they would need 75% of the vote. Douglas said no, the board of directors have the power to do what they like. If the Special resolution comes from the shareholders they would need 75%. The fear is that some of the Abattoir's board members might see no incentive to maintain the abattoir. Jamie Chapman said he had not heard anything from the Lawrie and Symington side of it.

Stuart Christie said that there was 27,000 tonnes of fillets from Brazil into the EU in the last year and that has stopped. He said to do the Irish ones he would need £27 per kilo to sell them to hotels. £32 kilo once trimmed was what it had to be to get back to a wholesale price said Jamie Chapman.

George Lees asked how many butchers were phoned to compile the SFMTA average prices. Jamie Chapman said there was not that many at the moment. Douglas said there are 9 or 10 and we keep appealing for more to participate. We need more to make these average prices more realistic. One member said it was dangerous to print the supermarket prices beside ourselves as it may be picked up by someone in the media. In future we will not print the multiples prices in the Newsletter. We had some members reacting since some of their prices were cheaper than the supermarkets. Some people are interested to see how the prices will look next time given what Alan Kennedy said about the jump in price of raw material. Jamie Chapman felt the multiple prices were a good thing. George Lees had been speaking to John Chapman before the meeting and the supermarket prices are totally different from what is in the newsletter. Douglas said the figures are

taken off the stores online websites and you can actually buy at that price. Ian Faulds said the prices are constantly changing through promotion of the product. Who would have thought in the middle of the chicken publicity about producing a £1.99 chicken which they will have sold like hot chickens. Douglas said that Tesco are two chickens for £5.50 at the moment.

Neil Cameron asked if there was any place we could get free range chickens from. Douglas said SFMTA had put a list on the website but none of those suppliers had nearly enough product to supply members with and it is not 3.5lb chickens. These producers generally want to sell 5.5lbs chickens. SFMTA spoke to NFU and have not heard how there poultry producers' meeting went. Producers have a particular problem knowing if it is a short term demand and the necessary accreditation takes longer than the chicken takes to produce. Producers are listening and we will probably see an increase in production. Grampian said they will react to a certain extent but Mitchells of Letham are not interested at all. David Lindsay said customers will come in for a chicken and ask for free range but when asking for chicken fillets there is no question at all. He felt interest in free range would diminish. Stuart Christie said there are farmers who will not eat free range eggs.

**LABOUR CONDITIONS REPORT:** Douglas Scott reported.

PENINSULA: Employment Law Adviser, Gordon Kerr Smith wishes to retire this October. SFMTA have had discussions with Peninsula who are a leading company in their field and have impressed with what they have to offer our members. The service would be a lot more comprehensive and there would be cover in holiday time which we do not have at present. Peninsula would re format our contracts of employment and employee handbook for us and make it more robust, they would supply the service on advice at the end of the telephone and they have quoted us on 500 advice requests per year. The concern is that people will start to use the service more when they get advice from Peninsula. The price is £8,200, we were fearful with what they would come up with. They are notoriously expensive; we currently pay £500 per month so we are looking at a slight increase. This is a tied price for 3 years as they want us to opt in as a lot of the major benefits are loaded at the front end. We would want an analysis of the topics and if any particular company is phoning a lot. Douglas felt it is a very good deal for what we are going to get. He said members will be given a number to phone up to get the advice when you give the reference number. John Chapman asked where the company is based. This was confirmed to be Manchester. John Chapman said that we should ask for a monthly return so at the end of the year they don't come back and say you owe x amount of money. Douglas said he thinks that is how it would work. Douglas said the company in Glasgow has quoted before but it was very expensive and on a per hour basis. Option 2 was the indemnity to cover all costs you incur based on their advice. Alan Kennedy said Option 2 price is pennies more than he pays Mentor for the same advice. John Chapman said the price was fair. The meeting agreed to adopt the proposal to accept the Peninsula offer.

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:** Sandra Lennox reported.

TRAINEE NUMBERS: Numbers are slightly up this month again with new registrations in both SE and HIE regions.

We now have a total of 15 trainee certificates to be awarded

SE CONTRACT: There is little to report this month regarding the SE contract. The tender documents are with SE and we must now await the contract decision which is expected in March. I have been asked to provide evidence of skills needs in both SE Tayside and in SE Ayrshire which I am told is required by both LECs in order that they can successfully support our tender application.

HIE CONTRACT: I have been told (by Contract Manager, Eric McNally) that we should confidently expect to receive a contract similar in value to that which we had received in 2007. Indeed, this morning, I have been asked to submit an as accurate as possible estimation of funds required for just such a contract for 2008/2009.

IMPROVE: I attended an Employer Technical Group meeting in York on 16<sup>th</sup> January. Unfortunately, due mainly to the bad weather this meeting was very poorly attended. Only Richard Dilworth (ABP) and myself were present.

Derek Williams of Improve Ltd. explained that the licenses for all Sector Skills Councils are now up for renewal. Improve must tender for the next round along with all other SSC's and must also put together a robust plan for the future. Derek had hoped for more attendees as Improve needed to arrive at decisions regarding the direction they should be taking in order to be responding to employer needs and skill shortages.

Discussion took place around the present qualification structure and we were asked to consider what form future qualifications should take. This is of course only the very early stages of consultation, but what came out of our discussions was that qualifications should be more flexible and yet more tailored to specific job roles. In essence, what we have developed here in Perth – our Craftsman Certificates, the Cutting Butcher Certificate, Manufacturing Certificate and the others.

After the meeting and on my return to Perth, I have made enquiries about how to have our qualifications accredited. There is a pilot operating in England only which is looking at employer's own qualification and levelling them against the current qualification curriculum. There may be an opportunity here for us to be involved and I am currently waiting for QCA to decide whether we can proceed.

ESF: We have had some further communication from David Martin MEP who has replied to us with a copy of his communication from Jim Mather MSP, Minister for Enterprise Energy and Tourism in which he states "informal discussions with the commission albeit without commitment, suggest that they will give sympathetic consideration to the request. That letter was dated 25<sup>th</sup> January. We have also had communication last week from Ian Hudghton MEP for Aberdeen and Dundee who is also seeking clarification on the EC position through Danuta Hubner, Commissioner for Rural Policy.

NORTHERN IRELAND: Last month I reported that we had 13 new trainees in Northern Ireland, with an estimate of 30 trainees by the end of February.

I am very happy to be able to report that Malachi McCann, our assessor in Northern Ireland has now completed inductions for a total of 44 trainees. There are another 6 trainees to be inducted this week and next. Malachi has also started the assessment process and in the coming weeks will be building a programme of assessment appointments for all of these trainees.

I was asked to attend a meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January, held by a chain of butchers shops in Northern Ireland and to give a presentation of the training available. The response from this so far is that there are older people (outside of the funding age group) who would like the opportunity to gain a qualification and we are putting together a cost proposal for them.

SMT were subject to an NVQ External Verification visit on 4<sup>th</sup> February in Northern Ireland. The visit passed very well. The External Verifier, Esther Watkins visited McKays Family Butcher in Ballycastle. She interviewed the three trainees from the shop and also spoke with Sean McKay, owner of the business. All trainees and indeed also Mr McKay stated that they were very pleased with the service given by SMT. After thoroughly checking the contents of portfolios and speaking with our assessor Malachi, Esther pronounced that she was very happy to conclude that SMT would have no action points to be addressed and confirmed that all requested certificates could be awarded. She also offered her congratulations on our progress in Northern Ireland.

Funding for these trainees is accessed through our partnership working with the Food and Drink Training Council (FDTC) in Northern Ireland.

NE ENGLAND: We launched our presence in NE England on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February with a 'fun for food' event held in Washington. Owners and staff from 22 businesses attended the evening which started with demonstrations of new products and tips from Roland Snel from Versteegen. During the break in demonstrations, Douglas and I explained the opportunities available for accessing funded training in the region and on the night 6 business owners asked for us to work with members of their staff.

These requests are being followed up. I've contacted the Skills Broker who will confirm the demand and authorize the funding through LSC Train to Gain. Douglas has also copied all the recipes and the training information onto discs, which have been sent to all attendees.

During February I attended a series of training workshops designed to encourage SMT and other new providers to the area to successfully 'grow' our Train to Gain contracts and so assist the LSC in reaching their targets which have been set by Government in response to the Leitch Report on skills shortages.

GENERAL: Our Assessors objective this month has been to work with those trainees close to completion of their certificates so that we begin the new contract year with the maximum number of completed qualifications and with the remaining trainees on schedule with their qualifications. Businesses and trainees have been very accommodating and I would like to add that this is appreciated – thank you.

Duncan Mackenzie said that on the Ireland project how much is it going to be for a proposal to be put forward to train them and is it going to be feasible for them to do it. Duncan Mackenzie said years ago it was an astronomical amount of money. We are having more requests for this even here. The question has been how much is this going to cost if I have to pay for this myself if we do not have the possibility of getting an ESF contract. We need to look at how much this is going to cost but in terms of Ireland we already have an assessor there who is likely to be going into the area where this is being requested. The extra cost involved in servicing this should not be too great so we should be able to put in something cost effective. Douglas said it is important how this is presented and it is important that we do this with a minimum amount of visits. The incentive needs to be there for the employer to keep the assessor there to get as much as possible done in the visit so it is a win-win situation. He thought it would be around £1,500. Jamie Chapman asked if it was over two years. The first candidates in Northern Ireland achieved in 9 to 12 months and it is perfectly possible to do everything in that time scale. Sandra said it would be based on the number of visits. Duncan Mackenzie said it is excellent the way Ireland is developing.

George Lees said at the last meeting it was mentioned that possibly 100 meat industry trainees in Scotland would have to have their training suspended due to lack of funds. He asked for an update on the situation. Sandra said it is the over 19 candidates who are affected. Sandra said we do not know yet if we can put our projects together for this year, if we have word back that none of our projects are eligible for this year we will have to address what we will do with those trainees, we have already started those trainees so there is a commitment to finish their qualification but it is working out how best to do that. What Sandra is trying to do at the moment is to bring in a pool of money for any training. If we do not have sufficient funds in Scotland we will bring in money from Ireland and North East of England. George Lees asked who was to blame for this situation in Scotland. People always want to take credit when things are going well and the last time something like this happened it was the Scottish Meat Training Assessors who got the blame. Do we have anyone to blame other than them as they had to go in to the shops? Sandra said it is not the Assessors fault. George Lees said I know its not but they got the blame. Sandra said they are the ones that go in there and are going to be met with that every time this does happen but the people to blame for that are those making the decisions for who gets ESF funding. At the moment it lies with Europe. Douglas Scott said it is also the enterprise companies as they are only supporting 16-18 year olds where as before it was up to 25's. It is annoying thing and we will use it as a step and it is not the case in England and Ireland in both cases they seem to be encouraging people to take up qualifications and the funding to them. There is something really wrong in Scotland and that will be part of our submission to the National Food Policy. Scottish Enterprise

because of their lack of funding has had to restrict it. They are the real reason why we have had to rely on European funding. We are still hoping to resolve the European funding but it could still just leave us 19 year olds in the air. George Lees says it boils down to the Scottish Government then. Douglas agreed. George Lees said this has not done the Federation any good either over the last year as people are saying the training is no use, they blame the Federation they blame everybody except the people who are really responsible. George advised that we need to make that very clear.

**LEGISLATION REPORT:** Douglas Scott reported.

VC REMOVAL: a telephone conference took place at the end of December when the processors were throwing their toys out the pram about this because nothing was happening and at that time of the year people were very interested in bone in beef. We got an assurance from FSA that they would look at any relaxations to help butchers access cattle over 24 months. The FSA phoned on the 17<sup>th</sup> January to see what the relaxations we would like to see. Douglas asked that they get rid of the staining, the Recommended Method of Operations and get rid of the problem of the disposal of bones. These are totally over the top in terms of food safety. The FSA returned a further call to say they had put a process into Europe. Europe is scrutinizing the proposals that were submitted on 21<sup>st</sup> January, these proposals were to remove the requirement all together. This will be published in the official journal on the 24<sup>th</sup> April when it comes to the end of the scrutiny period and because the draft domestic legislation takes a maximum of 21 days after the 24 April to bring in the legislation. FSA gave all sorts of reasons why they did not want to bring in a relaxation at this moment in time, because of political risk; bones could go for production of tallow and could damage the UK reputation. FSA also claimed that they did not have a great amount of evidence that butchers were bothered about this. Douglas told them if they wanted he could get butchers to tell them but at the moment they perceive we are dealing with the issue. He spoke to Ian Anderson about this afterwards; he did not think FSA knew where the proposals are with Europe. He said it is full of politics. The European Commission is likely to do a deal with the European Parliament behind the back of the European Council but there is confidence that something will happen within the timescale the FSA have set. Douglas did not know if we wanted to create more heat on it or not. It is nearing an end it could be 3 months away but given the price of beef the Executive may want access to this beef quicker.

Jamie Chapman reported that Forrest had been bought by Dundas. Douglas said he would put it in the next Newsletter. Argent Energy, the parent company, has retained the bio-fuel and Dundas has taken over the rendering and bone collection.

**PROMOTIONS REPORT:** Douglas reported.

**QMS** have this month embarked on marketing activities relating to Scotch Lamb. It has been a particularly difficult period for the lamb industry and in response to this Quality Meat Scotland and the Scottish Government have provided additional funds to extend the Scotch Lamb marketing campaign from the traditional period of autumn to also include February this financial year.

The February activity will include advertisements Scotland wide in the Scotsman, Daily Mail, Herald, Press and Journal, Scotland on Sunday and Sunday Herald. This burst of the campaign, aimed to appeal to the female shopper, will reach just under 2 million Scots and will highlight just how easy Scotch Lamb is to cook.

The first burst of the campaign that took place between August and October 2007 QMS claim has given positive results. According to TNS sales of Lamb in Scotland increased by 19% in volume terms during the 12 weeks ending 2nd December 2007 with the number of households purchasing lamb throughout the year increasing from 46.9% in 2006 to 50.4% in 2007.

#### SFMTA ACTIVITY

The Burns Night posters appear to have been well received and well used. Next we would like point of sale material to promote Scottish Craft Butchers.

With a fair amount of sentiment around to support locally produced food, reduce carbon footprints, know the source of raw materials, return to real values, we would like something that enforces the craft butchers position in that marketplace.

We would like to promote

- Authenticity and Real connections
- Scottish Butchers Supporting Scottish Farms
- Meat from Butchers because it's Better
- Properly Matured Meat cut by skilled Craftsmen

We have asked Hampton Associates in Aberdeen to work something up for us.

## PRODUCT COMPETITIONS

We have had agreement from McAusland Crawford to sponsor a Sliced Sausage Competition in April and are hoping to have a sponsor too, for a Potted Meat evaluation. These would be judged at Perth College with entries to be delivered on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April. Executive members could bring their entries to the April Executive meeting, on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April, for Bruce and Douglas to take to the college.

The award winners would be presented with their certificates at the Regional Meetings during the second half of May. Overall winners would be mystery shopped, evaluated at a final and presented at the same Regional Meetings.

Also at the May Regional meetings it is the intention to judge Beef Sausages and Black Pudding. Winners would be announced on the night and again mystery shoppers purchase Regional winners for a grand final. The overall winners to be announced at the Scottish Meat Challenge in September, possibly 17<sup>th</sup> and hopefully in Stirling. This has still to be arranged.

## MEAT TO GO

QMS have again agreed to sponsor these awards in the three categories as two years ago:- Ready to Eat, Ready to Heat and Ready to Cook. Judging will take place in August at Perth College.

Copy of letter received from June Lomax about the pink aprons. She requested that everyone should get a copy of the letter so they could make their own opinion. Ian Faulds said the first four paragraphs are nothing like the way she presented it at our Executive meeting. There were no qualifications until she heard that we knew nothing about it and even those who were part of the Scotch Butchers Club knew nothing about it.

Jack Meade said that we have to be careful about food miles as he has to go further a field for meat supplies, it is still not going to be anything like South America but it is not going to be on his doorstep. Douglas said he was mindful of that. We will use local businesses looking after local jobs so we get the local in the promotion. Without actually saying the meat is being sourced locally that is why we would say Scottish butchers supporting Scottish farmers but maybe there is a borders problem with that. Jamie Chapman suggested Scottish butchers supporting farmers.

Jamie Chapman felt promoting local jobs is important. Goods in supermarkets is from all round the country and all over the world. Where as we employ people to make sausages, slice the steak make the pies. Douglas said it would be a way to get local into the mind.

Alan Kennedy said the QMS letter is an insult. They wrote as usual and have no way of knowing if they received the letter or interest in taking part. June admitted at the meeting when she produced the aprons she had gone on holiday and left the job to another member of staff and it was her fault the letters hadn't been sent out. She also said Jamie highlighted the pink aprons which were a victim of their own success. Alan Kennedy said if they are going to have some sort of respect for us and their organisation then we need to say you're wrong.

Alan Kennedy said in supermarkets at the moment there are lots of saltires displayed with Scottish beef, Scottish lamb which is not Scotch and we are waiting for a reply from QMS to clarify the definitions. Supermarkets are selling beef which is against the ethos of QMS. So why are they spending all this money on supermarkets when the levy payers are not receiving proper support? Douglas agreed to ask again for a reply. Scotch comes within the PGI, Scottish appears to be raised in Scotland without any quality assurance but we need to find out where the line is drawn. Douglas said there are saltires all over Tesco cabinets and they selling Scottish not Scotch.

**QMS BOARD:** The meeting considered the letter outlining appointments to the new QMS board members. It stated 11 members had been appointed to the board. The board provides a "good balance of levy and non levy payers" and brings a wealth of experience of the red meat sector and other relevant skills.

Jamie Chapman said out of the twelve board members 8 of them are farmers. It was agreed that he write to the Cabinet Secretary stating that at this meeting of the executive of the SFMTA disappointment and concern was expressed that eight representatives is not a well balanced board.

It was also agreed that SFMTA should write to Jim Royan, a Past President of SFMTA and Elgin member who was successfully appointed to the new QMS Board. Jim would be invited to attend the May Executive Meeting and all subsequent meetings. SFMTA would look forward to working with him.

#### **ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS:**

Jamie Chapman said we have a meeting next week with the processors scheme which sets the criteria of what is Scotch beef and he fears that cow beef will be raised as being allowed to be called Scotch. He said he is not in favour of it. At worst case it would be called Scotch Beef cow Beef. John Chapman said it would be a good time to bring up the OTM beef as well. Duncan Mackenzie said we have been told for years that this will be sorted and nothing has been done about it. Alan Kennedy said having gone all this time to get the protected status now they are trying to widen it for the simple reason to get bulk and it is not a quality thing anymore.

George Lees asked what a QMS inspector does and Jamie Chapman said the same as a vet. They stand and time them, shoot to stun times, hygiene. Stuart Christie asked what their remit was. Jamie Chapman said to get a quality assurance stamp so they can say it was killed in an assured plant. Stuart Christie said that from the crofter through there are nine bites at the cherry to get a levy of that beast. Jamie Chapman said that if you join the butchers club you will pay another £50. Their argument is the fee to join that scheme only covers the running of that scheme, whether the scheme is necessary is another question all together. Jamie Chapman said with the move away from the 90 day rule the percentage of bad cattle to good cattle has gone up so there is less of the top end that can be called Scotch.

Douglas said that we have a member on Mull who runs a shop and abattoir as a co-operative. The abattoir is getting custom as far away as Dumfries and Galloway. James Hilder from the trust is looking for some practical advice on how to run a butcher shop. John Chapman volunteered to go.

Stuart Christie stated that he is now under the MHS for his new plant, he has had problems with a few items and these will be reviewed on another visit. He has a new bin from Forrest and MHS want all his waste weighed. Forrest and they will only give an approximate weight. John Chapman said whatever MHS say ask them to give it to you in writing. George Lees asked if the probes were sterilized every time and Stuart Christie confirmed that they were.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday 12th March 2008.

There was no further business and the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the chair.