

## Report of the Independent Assessor for AGM 2023

IFST was established in 1968 and is governed according to a Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Charitable Object is the general advancement and application of food science and technology, for the benefit, safety and health of the public. IFST is an association of Members and all that we do must serve the Members since their roles, executed in a professional fashion, serve the Object.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors - elected by Members - to ensure that the Object is served. It is the responsibility of an Independent Assessor (IA) to assess the effectiveness of the Board in this role and report accordingly to the Members at the Annual Meeting.

Appointed as IA from Sept 2020 I have attended Board meetings, some Standing Committees and working groups. I am not a voting member of any group. Chairs of Committees and IFST team have graciously welcomed me to observe, listen and learn. I am still a Fellow of the IFST and as such attend some regular events and benefit from the Journal and Magazine.

The Board of IFST established six strategic priorities designed to serve the membership of IFST and deliver against the charitable object. The Annual Report provides the Board and Executives understanding of the progress made in these six areas. I will not repeat that. My purpose is to give my assessment of the Board as it continues to develop IFST.

*Priority 1 - Providing and sharing evidence-based FS&T knowledge and Priority 2. Influencing and supporting key Stakeholders.*

IFST has continued to provide independent scientific information in Information Statements, Fact Sheets, webinars, conferences or access to trusted resources etc. The International Journal and the Magazine provide stimulating scientific knowledge and information to a high standard. The Scientific Committee and External Affairs Committees are sufficiently resourced and refreshed by volunteers and IFST colleagues. There is a thorough, systematic approach to issues that need to be addressed, and processes to ensure independence of scientific output. The IFST resources are used by an increasing number of stakeholders ranging from students to policy makers.

As a professional body, IFST must engage with relevant policy issues whether by responding to consultations in a timely and appropriate way or by monitoring and liaising with policy makers to ensure they are supported with relevant scientific and technical data. The IFST is guardian of the independence of thought and quality of output and thus can be a trusted partner in the necessary dialogue, engagement and communication of

global scientific knowledge.

IFST is increasingly responsive to key consultations. The IFST has made an initial response on Review of EU Legislation and will monitor and make input as is appropriate on scientific aspects of this legislation especially as it impacts food safety, food security and public health.

The pandemic forced IFST to enhance its on-line offerings and this has extended the reach. As IFST moves to reinstate in-person events it must not allow its reach to be diminished.

The aspiration that IFST becomes the first stop shop for scientific and technical information on food science and technology in UK and beyond is still elusive and will be until the search capabilities of the IFST digital systems are further enhanced.

*Priority 3 Promoting Professional Standards and Development.*  
*Priority 5 - Encouraging and supporting future talent.*

It is imperative that there is a pipeline of early education through apprenticeships, tertiary education and continuing professional development for Members if IFST is to retain its vitality and integrity.

Employment in the sector has altered radically following Brexit and the pandemic. With the current economic pressure, it is important that standards are retained so as to protect public health and consumer confidence. This is an opportunity that IFST Board should be grasping and resourcing by providing a new vision for Education and Professional development and a strategy for achieving it. Without this, the ambition that regulators, retailers and the general public can be confident that technical personnel at all levels within the food sector are recognised as being professionally competent and striving to remain current in their knowledge and skills through effective CPD will not be achieved.

Some progress has been made. All the competence frameworks have been updated and aligned with inclusion of an apprenticeship track. The Membership forms and appeals procedures have been reviewed and updated. The Science Council Licence has been renewed. The IFST Annual report provides further detail.

Young people engaged effectively in student launch pads, Ecotrophelia and other student offerings supported by the energetic and motivated Student Committee. The Love Food Love Science has increasing numbers of site visits and downloads of the materials. 50 IFST Members are STEM Ambassadors.

The Food Science and Technology profession, like all others, must

constantly review its processes, standards, professional registers and assessment criteria to keep in step with a modern, fast moving technically complex working environment. A cadre of robust assessors must be available to support these processes.

#### *Priority 4. Utilising and growing the strength of membership*

IFST creeps closer to the target of 4000 members. Group schemes have certainly been a part of this success. Membership retention at a time of economic strictures will be important. Student to associate transition also remains a challenge. IFST attracts a large number of international students and work under strategic priorities 1&2 should, alongside the enhanced online presence assist with their retention. A vigorous work stream on CPD and associated professional registers could enable stronger professional journeys and better food safety in all geographies.

The concept of IFST Communities has been welcomed but has not achieved its goal of enhancing engagement and support or creating a safe space for the many practitioners - industry, government and academic - who need access to science, advice and support. Currently the diagnosis is a failure of the CRM system to deliver appropriately and a lack of interest among members. This needs interrogation and analysis so that a better system can be developed in order to achieve this important objective for Members.

#### *Priority 6. Financial Stability: effective governance and sustainability.*

The Board is a careful steward of the IFST resources. The risk register is owned, scrutinised and amended by the Board. The finances of the Institute are in good order with a budget adequate to support the current strategic objectives agreed by the Board. Under the leadership of the Hon Treasurer the Finance Committee have managed the investment of reserves through some choppy economic waters and advised the Board on fees, financial challenges, draw downs, strategic decisions re the Journals and updated financial policies.

Governance requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association have been adhered to as are requirements of Company Law and Charitable Law. The Board is appraised of changes and updates to relevant legislation and codes of practice. The recent policy on maintenance of scientific independence is an important institutional anchor for Priorities 1&2. The Science Council's practices on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are being introduced throughout.

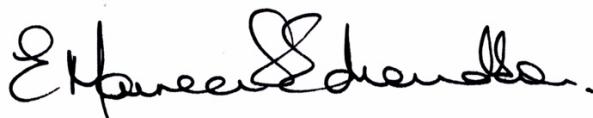
#### *Conclusion*

Good boards are responsible for setting strategy for their organisations, scrutinising performance, ensuring good stewardship of resources, stretching the Executive team to deliver to their full potential and supporting them in doing so.

The IFST Board does not flinch from addressing difficult issues and has the range of talent and skills necessary to do so. However, with very significant changes in leadership, new team dynamics must be developed and demonstrate effectiveness. The Board needs to support the new team as it settles in while still stretching the Executive to deliver maximum benefits for Members as they deliver the IFST Object for society in 2022-23.

Adequate scrutiny and pace of delivery continues to be a dilemma for this Board that meets only quarterly. The Board could be more nimble. Shorter more frequent virtual meetings/working groups might progress key issues.

IFST welcomes the new CEO Tim McLachlan and recognises the challenges of filling several important vacancies in the Executive team necessary to ensure that the strategic objectives are achieved. IFST will also welcome a new President at the AGM 2023. IFST can celebrate the achievements of the current President and Board Members and Senior team members in particular, but the Board cannot be complacent about the major challenges ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E Maureen S Edmondson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'E' and a long, sweeping underline.

E Maureen S Edmondson  
Independent Assessor  
17th Feb 2023