

FSA Board welcomes progress on modernised surveillance model

On Wednesday, 18 November, the Board received an update on the FSA's modernised surveillance model, from Director of Openness, Digital and Data, Wales & Science, Julie Pierce.

Julie explained how surveillance affects all parts of the organisation from responding to Covid-19 through to preparing for the end of EU Transition. Members heard how the FSA has established a Strategic Surveillance service that harnesses the power of data science to identify emerging food risks before they become risks to public health. This will allow the FSA, and others, to improve approaches to consumer food risks around safety, authenticity and assurance.

The Board discussed data sharing, and how the FSA can improve procedures, whilst protecting itself from attempts to maliciously use the information it publishes. More stakeholders are now not only referring to the FSA information dashboards but are also contributing to them, helping to create a bigger picture.

Chair Heather Hancock said:

"We've seen exciting steps forward in this area. It's already contributing to strengthen our international reputation, our profile, our relationships and our ability to influence. Surveillance is a powerful area of work for us, in terms of protecting the public and helping businesses get it right."

The Board were also updated on how the current sampling system works and how the FSA would like it to develop.

Discussions considered whether the end of the Transition Period would affect the FSA's ability to access labs which process samples, as well as whether the FSA can gain greater access to sampling undertaken by food businesses themselves. In discussing the ability of labs to process samples, members heard that there was a difference between lab capacity and capability, and that it is easier for a lab to multiply the amount of tests that it is doing than to diversify into new ones.

Overall, the Board recognised the amount of progress that has been made in this area, endorsed the future approach to the sampling framework and agreed to the proposals on publication of brand names in FSA sampling surveys where relevant to the purpose.

A full video of the [Board meeting is available to view now](#).