



Corporate Plan
2008/09



FOOD
STANDARDS
AGENCY
SCOTLAND
Buidheann
Inbhe-Bidhe
an Alba

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Foreword



The Food Standards Agency was set up to protect public health as well as address consumers' concerns and needs in relation to what they eat. Because consumers are at the centre of everything we do, one of the most important progress indicators we have is our annual consumer attitudes survey (CAS).

The recently released results of our eighth CAS were encouraging, as they showed an increased confidence among the public in what they eat and in wider food issues.

It also showed a marked increase in people being aware that a healthy diet includes five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and additionally that more people seem to be actually putting this into practice.

While this is all very positive, there is still much to do.

This is particularly important when you consider that, according to the survey, people in Scotland are less likely to cut down on fatty foods in their diet in comparison to people in other parts of the UK; that there was a significant increase in concern about food hygiene in supermarkets, and around half of the respondents from north of the border did not know the difference between 'use by' and 'best before' dates on packaging.

None of our work takes place in isolation and it has to be set within the wider context, particularly taking into account Agency policy across the UK and how we align ourselves with the Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives.

Going forward, we'll continue to ensure that we meet our statutory obligations as an absolute minimum; fulfil our role as an effective and proportionate regulator; protect public health and make it easier for people to make healthier choices and reduce the food risks to consumers.

This corporate plan sets out the activities we're undertaking over the next year and beyond to achieve this. I hope it underlines our commitment to our vision: Safe food and healthy eating for all, as well as supporting the Scottish Government's five strategic pillars and, in particular, that of a Healthier Scotland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George M. Paterson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a horizontal line.

Dr George M Paterson CBE

Director

Food Standards Agency Scotland



1. Safe Food and Healthy Eating for All in Scotland



The Food Standards Agency was launched in April 2000 as a non-Ministerial UK Government department charged with protecting the interests of consumers in relation to food.

Everything the Agency does, through its offices in Aberdeen, Belfast, Cardiff and London, is aligned to the core values of putting the consumer first; being open and accessible, being an independent voice and working at all times towards our vision of “Safe food and healthy eating for all.”

The Scottish arm of the Agency - the Food Standards Agency Scotland - is based in Aberdeen, with 79 staff and a £10.6 million budget for 2008-09.

In Scotland, we continue to work with important partners, including the Scottish Government; local authorities; non-Governmental organisations, such as the Scottish Consumer Council and research bodies; and the food industry, to ensure that regulations and standards are enforced to protect consumers and that information and advice is provided in an open and transparent manner.

Our sphere of influence ranges across the entire food chain, covering issues such as diet, nutrition and food standards as well as food and animal feed hygiene and safety.

We put the interests of the consumer first, and can openly publish our views and advice to Scottish Government Ministers.

This Corporate Plan looks at how we are working to meet specific objectives related to our four strategic aims: food safety; eating for health; choice and effective delivery.

Agency officials in Scotland are accountable, through our UK Chief Executive Tim Smith, to the Food Standards Agency Board, which sets the direction of the organisation. Board Members have a wide range of backgrounds, including specialist expertise in food matters and consumer affairs.

In addition, our Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC) provides independent advice to the Agency from a Scottish perspective. In line with the principles of openness and transparency, the Committee is able to publish its recommendations and develops its substantive advice through its open meetings.

The SFAC Chair, Professor Graeme Millar CBE, and Deputy Chair, Professor William Reilly, also sit on the FSA's UK Board.

FSA Scotland is headed by our Director, Dr George Paterson CBE, with two assistant Directors who lead a staff with a wide range of policy, scientific and enforcement expertise.

**Assistant Director Jim Thomson
(Science, Enforcement and
Business Division)**

Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Branch
Audit Branch
Science Branch
Business Management Unit

**Assistant Director Lydia Wilkie (Policy,
Regulation and Public Affairs Division)**

Strategic Policy and Consumer
Engagement Branch
Food Standards Diet and Nutrition Branch
Animal Food Chain and Novel Foods Branch
Contaminants, Hygiene, Additives and
Shellfish Branch
Communications Branch
SFAC Secretariat

Further information about who to contact on specific issues can be found on

<http://www.food.gov.uk/scotland>

2. Food Safety



Our aim is to ensure food safety across the entire food chain – “from farm to fork” – this includes primary producers, such as farmers; manufacturers; retailers and caterers, as well as consumers. The prime responsibility for ensuring the safety of food and animal feed rests with the businesses that produce, transport, store and sell it.

In Scotland, as with the rest of the UK, we work closely with partners such as the 32 local authorities, 14 local health boards, consumer organisations and of course, food businesses, to help protect the public and ensure fair, proportionate, consistent and effective enforcement. We also directly enforce controls in meat plants through our own agency – the Meat Hygiene Service, which is currently undergoing a significant programme of transformation.

Key achievements in food safety have included the development of the Cook**Safe** manual to help around 18,000 businesses develop food safety management systems based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) procedures, in line with European regulations.

Seventy-five local authority food enforcement officers attended European Commission - approved, Assessment of HACCP principles courses during February and March this year. In addition, around 85 officers have been trained in Primary Production (on-farm) enforcement.

Practical FSA advice was also made available to help food businesses ensure safe food is produced for consumers with food allergies or intolerances. We rolled out allergy awareness training to 250 enforcement officers over 15 events across Scotland.

The Eat Safe Award Scheme, which was launched in Scotland in January 2005 to highlight those businesses demonstrating standards of operation over-and-above legal food hygiene requirements, has reached the 400 outlet milestone and there are many more in the pipeline.

Food Hygiene work with primary schools has continued and the 2007 primary school poster competition attracted 5,200 entries from 241 schools. A further 8,000 pupils participated in the Hygiene, Healthy Eating and Activity in Primary Schools initiative run in partnership with the Scottish Rugby Union and professional football clubs.

We also provided funding for around 10,000 secondary school pupils to receive Elementary Food Hygiene Training.





OBJECTIVE: Reduce foodborne illness further

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Ensure the implementation of a proportionate enforcement regime covering food safety

This includes:

- Consulting on guidance for the enforcement of food hygiene regulations at egg producers
2. Implement local food hygiene initiatives in Scotland to deliver the messages of the Agency's Food Hygiene Campaign

This includes:

- Providing long-term funding to further roll out accredited food hygiene training for secondary school pupils. The goal is to give young people important skills and knowledge in food hygiene which they can not only apply at home but potentially at work
- Further expanding the Hygiene, Healthy Eating and Activity in Primary Schools (HHEAPS) initiative, designed to raise children's awareness of the benefits of good food hygiene, healthy eating and keeping fit. Effective partnerships with Scottish Rugby; Scottish Football Association and Active Schools Co-ordinators will continue and the initiative will be extended into new activities including provision for Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils
- Distributing an information pack for Registered Scottish childminders containing food hygiene and healthy eating publications
- Running a further food hygiene and healthy eating calendar competition for primary school pupils

3. Disseminate the results of research projects that identify the main sources of *Campylobacter* infection in Scotland, and consider why there are geographic and seasonal variations
4. Input into a review of outbreak guidance
5. Publish research looking into the prevalence of pathogenic nematodes in a range of fish species in Scotland and develop practical guidance for fish processors to help detect them
6. Provide guidance to increase awareness of bio-security and relevant food safety issues for Scottish poultry catching teams
7. Seek Scottish stakeholders' input to the European Commission's proposals on marketing and use of animal feed



OBJECTIVE: Deliver proportionate Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) controls, based on the latest scientific knowledge

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Ensure that Scottish circumstances are appropriately taken into account in UK-wide policy development covering effective, enforceable and proportionate controls

This includes:

- Making sure Scottish stakeholders are kept informed about the Agency and MHS' work to deliver, on a step-by-step basis, a more risk-based audit and inspection regime for official controls on certain Specified Risk Material (SRM) in slaughterhouses
 - Consulting on any proposed amendments to the TSE regulations to reflect European legislative changes
 - Keeping stakeholders informed about all TSE matters that are relevant, or potentially relevant, to food safety, including issues arising from the European TSE Roadmap
2. Work with the meat industry, and other stakeholders, to maintain constructive working relationships and ensure their views are considered in policy development

OBJECTIVE: Reduce the risks to consumers from contaminated food

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Work with food enforcers and the industry in Scotland to reduce contamination incidents and ensure appropriate action is taken if they do occur
2. Commission and manage research and surveillance on contaminants in the food chain and implement domestic regulations on contaminants in food in Scotland

This includes:

- Completing a collaborative research project on the potential transfer of radioactivity to food from seaweed grazed by sheep or used as a soil conditioner
- Undertaking research to investigate the levels of environmental contaminants in Scottish marine and freshwater fish
- Inputting into UK policy development and implementing European legislation in Scotland on contaminants in food
- Progressing the de-restriction of farms covered by the post-Chernobyl Food and Environment Protection Act (FEPA) order, in association with the Scottish Government, according to results from monitoring

3. Eating for Health



The Food Standards Agency Scotland shares responsibility for diet and nutrition with the Scottish Government. We want to ensure people have the best available dietary information and nutritional advice to help them make informed choices about what they eat. In particular, this supports the Scottish Government’s vision for “A Healthier Scotland.”

Our most recent Consumer Attitudes Survey encouragingly showed more people reporting eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, but we are still eating too much fat and the survey showed that people in Scotland, compared with the rest of the UK, were least likely to reduce their fatty food intake.

We have successfully engaged with the food industry, to reduce salt in food products and a further review of our salt targets in 2008 should encourage more industry reductions. Front-of-pack labelling is now common on products, helping Scottish consumers to make healthier choices when they shop.

Good healthy eating habits should be established early. That is why the FSA in Scotland has been a key partner in the development of nutritional requirements for schools as part of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition)(Scotland) Act 2007. We have been inputting into the new Curriculum for Excellence, the programme of work reviewing the Scottish school curriculum, so that youngsters will be aware, from an early age, of what a healthy balanced diet looks like.





3.

OBJECTIVE: To enable consumers to choose a healthier diet and help reduce diet-related diseases

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Take forward our UK-wide strategic plan targets in Scotland to change people's diets through working with industry to reduce salt, saturated fat and sugar in food products, providing consumer information and advice on a healthy balanced diet, and helping promote cooking skills. We will achieve this by working in partnership with consumers, industry and other Government and non-Government partners

This includes:

- Maintaining and developing strategic links with the Scottish Government, agencies and stakeholders, to help deliver targets such as improving access to healthy food and providing information on a healthy balanced diet
- Working with the Scottish Government to help improve Scotland's diet by providing effective support and expert nutrition advice to ensure consistent key messages on healthy eating
- Supporting and advising the Scottish Government to help develop and deliver food policies
- Delivering a campaign in 2009 to reduce saturated fat intakes in Scotland's diet

- Continuing to encourage the Scottish food industry to reformulate its products to reduce salt, saturated fat and sugar in food products
- Supporting and providing nutrition advice to the **healthyliving award** in Scotland to encourage healthier catering
- Promoting consumer information on salt reduction and front of pack labelling for Scotland
- Promoting the "Eatwell Plate" model across Scotland to show consumers what makes a healthy balanced diet

2. Deliver an agreed programme of education initiatives in conjunction with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other organisations, focused on children, young adults and disadvantaged groups by 2010. These include an educational resource aimed at 3-12 year olds and attending events, including the Scottish Science Discovery Day; Scottish Health and Wellbeing Conference; Scottish Learning Festival, and sponsor the University of Glasgow 10th Annual Food and Health Conference
3. Provide input and assistance in the development of the food and health section of the "Curriculum of Excellence" and work with Scottish Qualifications Authority to update current Home Economics qualifications



4. Work in partnership with the Scottish Government to review progress made towards the Scottish Dietary Goals, using existing data from the Expenditure and Foods Survey and the Scottish Health Survey
5. Publish research into the selenium content of locally produced Scottish foods – this will help inform the Scottish Government's local food and sustainability policies
6. Lead Scottish input into UK work on improving folate intakes in women of child-bearing age – this includes working closely with partners such as the Scottish Government and NHS Health Scotland, as well as the Agency UK-wide



3.

OBJECTIVE: Support Scottish Government and other relevant departments in establishing and periodically surveying standards for providing healthy meals in public sector institutions and to support their work to encourage adoption of the whole school approach to food hygiene, diet and nutrition and food choice

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Continue to be a main partner in the development and implementation of nutritional regulations for the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. This includes providing nutritional expertise to the Scottish Government
2. Work with the Scottish Government in partnership and support the achievement of the **healthyliving award** within hospital canteens and other public sector workplaces



4. Choice



The cornerstone of how the Food Standards Agency operates is its commitment to giving consumers accurate, independent, proportionate and science-based information to help them make informed choices.

As part of this commitment, the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) was launched in November 2006 and has expanded over the last 12 months to include over 3,100 businesses. The voluntary scheme provides consumers with information about the results of local authority food hygiene inspections.

OBJECTIVE: To enable consumers to make informed choices

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Build on FHIS work and consult on proposals for a UK-wide scheme to give consumers accessible information about food businesses and consult with local authorities and consumer organisations on implementation and operation
2. Continue to ensure information produced by the FSA Scotland to help consumers make informed choices is independent, accurate, clear, evidence-based and proportionate
3. Continue to run and promote the Eat Safe Award Scheme and communicate changes to the scheme effectively to stakeholders, such as local authorities and award holders, as well as to the general public
4. Hold six Citizens' Forums annually in Scotland until 2010 and three consumer engagement events each year with the "seldom heard" group to develop ongoing dialogue with consumers, providing feedback to Agency Directors and to our Board
5. Establish constructive links with communities and other Scottish Government and non-Government organisations to utilise existing networks and share good practice to further develop consumer engagement
6. Keep people fully informed about developments in relation to Genetically Modified (GM) food and feed, and ensure that Scottish views are taken into account in policy development





OBJECTIVE: We will press for simplification of existing EC food labelling legislation within the European labelling review and encourage an approach that delivers clear labelling and information for the consumer

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Work with the Scottish Government to ensure clear food labelling for Scottish consumers as part of the European proposal for a new food information regulation
2. Continue to promote the Agency's front of pack labelling scheme in Scotland to Government, industry and consumers
3. Seek Scottish stakeholders' views on European proposals to review Novel Foods Legislation
4. Encourage voluntary action by UK manufacturers to remove certain artificial colours by 2009, with parallel action in Europe to phase them out over a specified period. This action should focus on six colours, namely sunset yellow (E110), quinoline yellow (E104), carmoisine (E122), allura red (E129), tartrazine (E102) and ponceau 4R (E124)



5. Effective Delivery

The Food Standards Agency Scotland strives to be economic, efficient and effective in the discharge of our responsibilities as a non-Ministerial Government department and an independent regulator.

We are committed in Scotland to delivering sustainably through partnership and consultation.

OBJECTIVE: To be an effective and proportionate regulator, intervening to protect consumers and their interests where the benefits justify action

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Implement European regulations, standards and controls into Scottish legislation in a timely, appropriate and proportionate manner
2. Implement changes to the local authority enforcement regime aimed at improving effectiveness, efficiency and consistency of regulation
3. Work with local authorities to identify where consistent standards should be set, particularly in their internal processes, to ensure consistent, fit-for-purpose food law enforcement across the board
4. Implement the primary production enforcement regime and roll out on-farm inspections throughout 2008
5. Provide scientific advice, including commissioning research and surveillance, as necessary, to ensure FSA Scotland policies and practices have a sound scientific evidence base
6. Continue to roll out 'sanitary surveys' of classified shellfish harvesting areas to better inform the classification process. This work will also help provide an evidence basis for future sampling plans
7. Enshrine sustainability in policy development in Scotland

8. Monitor the performance of local authority food and feed law enforcement services under the framework agreement on local authority food law enforcement following the completion of core audits, this includes ensuring implementation of action plans. In addition developing a comprehensive audit strategy for all food and feed law enforcement activities





OBJECTIVE: To deliver effective action on risks to public health and consumers' other interests in relation to food through better working with our partners in the enforcement and business communities and in the voluntary sector

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Continue to respond to food incidents in a timely and proportionate manner working closely with local authorities – this includes distributing information via the media and other organisations
2. Continue to classify and list shellfish harvesting areas according to the degree of E.coli contamination in flesh samples, as directed under European law
3. Continue to review the effectiveness of our incident response procedures; specifically by participating in emergency exercises and implementing lessons learnt as well as reviewing and modifying protocols
4. Work closely with the transformed Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) and stakeholders to help ensure a smooth transition in Scotland to the new operational structure for delivering official controls in meat plants
5. Work closely with the Scottish Government and others to ensure a joined-up approach to assessing the impacts of proposals for new MHS charging arrangements and in considering wider affordability for the meat and livestock sectors, and others that may be affected by the proposals

OBJECTIVE: To ensure that the FSA meets its various statutory obligations and fulfils its role as a UK Government Department, being economic, efficient and effective in doing so

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Ensure we operate to the required standards of corporate governance, with particular emphasis on financial management
2. Ensure the Agency's Better Regulation agenda meets the requirements of Scottish Government Ministers
3. Review policies following implementation to ensure they meet high standards of effectiveness and efficiency
4. Help to develop and implement a charging policy for official controls on meat, in line with European law and in accordance with our Board's direction

OBJECTIVE: We will continue to be an open and evidence-based organisation using our independent voice to deliver consumer protection

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Continue to provide support to our Scottish Food Advisory Committee ensuring it meets its obligations and objectives, including holding six open meetings a year in keeping with the Agency's policy of openness and transparency
2. Continue to consult widely with appropriate stakeholders on areas of key policy development

5.



OBJECTIVE: To be the most used and most trusted source of advice on food safety and information about food and nutrition

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Continue to provide authoritative advice and information in response to relevant inquiries within 20 working days
2. Continue to provide advice and briefing for Scottish Government Ministers
3. Work closely with the Scottish media to provide accurate, proportionate information within print or broadcast deadlines that is relevant to consumers and other stakeholders
4. Roll out the annual events plan to raise awareness of the Agency and our activities among consumers. This includes exhibiting at major events, such as the Royal Highland Show and Taste of Grampian in 2008, as well as continuing to develop and run three successful Recipe for Success roadshows throughout the year
5. Further develop our voluntary, and statutory when appropriate, Gaelic plan under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

OBJECTIVE: To be a good employer, making the best use of our diverse talent and delivery. A safe, secure, compliant and sustainable working environment for staff, contractors and visitors

The Food Standards Agency Scotland will:

1. Ensure that all new and existing staff acquire and retain the necessary skills and knowledge to perform effectively and have personal objectives in place linking their day-to-day work with the objectives set out in the FSA Strategic Plan
2. Raise awareness of the Agency's diversity strategy among our staff and exemplify the values we promote



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