

FSA and Official Controls: FSA’s response to the EU exit and other events

This area of the study was added in 2022 so there are no comparisons to the previous wave of research.

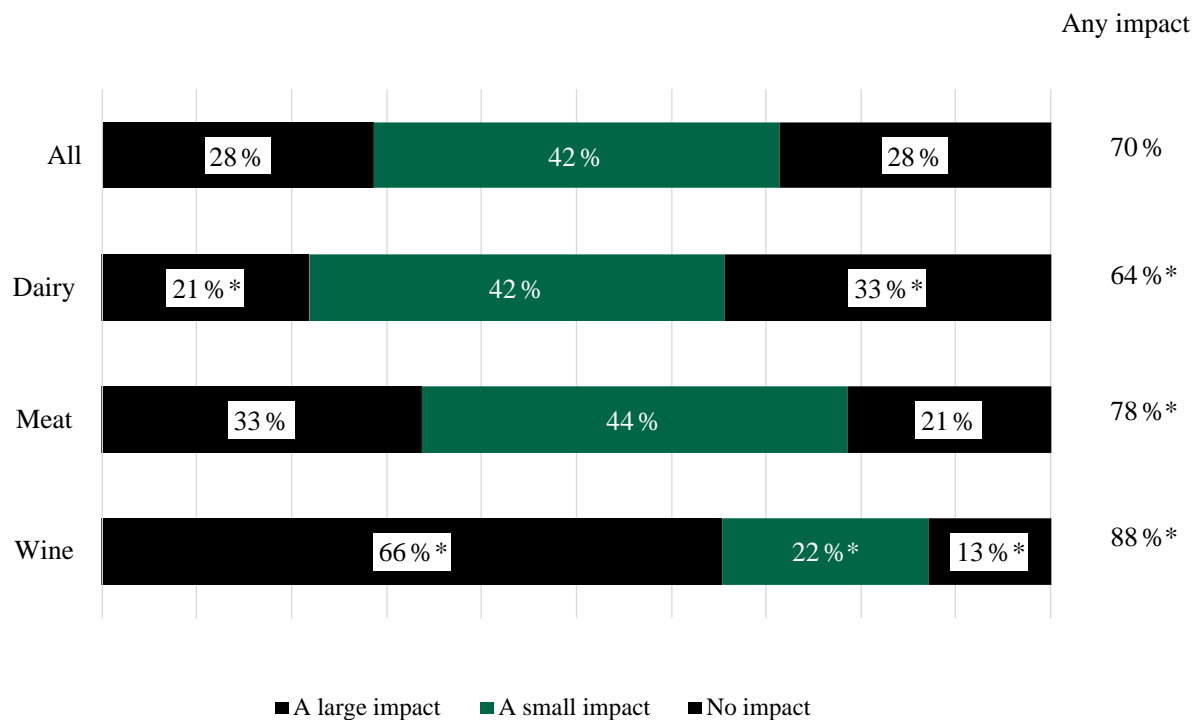
Impact of UK's exit from the EU on FBOs

The majority of FBOs (70%) felt the UK’s exit from the EU had some level of impact on their business; 28% considered this to be a large impact. Just under three in ten (28%) said it had no impact and a very small proportion said they did not know (2%).

As shown in Figure 9.1, FBOs in the wine sector were most likely impacted by the EU exit compared to meat and dairy. Just under nine in ten (88%) experienced some level of impact, compared to 78% in the meat sector and 64% in the dairy sector. Wine FBOs were also twice as likely to experience a large impact (66%, compared to 33% for meat and 21% for dairy).

There were few differences by country or other sub groups of interest.

Figure 9.1 Impact of EU Exit on FBOs



F1. What level of impact, if any, has the UK’s exit from the EU had for your business? Base: All businesses (400); Dairy (264), Meat (99), Wine (32). ‘*’ indicates a significant difference from all other sectors. Don’t know figures have not been presented in the chart

Qualitative interviews explored in more detail how the UK's exit from the EU impacted FBOs' business. On the whole, businesses typically felt negatively affected by the UK's exit from the EU, although there were a handful of positive reflections.

For some, these issues were exacerbated by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"It made life a whole lot more painful - logistical, legislative, costs - transport costs... If it wasn't COVID, it was Brexit and vice versa." (Wine, England)

Recruitment was a common issue across sectors, both in anticipation of and subsequent to the UK's exit from the EU. FBOs mentioned staff leaving because they thought they might not be able to stay in the UK and there being a labour supply shortage as well.

"We rely quite largely on a Romanian workforce and we haven't as yet failed to get someone, as we have been able to bring someone from other places in the country. Going forwards this may be an area that could be a problem." (Dairy, England)

Paperwork was also a commonly cited issue. FBOs either felt the burden they faced here had not reduced despite expectations that the UK's exit from the EU would contribute to less 'red tape', while some felt the burden had increased as a result of complications in exporting and importing.

"Obviously more paperwork because when you are moving anything out of the borders... prior to Brexit you didn't have to have paperwork to move things to Ireland ... it is another person's job and learning about all this new legislation and what you are supposed to be doing... that makes a difference as well." (Meat, England)

Increased complications relating to customs and costings was also mentioned.

"Increased costs of everything, that is the main issue. The cost of production has gone up ... we're lucky, our milk is sold mainly to make cheese in the UK." (Dairy, Wales)

"There was another part for a machine and it was stuck in a port because they couldn't get clearance because of the paperwork. It's taking longer to get things into the country." (Dairy, England)

That said, a number of businesses mentioned either no impact or even positive benefits to the UK's exit. One FBO reported that their business was in fact created as a result of the EU exit and changes in legislation. A dairy farmer in Wales mentioned because milk prices had doubled it was good for this business.

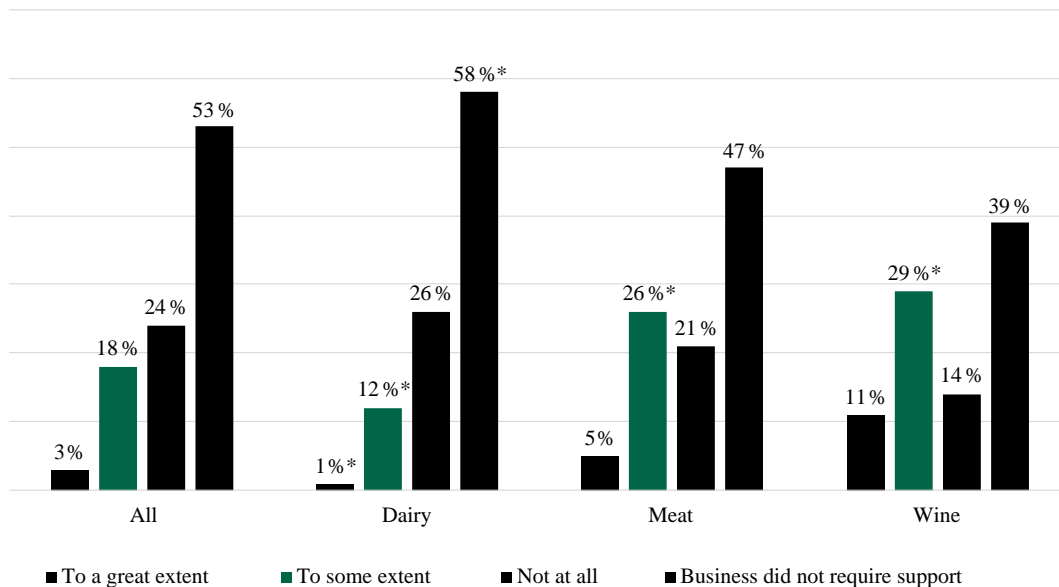
Extent to which FBOs felt supported during the UK's exit from the EU

FBOs who said the EU exit had at least some impact on their business were asked to what extent they felt supported by the FSA during this time. Just over half (53%) of those FBOs said their business did not require any support during this time, a finding that was relatively consistent across sectors.

One in five FBOs (21%) said they felt supported to at least some extent (with 3% reporting feeling supported to a 'great' extent), while 24% did not feel supported at all.

As shown in Figure 9.2, FBOs in the meat sector were much more likely to feel supported at least to some extent compared to the dairy sector (31% compared to 13%).

Figure 9.2 Extent to which FBOs felt supported during the UK's exit from the EU



F2. To what extent do you feel that the FSA supported your organisation during the UK's exit from the EU?

Base: All EU exit has had impact (Overall: 278; Dairy: 168; Meat: 77; Wine: 28). *Indicates significant difference from all UK's 2022. Don't know figures have not been presented in the chart but at an overall level were 3% (8).

FBOs whose overall experience of the FSA was 'good' were more likely than FBOs whose overall experience was 'average' to say they felt supported to at least some extent (26% compared to 7%). Otherwise, there were few differences by other sub groups of interest.

Qualitative interviews generally tended to report minimal input or support from the FSA during the UK's exit from the EU. The size of the business was mentioned to be relevant by a small dairy farmer, who felt the FSA's support and communication tended to be based on the experiences of large businesses rather than smaller ones.

"[The FSA provided] No support at all with employment, language barriers and visa applications. They only deal with food safety." (Meat, England)

However, one FBO said they found the FSA's communications clear and helpful when interpreting timings around pivotal changes.

Impact of the FSA's response to the UK's exit from the EU on views of the FSA

FBOs who said the UK's exit from the EU had at least some impact on their business were then asked whether the FSA's response impacted their views of the FSA. The vast majority (83%) of FBOs said their views had not changed. Only six per cent of FBOs' views improved and eight per cent got worse. There was little difference by subgroups of interest.

Most commonly, FBOs whose views of the FSA got worse as a result of the EU exit reflected that the information, guidance and advice provided over this period was unclear.

"I don't feel that the communication between the different bodies is effective regarding the requirements so I don't know if they were all aligned. I don't know if everyone received the same training." (Meat, Northern Ireland)

Other events since 202 that impacted FBOs views and interactions with the FSA

All FBOs were asked what other events since 2020 had impacted their views and interactions with the FSA. Nearly all (96%) said that there were no events that impacted their view. Avian influenza, the Ukraine-Russia conflict and rising costs were mentioned by a handful of FBOs as issues or events that were affecting them.

Qualitative interviews revealed that FBOs felt they had been impacted by the Ukraine-Russia war more than initially suggested. There was a general sense that more recently the war had increased costs of feed, fertiliser and fuel.

"It hasn't really impacted us [talking about the UK exit from the EU]... the Ukrainian war has impacted more ... fertilizer and feed prices are going up, but this hasn't affected our sales or anything ... [increases after UK exit from the EU] were so minimal I didn't even notice." (Dairy, England)