

Appendix F: FBO topic guide

RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) has been commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) to undertake an independent evaluation of the food recalls and withdrawals system. Specifically, the evaluation will look at how effective the processes involved in developing the current system have been, and the efficacy of the package developed, as well as the effectiveness of its implementation.

My name is [Name of interviewer], and I am an evaluator from the RSM research team. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

As part of this evaluation, we are interviewing food businesses with recent experience of recalls/withdrawals to share their experiences for case studies. The interview will cover:

- your recent experience
- your feedback on the current system and package
- communications with consumers
- future planning
- any other recommendations you might have

This discussion should take 45 to 60 minutes via MS Teams.[Informed consent taken – check participant understands how their data will be processed and check if they have any questions. Gain explicit consent for audio recording of interview. Confirm confidentiality – for example, Are they happy for their company name to be used in a case study].

Introduction

1. Please can you describe your business, and your role within this business? (prompt: products manufactured, number of employees, location)

Experience of the recent product recall/withdrawal

2. Please can you describe what happened during the (INSERT NAME) incident?

- how did you notify consumers?

3. Did you undertake a Root Cause Analysis?

- do you think you were successful in finding a cause?
- did you get any feedback or input from the LA or the FSA on any Root cause carried out?
- did you share these findings with anyone else including the FSA (for example, with your sector representative body?)

4. During this incident, which agencies did you engage with? (for example, FSA/FSS, local authority, port authority, industry representatives)

- what role did they play?
- did the FSA/FSS or enforcement agencies share best practice examples for completing processes and paperwork for recalls and withdrawals? Was this helpful?
- how well did they carry these out responsibilities?

- to what extent did you feel supported by the FSA/FSS during this period?
- looking back, is there anything that they could have done differently?

5. Was the guidance/ advice issued to you clear/ appropriate about where and how the notifications should be displayed (in store and online) or other actions that needed to be taken?

6. To what extent did you feel that all parties involved (for example, yourselves, FSA/FSS, local authority) were clear on their responsibilities during the recall/withdrawal?

- is there anything else that could be done to make these responsibilities clearer?

Feedback on the current product recall and withdrawal system

7. Did you use the FSA/FSS guidance and materials for recalls and withdrawals during the incident? This includes guidance documents, example contact templates for notifying consumers and other businesses and root cause analysis documents.

- was this easy to access?
- how useful did you find these during your incident?
- were there any parts that were particularly useful, and why?
- (if used templates) did these meet your needs? (for example, were they comprehensive/ too complicated/ easy or difficult to complete/ missing sections for collating key information)?
- (if used RCA e-learning training) If yes, was it useful? If no, why?
- what impacts did this guidance and materials have?

8. To what extent (on a scale of one to ten) has the guidance and materials improved:

- timeliness of notices
- consistency of information
- targeting of consumers

9. Were you aware that these materials were available prior to the incident?

- if not, how could the FSA/FSS increase awareness of these within your industry?

10. Was the content and style of communications and guidance/ tools appropriate?

11. If the guidance and materials hadn't been available, would you have handled the recall in a different manner? Would you use the guidance and materials if you ever had another recalls incident in future?

12. What benefits do you think the recalls and withdrawals system will have for your wider industry? (prompt, sharing of good practice, continuous improvement)

13. Based on your experience, are there any improvements you could suggest for the current product recall system?

14. Were there any unintended outcomes of this process?

Consumers and communications

15. To what extent do you think consumers are aware of what to do during the recalls process?

- has this awareness increased following the introduction of the current system?
- is information about recalls accessible to the public?
- did you have any returns of your product following the recall?

16. What do you think is the best way to alert consumers about product recalls (for example, social media, notices in stores, newspaper advertisements, FSA text alerts to subscribers, FSA website)?

- why do you say that?
- does the current FSA/FSS guidance and templates take into account social media?

17. In your mind, what does best practice look like in terms of alerting consumers to food recalls?

- what could be done to ensure that best practice is shared within the industry?

• Experience of the previous product recall system

18. Before the current system was introduced in 2019, have you ever had a previous recall or withdraw a product?

19. How does the current system compare with the previous recall system? (for example, clarity of roles, support provided, speed of issuing a recall notice etc)

- to what extent would you say that the current system is an improvement?

Planning for food safety incidents

20. Did the incident lead to any changes in your processes, risk management or compliance?

21. Have you used any of the guidance and template/ tools available on the FSA/ FSS websites to support you in planning for managing food safety incidents?

22. Did you have any concerns following the food safety incident and did the FSA/FSS or enforcement agencies help address these at all? If so, how?

Any other comments

23. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

Thank and close (plus check if email address best way to send e-voucher).