

# Consumer views of potential regulatory divergence in the meat sector: Appendix 2

## Focus group discussion guide

Note: this discussion guide is intended to inform the discussion in each workshop. Questions may not be asked in the order below, and not every question will be asked in each workshop.

### Key:

- CAPITALISED = instructions for moderators
- **Bold lower case** = key questions
- Non-bold lower case = follow up questions and prompts

Section	Timings	Questions and exercises	Objectives covered
Arrival (before start)	15-20 mins	Participants enter the 'zoom room' and any that have not already done so are asked to change their screen name to first name and initial of their surname and check their microphone and video are working	-

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<p>Section 1: Introductions and warm-up</p>	<p>5 mins</p> <p>6:05</p>	<p>SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDES 1-5 <b>Introduction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank participants for taking part.</li> <li>• Introduce self and Ipsos, any observers, tech support and note-takers.</li> <li>• The discussion will last two hours and we'll have a short break part way through.</li> </ul> <p>Explain purpose of the discussion: This research is being carried out on behalf of the Food Standards Agency. The FSA are looking at the way the food industry currently regulated and thinking about ways in which this could change in the future. They have asked us to run this research as they are interested in gaining <b>a better understanding of public views on proposed changes to the meat industry.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talk through the ground rules/ housekeeping [SLIDES 3 and 4]</li> <li>• we will be audio-recording this discussion in line with the MRS Code of Conduct. The recording will be stored on our secure servers and no one outside of the research team will have access to this.</li> <li>• following these groups, we will be writing up our findings into a report for the FSA, and these will be published. However, no findings will be attributed to you, and we will not include your name in any reports.</li> <li>• any questions?</li> <li>• can I check you are all happy to take part in this research?</li> <li>• check if participants are happy for the discussion to be audio-recorded in line with the MRS Code of Conduct and that all recordings will be saved securely and securely deleted following the completion of the research project.</li> </ul> <p>Ask if everyone is happy for the recording to begin <b>TURN ON RECORDING</b> and <b>record consent that everyone is happy to participate in the workshop, that they understand the aims of the research, that their participation is voluntary and that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous.</b></p> <p><b>WHEN INTRODUCING OBSERVERS, PLEASE SPECIFY:</b> We're also joined tonight by observers from the Food Standards Agency, but please rest assured they don't have any other information about you, other than what can be seen on the screen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduce participants to the research</li> <li>• introduce moderators, observers and note-takers</li> <li>• clarify audio recording</li> <li>• collect informed consent for participation</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Section 2.</b> Introductions and gaining level of awareness of the FSA</p>	<p><b>15 mins</b> <b>-6:20</b></p>	<p>SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 5 <b>Introductions around the group.</b> <b>Please tell us:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your first name</li> <li>• where you're from</li> <li>• what's your favourite meal to eat, or cook at the moment</li> </ul> <p><b>We want to start by talking a bit about the Food Standards Agency and what you think it is that they do/what they are responsible for. As a reminder, this is not a test, we are just interested in hearing about your awareness of the FSA.</b></p> <p>SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 6</p> <p><b>What initially comes to mind when you hear "the Food Standards Agency"?</b> How many of you have heard of this organisation before?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what kinds of things do you think the FSA does?</li> <li>• what do you think they are responsible for?</li> <li>• <b>what does this look like in practice?</b></li> <li>• where do you think they operate/enforce standards (for example, what kind of businesses)?</li> <li>• is there anything else you think the FSA does?</li> </ul> <p><b>Do you think anyone else is responsible for regulating the safety of food?</b> What do you think they do? <b>What do you think happens to make sure the food you buy in the shops is safe to eat?</b></p> <p><b>Do you think there are any differences in the way that different foods are regulated?</b> For example, meat versus vegetables?</p> <p>SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 7 – Overview of role of the FSA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how much of this information is familiar to you? Any surprises?</li> <li>• do you have any questions about the FSA's role?</li> </ul> <p><b>What do you think about the FSA and their role as a regulator, now that you know a little more?</b></p>	<p>Ice-breaker exercise to get participants to know each other and build discussion dynamic.</p> <p>Gauge awareness levels of regulation in the food industry and the FSA's role in this</p>



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<p><b>Section 3.</b></p> <p>Introducing the concept of regulatory divergence and exploring examples of this in practice</p>	<p>20 mins-</p>	<p>SHOW SLIDE 10</p> <p>As you may know, the UK left the European Union in January 2020. Following this, the FSA is interested in exploring the potential opportunities the UK now has to change and modernise how food is regulated.</p> <p><b>This could mean different regulations apply in different parts of the UK. This could be because Northern Ireland will continue to follow EU regulations, while England, Wales and Scotland will follow UK regulation. Or it could be because England, Wales and Scotland do not make the same changes as each other.</b></p> <p>Currently, most UK regulations are the same as EU regulations. However, this could change in the future if the EU made changes to their regulations, or the UK changes our current regulation. This is known as 'regulatory divergence'. This could mean that some food businesses need to comply with both UK and EU regulations, depending on which market they are producing for, because the requirements are different. This could be expensive for businesses, as it could mean they need to run two production lines to meet different rules for EU exports and supply of the UK market. In this scenario all products in UK shops will all be produced to UK regulations.</p> <p><b>One alternative is that food businesses could be allowed to choose to comply with either UK or EU regulation for the UK market when these regulations are different. This would mean they could still sell their products in the UK by complying with EU regulations that could be different from those in the UK. In this scenario, two products that appear to be identical in a UK shop could be sold, even though they have been manufactured to different regulations.</b></p> <p>The FSA wants to explore consumer attitudes towards these potential changes to regulation and what it would mean for food businesses and consumers.</p> <p>What do you think of the information you've just heard? Do you have any questions? Is anything unclear?</p> <p>What do you think about the idea that food businesses could decide which legislation to comply with? Do you think there could be any positives to this? What about downsides?</p> <p>What do you think about the idea that regulations could be different across each of the four nations in the UK? Do you think there could be any positives to this? What about downsides?</p> <p>What do you think this could mean to consumers? Do you have any concerns? How do you think this might affect you? Could it change what you consider when buying meat?</p> <p>INTRODUCE EXAMPLES: We have developed some hypothetical examples of what regulatory divergence could look like in the future, with regards to meat products.</p> <p>SHOW SLIDE 11</p> <p>Example 1. Jameson's, a UK food business, has sold meat to the EU and UK markets for the last fifty years. Following changes to UK regulations in the meat industry, Jameson's decides to continue to produce meat which adheres to EU regulations, rather than produce products which adhere to both regulations.</p> <p>This means that, in some cases, the meat they produce may not comply with the revised UK regulations but can still be sold in the UK.</p> <p>Their meat products are sold across the UK, using the same packaging they've always used. They do not look any different to other meat products being sold in line with the revised UK regulations.</p>	<p>Introducing regulator divergence to participants and gathering initial views on this.</p> <p>Exploring hypothetical example of what proposed changes to regulations could look like in practice</p>

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Break	7:pm 10 mins	SLIDE 12	-

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	7:10-7:40 30min	<p><b>SHOW SLIDE 13</b></p> <p><b>Example 2. Under the new regulations, one of the main areas another food business, Gregory's Meat, makes changes to is their approach to disinfecting tools which are used to prepare meat safely. The water for disinfecting tools must be supplied at no less than 82oC . However, research is commissioned and demonstrates that equivalent results are achieved using water at 72oC. The FSA accepts the research and amends their legislation to permit the lower temperature to be used in England and Wales. Due to regulatory divergence, two steaks could appear next to each other on the shelves, one prepared at a facility disinfecting with water temperatures of 82C and the other at 72C.</b></p> <p>What do you think about this scenario? Do you have any immediate concerns?</p> <p>What could this mean for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consumers?</li> <li>• food businesses?</li> <li>• retailers?</li> </ul> <p>How would you feel about some businesses using water at a lower temperature to disinfect tools, compared to others? What might be the benefits? What concerns do you have?</p> <p>How would you feel about the change in regulations only applying to England and Wales (and not Northern Ireland)? What might be the benefits? What concerns do you have?</p> <p>Would you want this to be communicated to consumers? If so, in what way?</p> <p>Would this affect your decision-making in any way when purchasing meat? Why/why not?</p> <p>To what extent would you trust that food adhering to these revised standards was safe to eat?</p> <p><b>How would you feel about two meat products that are packaged the same being available for purchase, but they have been prepared on production lines using different water temperatures?</b></p>	
7.25		<p><b>SHOW SLIDE 14</b></p> <p><b>Example 3. Currently under retained EU regulations, Official Veterinarians should be physically present at abattoirs at all times to ensure no animal welfare breaches are made.</b></p> <p>Potential changes in the future could involve a greater use of artificial intelligence to assist with remote welfare monitoring for animals, or training staff within the meat processing plants to report and investigate breaches to animal welfare. This would be instead of Official Veterinarians carrying out inspections of animals to check for any injuries or cause of death.</p> <p>In both of these scenarios, animal welfare standards would remain unchanged, but the staff responsible, or way in which monitoring standards is delivered could be different from the current regulations.</p> <p>What do you think about this scenario? Do you have any immediate concerns?</p> <p>What could this mean for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consumers?</li> <li>• food businesses?</li> <li>• retailers?</li> </ul> <p>[FOR MODERATORS IF NEEDED: benefits of this could include freeing up the time of Official Veterinarians to concentrate on higher risk businesses or tasks.]</p> <p>How would you feel about the introduction of more artificial intelligence or technology to ensure welfare standards are monitored and met?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what might be the benefits?</li> <li>• what are some do you have?</li> </ul>	Continuing to explore hypothetical example of what proposed changes to regulations could look like in practice

Section	Timings	Questions and exercises	Objectives covered
Wrapping up and reflections	7:40 -7:55 15mins	<p>IF NOT ALREADY COVERED: How important is it that consumers are told about the change in regulations? How should consumers be told about this? Who do you think should be providing this information?</p> <p>Overall, what do you think any proposed changes to regulation might mean for: The FSA? Are there any additional controls/resources/admin which you think the FSA will need, should they progress with these proposed plans?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food businesses?</li> <li>• consumers?</li> </ul> <p>Moderator to go round group and ask individually if participants are struggling at section</p> <p>What would you say would be the ONE main benefit of potentially diverting from retained EU regulation?</p> <p>What would you say would be the ONE key risk or challenge of potentially diverting from retained EU regulation, if any?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who may be most affected here?</li> <li>• what concerns do you have?</li> <li>• do you have any concerns with regards to food safety?</li> <li>• do you have any concerns with regards to animal welfare?</li> <li>• are there any other risks you can think of?</li> </ul> <p>What do you now think about the idea that regulations could be different across each of the four nations in the UK? Do you think there could be any positives to this? What about downsides?</p> <p>What is the ONE thing you would want to be in place to reassure you that meat produced under different regulations is safe to eat? What would these assurances or limits look like in practice? Who would be best place to communicate this?</p> <p>What would you want the FSA to prioritise as they develop their plans?</p> <p><b>Do you have any final thoughts for the FSA? Moderator to decide if would work best to go round group individually here</b></p> <p><b>Do you have any questions about what we've discussed today?</b></p>	Summarise discussions and provide a chance to reflect.
Section 4: Final reflections	5 mins	<p><b>MODERATOR TO SHARE SIGNPOSTING SLIDE ON SCREEN SHOW SLIDE 15</b></p> <p>If anyone has any questions about food safety at home, you can contact these places. I'm going to leave this slide up, so you can take a note of their names and contact details if of interest. Please let me know if you would like me to send you a copy of this.</p> <p>THANK AND CLOSE</p>	Thank participants for time and signpost to relevant organisations