

Climate Adaptation Report: introduction

The Food Standards Agency

The [Food Standards Agency](#) (FSA) is an independent, non-ministerial department established in 2000 following several high-profile outbreaks of foodborne illness and the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis. The FSA operates across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and works closely with Food Standards Scotland (FSS). Its main objectives in law are to protect public health from risks arising from the consumption of food, and to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.

The FSA works to drive change in the food system, so better outcomes are delivered for consumers. It encourages transparency and openness, making it easier for businesses to do the right thing and ensuring compliance with high food standards to protect public health.

In 2022, the organisational strategy, "[Food you can trust](#)" was published, spanning the period 2022 to 2027. The strategy describes the FSA's vision for:

- Food that is safe;
- Food that is what it says it is; and
- Food that is healthier and more sustainable.

Direct policy responsibility relating to health and sustainability in the food system is largely held by other government departments. The FSA's strategic ambition to "grow its contribution to food that is more sustainable" recognises this and so prioritises working collaboratively with others to achieve this vision.

Climate adaptation in the food system

Climate change is a key risk to the UK food system. The UN estimates that the [food system contributes more than one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions](#). Climate change also impacts the food system. Current observations indicate that the rate of climate change is much faster than in recent history, and that its impacts will steadily increase over at least the next ten years.

The UK's agri-food sector contributed £146.7bn to national Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2022, employed 13% of British workers and accounted for £246bn in consumer spending in 2023¹. The food system is wide and encompasses a range of actors and their interconnected activities. These include production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal. The impact of climate change is particularly challenging for the food system due to its complexity. Climate change represents a whole system challenge and must be tackled via a whole system response. There is no organisation with sole responsibility for adapting the food system to climate change.

However, as a regulator, the FSA is well-placed to play a part in supporting and enabling the response.

FSA contribution to UK Government climate initiatives

Under the Climate Change Act 2008, every five years a UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is undertaken. Through the most recent risk assessment, conducted in 2022, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) identified an information gap in relation to the food system. As a key public organisation in this space, the FSA was invited by Defra to publish a Climate Adaptation Report in 2024, to inform the next national risk assessment.

The FSA is therefore publishing this Climate Adaptation Report to help support the work of the CCC. The CCC can then consider how best to use the information in this report to inform the next risk Climate Change Risk Assessment to support delivery of the system-wide changes needed.

In addition to publishing this report, the FSA contributes to the National Adaptation Programme (NAP) in England and the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP). NAP and NICCAP address the risks identified through the national Climate Change Risk Assessment, with specific departments and bodies responsible for taking relevant actions. The FSA owns several actions under [NAP](#) and [NICCAP](#), and progress is reported regularly.