

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for food safety across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The FSA is looking at modernising the way it's currently delivering the Official Controls in the meat, dairy and wine sectors. The Future Delivery Model (FDM) consists of a series of changes to the Official Controls process aimed at implementing a more tailored, risk-based approach to regulation.

The FSA commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct qualitative research to explore and capture consumer views on the proposed FDM. The findings of this research will be used alongside the findings from the FSA's public consultation and wider stakeholder activities to support the development of the FDM. The main objectives of this research were to:

- explore the extent to which consumers understand the current regulatory role of the FSA
- outline the main proposed aspirations that are contained in the FDM and explain the case for change
- establish the level of support for the FDM and the proposed aspirations
- invite an opportunity to provide feedback on the FDM proposals

1.2 Methodology

Our approach involved a series of seven reconvened online workshops conducted between the 12th and the 22nd of July, each lasting two hours. Participants took part in an initial set of workshops in w/c 12th July, and then returned to take part in a second workshop in w/c 19th July. The same participants took part in both workshops, approximately seven days apart. This methodology allowed us to spend more time with participants to develop informed views and provide them with an opportunity to reflect between the sessions.

Sample

We recruited 84 members of the public from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a total of 77 participants attending both workshops. Table 1 provides further detail about the sessions.

Table 1: Workshop schedule and total number of participants

Location	Initial workshop	Reconvened workshop	Number of participants
England	Monday 12 July 2021	Monday 19 July 2021	11

Location	Initial workshop	Reconvened workshop	Number of participants
England	Tuesday 13 July 2021	Tuesday 20 July 2021	22
Northern Ireland	Thursday 15 July 2021	Wednesday 21 July 2021	23
Wales	Saturday 17 July 2021	Thursday 22 July 2021	21

* The total number of participants at the end of the reconvened workshops

Quotas were set on age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic group (SEG) and the number of children in the household to ensure discussions benefited from a diverse range of views and experiences. Additional quotas were set on education, urban/rural areas and each group also had a mix of meat and non-meat eaters. A full sample breakdown is provided in Appendix 1.

Session design

The first workshop explored awareness of the FSA and their role as a regulator. Participants discussed how the meat industry is currently regulated, explored the 'farm to fork' journey, and introduced the Official Controls process. We then shared the proposed FDM and each of the four main elements, collecting spontaneous reactions.

The second reconvened workshop involved exploring the case for change and looking at the potential implications of the FDM for FSA employees, food businesses and consumers. The workshops began with a reminder of the Official Controls process and the proposed changes under the FDM, followed by a presentation on the case for change. Several personas were presented to each group, exploring the benefits and challenges under the FDM for different types of people or businesses. The sessions concluded with participants voicing their priorities and final reflections for the FSA.

Our proposed methodology reflected the low levels of consumer awareness about the Official Controls process and food regulation in general. Discussions focused on the meat industry as the largest sector covered by the FSA's Official Controls. The design was aimed at capturing public views towards the high-level proposals of the FDM, highlighting areas of support and concern.