

The Future Delivery Model Citizen Panels: qualitative research findings

Area of research interest: [Innovative regulator](#)

Planned completion: 31 January 2022

Project status: Completed

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Conducted by: Food Standards Agency and Ipsos Mori

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About this research

The FSA is looking at modernising the way it regulates the meat, dairy and wine sectors through a series of changes brought together under the Future Delivery Model (FDM). To support the development of the FDM, the FSA ran a public consultation, wider stakeholder activities and commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct qualitative research with the public to help them understand consumer views of the FDM.

This report summarises the findings from qualitative research conducted with 77 participants from England, Wales and Northern Ireland who took part in seven reconvened workshops between the 12th and the 22nd of July 2021. Each workshop lasted two hours. Across the two weeks of fieldwork, each participant spent four hours in discussions about current and future food regulation.

Our methodology was designed to capture public views on the initial FDM proposals. Discussions were focused on regulation in the meat industry, alongside wider conversations about food regulation and the role of the FSA.

Consumer awareness of current food regulation

Generally, awareness of regulation in the meat industry was low. Participants had not given much thought to where meat comes from prior to the workshops. Knowledge was often linked to previous experiences of working or living near a farm or from watching documentaries on television.

Participants expected the FSA to be involved in all the stages of the food journey and to play a role in monitoring animal welfare standards. In initial conversations, participants emphasised the

importance of regulations that focus on ensuring the quality of meat and business adherence to safe hygiene practices. They also voiced concerns about food businesses cutting corners, often referring to personal experiences of abattoirs and news stories such as those relating to horse meat in ready meals.

When introduced to the Official Controls, participants were reassured by the extent and thoroughness of the checks involved in the process. They were often surprised by the FSA's continuous presence in food businesses and emphasised how they found this reassuring.

Reflecting on the Official Controls, questions were raised about the inspection, sampling and enforcement processes. For example, participants questioned the ability of Meat Hygiene Inspectors to fully check carcasses in a short period of time. They were also curious about the extensiveness of the sampling approach.

Participants widely supported the idea of the FSA conducting unannounced inspections, seeing this as a more effective way of understanding the reality and behaviour of food businesses.

Consumer views on the Future Delivery model

Participants questioned the FSA's motivations for changing a system that was seen as being thorough and effective in ensuring food is safe for consumption. They highlighted concerns about the potential for food standards to drop, particularly if there was a reduced FSA presence in some food businesses. In contrast, participants were in favour of enhanced transparency, which they felt would empower consumers to make more informed choices.

After hearing the case for change, many participants felt more supportive of the FDM and recognised the need to modernise and adapt approaches based on new technologies. They could see the potential benefits and described the reassurances they wanted in place to give them confidence in the new model. However, a number of participants remained concerned about a potential reduction in standards and therefore wanted to maintain the current Official Controls process.

Four of the seven FDM elements were explored in more detail in the workshops:

- **Tailored presence:** While participants were able to identify benefits such as potential improvements in poor performing businesses, they were concerned about compliant businesses becoming complacent and the impact this would have on food safety standards. They felt reassurances needed to be put in place to avoid a reduction in standards, voicing support for increasing the number of unannounced inspections across all businesses
- **Clearer accountability:** Participants expressed concerns about a potential conflict of interest if staff from food businesses played a role in carcass inspections. They emphasised the importance of the FSA providing training to all individuals stepping into this role. This was seen as a way to prevent a deterioration of standards and encourage businesses to take more ownership and responsibility for their work
- **Robust assurance regime:** There was a recognition that increased collaboration and data sharing with other organisations could help identify supply chain issues. However, participants emphasised the importance of the FSA's independence and wanted the FSA to remain accountable for setting standards across the industry
- **Transparent compliance:** Participants were most positive about this element. They felt it would give consumers access to information that could help them to make more informed purchasing decisions. This could take the form of labelling on items or an online directory, with an emphasis placed on the need for the FSA to explain what ratings meant and update scores regularly. However, there was also some concern that this could lead to unequal

access to quality meat and increase food waste. Participants also recognised that greater transparency could incentivise improvements due to the potential impact on business reputations.

How to read this report

This report provides a summary of the insights from the Food Standards Agency's (FSA's) Citizens Panels conducted during July 2021. Our findings have been organised in the following structure:

- in Chapter 1 we summarise the background and methodology of the study
- in Chapter 2 we present participants' understanding of where food comes from, their awareness and expectations of food regulation and the FSA's role. We also summarise participants' spontaneous reactions to the current Official Controls process
- in Chapter 3 we detail participants' reactions towards the Future Delivery Model (FDM) before and after introducing the case of change. We also describe participants' views, concerns and the reassurances they would like to see in place for each of the four elements of the FDM
- finally, in Chapter 4 we summarise participants' overall attitudes and key reflections on the FDM

Note on the language used throughout the report

Throughout this report we have referred to "participants" as the individuals that have taken part in our research. We have also used several abbreviations reflecting the topic of discussion:

- FSA – The Food Standards Agency
- FBO – Food Business Operator
- RSPCA – Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
- Defra – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- FDM – The Future Delivery Model
- MHI – Meat Hygiene Inspector
- OV – Official Veterinarian

Anonymised verbatim quotes have been used to help illustrate key findings, but these quotes do not necessarily summarise the views of all participants that we spoke to.

Limitations to the research

While every attempt has been made to recruit a varied sample of participants and design a robust methodology, possible limitations to the research include:

The research topic. Talking about food regulation, including the processes involved in the meat industry, is not something participants would normally discuss. The workshops explored complex regulatory structures and exposed participants to new information they were not aware of. To support meaningful discussions, participants were presented with simplified versions of the Official Controls process, and stimulus materials designed to provide them with the information they needed to engage in the topic. They were given the opportunity to ask questions. However, it is possible that participants' attitudes reflect misunderstandings about the processes involved and it is important to note that participants are not experts in food regulations.

Generalisability. The findings summarised reflect the self-reported views shared by the participants. Qualitative research is designed to be exploratory and provide insight into people's perceptions, feelings and behaviours. The findings are therefore not intended to be representative

of the views of all people who may share similar characteristics.

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
England	Tuesday 13 July 2021	Tuesday 20 July 2021	22

Location	Initial workshop	Reconvened workshop	Number of participants
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.

Chapter 2: Public awareness of current food regulation

2.1 Understanding the food to fork journey

Participants had not thought much about where food comes from before the workshops

A number of participants shared their experience of farming and how this had given them a greater understanding of where food comes from and how it is produced. This included working

on farms as children, while spending time abroad or working and living near farms in the UK. TV programmes such as Inside the Factory were also mentioned as a source of information for participants. However, most did not have a detailed understanding of the farm to fork journey, and this was not something they had learnt about at school or spent long considering previously.

“I think everyone will have a general understanding that there's different processes involved, but I don't know much in depth to be honest. I just know stuff happens.” – **Initial workshop participant, Wales**

There was some understanding of the origins of different food products, including domestic farms and imported supplies. Participants described how they often prefer to buy food locally, such as from the local butchers, or look at the labels to see the origin of products. They worried about how long food is stored for before it reaches the shelves, with participants expressing concern about the preservatives added to keep products fresh.

“I try not to think about it too much. Usually just when it comes to the packet, I will always with meat look where it's meant to be from, and with fish and wine. But I wouldn't try to think of too much beforehand where it's coming from.” - **Initial workshop participant, Northern Ireland.**

Awareness of regulation in meat production was low

During spontaneous discussions, participants were widely unsure about how meat production is regulated. They assumed that quality control and health and safety measures existed, drawing on their perceptions that food is safe to eat in the UK. They saw this as largely the responsibility of the FSA.

“The FSA, I assume people are allowed to sell, make and produce food because they're regulated by the FSA. That's regulated, so it's safe because they have to adhere to the FSA's standards.” - **Initial workshop participant, Wales**

Participants reflected on the role of food businesses in maintaining standards and saw it as primarily their responsibility to adhere to hygiene and safety requirements as well as keeping records of their compliance. A number of participants felt that supermarkets carried out their own checks of food businesses, or mentioned Defra being involved in the regulatory process. Participants recognised that as consumers they also had a role to play in ensuring food is safely stored and prepared.

“I think everyone has a responsibility. Even the customers are responsible for checking food ratings of restaurants. The factories, the bosses to the managers and working people. They have to follow the hygiene and safety standards.” – **Initial workshop participant, Wales.**

There was an expectation the FSA was involved at each stage of the food to fork journey

Figure 1: Food to fork journey. Stimulus shared with participants during the initial workshops

After seeing the food to fork journey, participants questioned whether the FSA is involved in each stage of the process from farming to retail. This was something they wanted to happen, with the FSA playing a role from the start of the journey to the end where food reaches the consumer. They questioned how the FSA interacts with other bodies including Local Authorities and supermarkets. There was also uncertainty about the role of the FSA in checking distribution processes, such as whether food is stored at the right temperature, and the extent to which they monitor retail environments.

“They need to be involved at every stage, in different ways, they need to be involved at every stage of that flowchart...The processing facilities, everything has to meet standards in the abattoir, equipment needs to be stored and maintained regularly, so it’s safe for the workers.” – **Initial workshop participant, England**

Participants focused on regulations to ensure safety and hygiene

An emphasis was placed on the importance of regulations that check the quality and safety of meat, as well as ensuring hygiene practices are adhered to. For example, one participant described how they think there are checks to make sure meat does not contain pathogens or E. coli ([footnote 1](#)).

There was also an assumption that checks were carried out to ensure that food is what it says it is. For example, participants described how they would expect the FSA to carry out checks to ensure food is being correctly labelled. This could be based on processes such as Halal, or ingredients such as e-numbers or ensuring food does not contain allergens if labelled as such. Participants also mentioned labels such as the Red Tractor symbol and the Lion symbol on eggs, seeing this as part of the regulatory process.

“I see the FSA as being a regulatory body establishing parameters of animal welfare, food handling, production and standards of distribution.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

There was an expectation for regulations around animal welfare.

Participants expected animal welfare to be monitored, both while animals were living and during slaughter. For example, participants mentioned checks to ensure animals are slaughtered humanely, fed appropriately, and are treated well before they are killed. A small number of participants mentioned the role of veterinarians in this process, but this was not widely known.

“I’d like to think there is somebody that gauged all these processes in a way that it’s all done properly, cleanly and safely. But I don’t know what those people would be called. But I’d like to think those would be in place.” - **Initial workshop participant, England.**

There was some distrust in food businesses and concern about standards not being met.

Participants worried about when things go wrong in food production and voiced concerns about food businesses cutting corners. There was a general scepticism about meat production, with a number of participants describing how they had stopped eating meat due to concerns about animal welfare and the production processes involved. Personal experiences of abattoirs and news stories about horsemeat in ready meals were referenced as examples that had led to greater distrust. There were also concerns about how imported food is regulated to ensure it adheres to the same standards as domestic produce.

“The fear comes when things go wrong, with people cheating. When there was the horse meat scare. I don’t know how you get around that really because it has to be checked.” – **Initial workshop participant, England.**

2.2 Spontaneous reactions to current Official Controls

Participants were introduced to the current Official Controls process including approvals, inspections, sampling and verification, audits and enforcement. They were provided with information about each stage of the process and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Figure 2: Stages of meat production covered by the Official Controls process. Stimulus from the initial workshops.

Participants were reassured by the extent and thoroughness of the current Official Controls process.

There was an understanding that the Official Controls process provides consistency to meat production. Participants felt this ensures all meat products made in the UK achieve certain minimum standards set by the FSA, irrespective of the price of an item. This was reassuring and something participants expected, reflecting their general belief in the safety of food in the UK.

“Is it not to make sure there’s a consistency in the food that we’re eating, that there’s a standard being kept for people’s health? It’s a reassurance for the consumer that someone can stand over how what you’re buying got on the shelf.” – **Initial workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

Participants were often surprised about the continuous presence of Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHI) at all slaughterhouses and that carcasses are checked by an FSA employee both before and after slaughter. They reflected on how they had not thought much about the process before and felt reassured that there is a continuous FSA presence in food businesses including Official Veterinarians checking each animal. This was supported by participants who emphasised how it

is essential mistakes are not made due to the potential public health risks involved.

“I’m taking it in. It’s not information you think about when you’re buying meat. It seems a lot to be checking every single one [carcase]. If they don’t, that missed one could be serious. It’s surprising, but it’s normal, I suppose.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

However, there was also some scepticism about the ability of MHI to check all carcasses given the numbers involved. Participants questioned whether FSA employees can carry out thorough checks of all carcasses and were unsure about whether the sampling process could result in problems being missed. They also reflected on their own experiences of abattoirs or news stories about meat processing and were unsure whether regulations had recently changed to improve standards.

“A massive process, isn’t it? If you look at the numbers of cattle, pigs and especially birds... Are they all getting checked? It’s a lot of things to check, 1.2 million hours of testing. I’m sceptical about that. But it’s nice to see these things are going on.” – **Initial workshop participant, Wales**

Questions focused on the inspection, sampling and enforcement stages of the current Official Controls

Participants wanted to know more about the inspection process including how MHIs are trained and whether they move between different food businesses. There were some concerns about the potential for inspectors to become complacent or too familiar with plant employees if they are only based in one premise. There were also questions about how different animal carcasses are inspected and the ability of inspectors to fully assess a carcass in a short space of time. This reflected wider conversations about the resources involved in the Official Controls process.

“My only concern is do they have enough resources to go out and check all these abattoirs? That would be a big concern, to ensure there is enough resources to ensure everything is done right.” – **Initial workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

There were also questions about the proportion of meat that is sampled and whether this is extensive enough to ensure the safety of food. Participants worried that if only a small proportion of meat is sampled for verification activities, this could result in problems being missed and food unfit for human consumption entering the supply chain.

There was support for unannounced inspections as a way of checking standards

Participants widely supported this element of the Official Controls process and reflected on similar experiences of regulatory enforcement. They argued that unannounced inspections would provide a better understanding of how the business normally behaves, by limiting their ability to prepare for an inspection. For example, participants including teachers compared the inspections process to Ofsted inspections of schools.

“All inspections should be unannounced. If they see an issue, they can give places one month to get it right and if not, the place should be closed.” – **Initial workshop participant, Wales**

Participants wanted to see strong enforcement measures, as well as reflecting on the role of the FSA to support food businesses. Although they did not want to see the closure of multiple businesses and felt there was room for the FSA to provide advice to support improvements, participants fundamentally wanted to ensure food safety. There were also concerns about individuals selling food that are not regulated by the FSA. For example, if an individual sells food from their home, participants worried that products would not be verified by FSA employees and could therefore pose a risk to health.

“Are there any people working outside of the auspices of the FSA that could get meat into the public domain? That the FSA are not aware of that are putting meat into the market, that aren’t governed by these regulations? If you go to a supermarket or butcher, you feel confident.” – **Initial workshop participant, England.**

1. Escherichia Coli (known as E. coli) is a type of bacteria that can be found in the intestines of animals and humans. Many strains of E. coli are harmless to humans, but some can cause serious illness. Most cases of foodborne illness are caused by a strain known as E. coli O157. More information is available on the [FSA website](#).

Chapter 3: The Future Delivery Model

Participants were introduced to the FDM during the first workshop, where they discussed their initial reactions to each of the four elements. During the second reconvened workshop, participants discussed the FDM in greater detail. They explored how the FDM could affect different FSA employees, food businesses, consumers, and retailers. This chapter brings together the findings from both workshops.

3.1 Overall reactions to the FDM

Questions were raised about the motivations for changing the current Official Controls.

As described above, participants felt reassured by the current Official Controls process, emphasising the importance of stringent checks to keep food safe. They questioned why this approach would need to be adapted, and worried about the potential consequences to food safety and wider consumer interests such as animal welfare. As a result, they speculated as to whether the FDM reflected problems in the current regulatory approach or wider changes brought about by the UK’s exit from the EU.

“It seems to be working... If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. The fact that we’re not getting lots of people ill, dying from that, from the way they’re doing it at the moment. We don’t seem to have any major, really bad outbreaks in the food chain, nothing seems to be too bad at the moment. Let’s hope it stays like that.” - **Initial workshop participant, Wales**

Tailored presence and transparent compliance sparked the most interest.

The tailored presence element of the FDM was a source of concern for participants. They worried that reducing the FSA presence in food businesses would result in a reduction of standards. This aspect of the current Official Controls process had reassured participants, even though there was scepticism about the ability of MHIs to check all carcasses. This meant they worried about a reduction in FSA presence, with some arguing for greater resources towards inspections rather than tailoring the current FSA presence. They were concerned that the FSA was looking at introducing this change as a way to make financial savings.

“Reducing presence with compliant businesses would give them more leeway to not be compliant at times. I thought it was very good that there was someone there constantly over each step. I think it looks like having cutbacks to me.” - **Initial workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

Conversely, the transparent compliance element of the FDM was appealing to participants. Publicising information about where meat is coming from and how it had been produced was seen as a good way of empowering retailers and consumers to make more informed decisions. Participants reflected on their limited knowledge and awareness of meat processing before the workshops and felt greater transparency could help to educate consumers. This element consistently received the greatest support from participants across the workshops, and views did not change significantly as they discussed the topic in more detail.

“I’m interested to hear more about transparent compliance where retailers would know more to be making decisions, and you would have more information on the exact whereabouts of where it’s coming from and what is being dealt with.” - **Initial workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

There was an appreciation for why the FSA is exploring the FDM after hearing the case for change.

At the start of the reconvened workshops, participants were presented with the reasons why the FSA has developed the FDM. This focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the process of the UK exiting the EU and technological changes in food production. Participants recognised these factors and understood how they could shape the Official Controls process, drawing on similar experiences from their own industries. For example, they described how their work has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and technological advances. This meant participants understood the need for the FSA to do the same.

“It makes sense to me, especially the points about COVID. All industries have had to reassess how they can work. That’s a good opportunity to explore what you can do more efficiently or how their roles can change and grow or work remotely.” - **Reconvened workshop participant, England**

Although participants recognised that technological changes might affect food processing, questions were raised about the timing of the FDM and why processes had not been modernised sooner. There were also concerns about the impact of introducing new technology on jobs and the reliability of new systems.

“No matter how good the technology is, unless there is someone there in person, the technology can go wrong, can’t it.” - **Reconvened workshop participant, Wales**

There was a general understanding that the UK’s exit from the EU has triggered changes in food importation and the regulatory system. However, participants were less clear about the detail of how imported food had been checked and therefore what the changes might mean in the future.

3.2 Attitudes towards the four elements of the FDM

The workshops explored views on four of the seven elements of the FDM – tailored presence, clearer accountability, a robust assurance regime and transparent compliance. Below we provide a summary of participants’ attitudes to each element and the reassurances they wanted to see in place under the FDM.

3.2.1 Tailored presence

Participants worried tailored presence could lead to a reduction in compliance.

Spontaneous reactions to tailored presence highlighted concerns about the impact of reducing FSA presence in certain businesses. Participants were concerned this would lead to a reduction

in standards as high-performing businesses may start to cut corners if a MHI is no longer present on the production line.

“I’m a little concerned about the first item where they’re offering the idea of reducing FSA presence with compliant businesses. I’m not sure that would drive greater overall compliance.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

There was some recognition that tailoring resources could improve standards in poor performing businesses.

Some participants described how a reallocation of resources could help to support lower performing businesses and suggested this could improve standards overall. For example, they felt it might be beneficial for MHIs to spend more time at lower performing plants, or that MHIs could spend more time sharing good practice under the FDM. In some cases, this was seen as an opportunity for FSA employees to develop new skills and avoid becoming too close to a food business by spending less time in one place.

“She’ll [FSA employee] be able to see how other plants work and give or take advice on how to improve things. It’s going to broaden her understanding of that whole area.” - **Reconvened workshop participant, Wales**

However, there were also concerns about FSA employees losing knowledge of a specific food business. Participants worried that this could make it more difficult for FSA employees to carry out their role if spread too thinly between multiple locations. They also feared a potential impact on the relationship between FSA employees and food businesses. They felt that spending less time in a plant could make it more difficult for MHIs or Official Veterinarians to influence or encourage businesses to improve their standards.

There was support for an increase in unannounced inspections to ensure standards do not slip.

While participants could see the benefits of a more proportionate approach to the allocation of FSA resources, they feared the impact this could have on standards. Overall, participants were often sceptical about businesses maintaining compliance levels without greater assurance activities and they wanted reassurances that standards would not slip.

In particular, participants emphasised the importance of unannounced inspections as a way of checking whether all businesses are complying with regulations. There was a recognition that reducing the FSA presence in high performing businesses could free up FSA resources and thus allow more unannounced inspections to take place. Participants wanted to make sure these inspections were not predictable for businesses and that inspectors took a thorough approach to checking standards. By taking a business by surprise, participants felt it would be harder for them to prepare and therefore the outcomes of the inspection were more likely to be an accurate portrayal of performance.

“I like the idea of unannounced inspections, but not just for the ones that aren’t performing well. Even the ones that are performing well, you don’t want them to feel they have a free pass. It’s more reassuring to know that at any time there could be an inspection. That is more reassuring, certainly for me anyway.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

As well as increasing the number of unannounced inspections across all businesses, participants wanted to measure the effects of the FDM on standards. They felt monitoring the implementation of the FDM would enable the FSA to reverse any changes if there is evidence that compliance has reduced under the new model.

“It’s all written down, but it needs a trial run of say six months and look at all the information that has come in. Hopefully, after so long, they could see exactly what’s the best for the FSA.” -

Reconvened workshop participant, Wales

Summary of reassurances: Tailored presence

- FSA presence should remain the same (or increase) in non-compliant businesses as suggested under the FDM
- FSA staff should not be spread across too many different food businesses. This is important to ensure their workload remains manageable and they have a good understanding and relationship with each business
- a robust assurance regime should be in place to check all businesses are still complying with standards. Greater unannounced inspections could provide reassurance that businesses with a reduced FSA presence are still compliant
- the approach should be trialled to ensure there is no reduction in standards.

3.2.2 Clearer Accountability

There was concern that greater involvement in carcase inspection could result in a conflict of interest for food businesses.

Participants worried that asking food businesses to inspect carcasses could lead to a reduction in standards. They argued that food businesses would have an incentive to approve poor quality meat and that inspections need to be carried out by an independent actor for consumers to have trust in the process. This was seen as particularly important given the potential public health risks if unsafe meat reaches the supply chain.

“I’d be slightly uncomfortable. They might want to cut corners. If there’s no safeguard to check what they’re doing, to monitor that, then it’s open for it to be exploited.” – **Initial workshop participant, England**

Questions were raised about the skills and expertise of food business staff, with many participants arguing that they may not have the skills required to take on carcase inspection. FSA employees were seen as trusted experts by participants, thus they had concerns about this role being taken on by other employees.

It was seen as important for the FSA to provide training to any individuals taking on carcase inspection.

Under this element of the FDM, participants wanted to see an accreditation process to ensure food business employees had the right skills for any new areas of responsibility. They emphasised the importance of independent training and certification to provide reassurance that carcase inspections were being handled appropriately. However, there were concerns about the resource implications of this on businesses, particularly smaller companies that may not be able to fund additional training. Participants emphasised the importance of the FSA continuing to support businesses with compliance activities and wanted to see greater partnership working.

“I feel like a happy medium would be if staff were trained in conducting aspects. It would be beneficial for the FSA to have a leader for those in an area that worked daily and could help them with any issues or just had someone above them to go to. Instead of putting the pressure on staff for a brand new role and then walking away. And having an unexpected inspection maybe once a year or so on. It might be better if they liaised more and worked together in partnership.” –

Reconvened workshop participant, Northern Ireland

In some cases, participants reflected on the potential for technology to support the clearer accountability element, suggesting it could reduce human error and improve the accuracy of checks. Participants agreed that technology could provide a feasible alternative to a continuous FSA presence on the production line, while checking the performance of food business employees conducting carcass inspections. However, they felt there should be a degree of human supervision for any new technologies to ensure accuracy and pick up on any errors.

“I saw about cameras and technology. If things are being monitored, people will feel conscious they’re being watched and checked up on. If it’s being done consistently, that could be an alternative.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

There was a recognition that clearer accountability could lead businesses to take greater pride in their work.

Participants felt that clearer accountability could mean food businesses take greater responsibility and pride in their work, increasing standards and work satisfaction. They recognised how giving businesses greater ownership and responsibility might empower them to improve standards and innovate to make processes more efficient, reflecting on their own experiences of motivation in the workplace.

“As long as they’re still being regulated on a daily basis, the fact they’re taking on a lot of the inspection work is a good thing. It’ll give them pride in their work; show they’re working in a reputable company. It would certainly make retailers feel comfortable using them, given they’re doing the job well.” - **Reconvened workshop participant, England**

However, there was a recognition that food safety is of utmost importance, meaning there can be no room for errors. As such, participants wanted to see wider assurance activities such as unannounced inspections and clear enforcement mechanisms for businesses as well as employees responsible for carrying out carcass inspections. This could include fines and prison sentences as a way of incentivising individual employees to stick to the rules and provide the public with reassurance.

“If you’re leaving it to the business the accountability won’t be picked up until something happens to a consumer and someone gets sick and dies.” - **Initial workshop participant, England.**

Summary of reassurances: Clearer Accountability

(TEXT TO BE ADDED)

3.2.3. Robust Assurance Regime

There was support for a robust assurance regime, with the FSA setting the industry standard.

Participants recognised that enhanced collaboration and data sharing across the wider industry could provide a better chance of identifying when things go wrong in food businesses. It was felt that being transparent about the organisations involved could increase consumer confidence, especially if consumers recognise the companies and are familiar with their standards. For example, participants referred to the Red Tractor Scheme and the RSPCA as familiar brands they trusted. Being transparent about the involvement of these organisations could therefore increase confidence in the process.

“The fact they’ve named the organisations they’re thinking of collaborating with, and being more transparent, I think is a good thing. And sharing information for each other is a good thing. Especially when I can recognise some of those names. Everyone knows the RSPCA, I’ve heard

of the Red Tractor. I would trust those kinds of organisations, I think. That, for me, was a good thing.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

Similarly, participants recognised how FSA data could equip smaller supermarkets and businesses with valuable information. This could allow them to make more informed choices about their supply chain if they do not have existing assurance processes in place, unlike the larger supermarket chains.

“I think the greater use of multiple sources of data that’s one of the more positives, that they will be able to share multiple sources of data. I could imagine maybe supermarkets and small businesses may not have all the knowledge they need. They may have an awareness, but not the nitty-gritty. I think they will gain from the extra data.” - **Initial workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

Concerns were raised about organisations influencing standards by shaping the FSA’s judgements of regulatory performance.

Participants felt organisations could potentially withhold or selectively share information without a way of the FSA verifying this. As such, there were concerns about giving greater powers to businesses with a wide range of motivations beyond consumer safety. This was a worry for participants who compared this to the current system of independent regulation under the FSA. It was also felt that poor or disjointed communication between different sources of information could result in issues being missed.

Participants questioned how aggregate scores would be agreed. There was a strong desire that the FSA remains independent and has the final say on designing the assurance regime and deciding on any ratings.

“No, I don’t think it is good to share the data. All these different companies are doing their own quality assurance. It’s fine if they want to share their findings but I wouldn’t want to couple it all together. If you try to amalgamate, take five assurances from there and five from there and try to come up with one big one, I see that getting a bit muddy.” - **Initial workshop participant, England.**

Summary of reassurance: Robust Assurance Regime

(TEXT TO BE ADDED)

3.2.4 Transparent Compliance

There was widespread support for greater transparency

Participants acknowledged the benefits that greater transparency would give consumers including the ability to make more informed choices about what products they buy. This was seen as a positive for consumers who wanted to know where their meat had come from, what hygiene standards had been met and how animals had been treated in the process. Many participants felt they would appreciate having access to this kind of information, either online or on packaging, as well as in restaurants or institutions such as schools. They felt it would influence their decisions on what to buy, with many suggesting they would change their purchasing habits in line with the ratings.

“Thinking about Ofsted, every school has that published and parents get to make a decision off that. I’m sure sometimes that’s not fair, but you can make an informed decision. I think it’s scary that these food businesses don’t have to publish this now.” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

However, participants worried this could lead to a two-tier system if meat with higher ratings became more expensive. They felt there was a risk this could lead to unequal access to quality meat and result in more food waste if lower quality meat became harder to sell.

“There is an awfully big concern about people on benefits and on lower incomes. So now you’re from a lower income background, you should now eat a lower standard of meat? It doesn’t seem fair.” - **Reconvened workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

Transparent compliance was seen as a way to incentivise improvements.

There was a recognition that greater transparency could increase compliance and result in improved standards as businesses would want to protect their reputation and grow. This could also result in poor performing food businesses leaving the market, thus increasing standards across the industry in the long-term.

“I think it’ll work. By and large, it’ll work. The possibility of having the names, the business names, connected with poor performance, in terms of hygiene and food preparation, would be a spur to a lot of businesses to keep within the rules. There’s always going to be the maverick, isn’t there?” - **Initial workshop participant, England**

However, there was some concern for the impact of greater transparency on businesses. For instance, this could result in food businesses losing contracts or closing down if fewer consumers buy products based on their performance rating. Participants recognised how this could treat improving businesses unfairly if results did not reflect recent changes. Nevertheless, they largely felt that the benefits to consumers would outweigh the potential impact on businesses.

There were differing views about the best approach to transparent compliance.

There was support for adding a ratings label onto packaging as a way of increasing information for consumers in an accessible way. Participants argued consumers would be more likely to use information on packaging in comparison to other information sources. In turn, they felt this would encourage supermarkets to stock high performing products, thus increasing standards across the industry.

“I think everyone would love to know exactly where their food is coming from and how it’s being processed. People might buy the lower rated meat as it’s cheaper. I think there would be issues where people might not be truthful in terms of where it comes from.” – **Reconvened workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

There were concerns that if information was not presented in a clear format on packages it could lead to misinterpretations. For example, there were worries this could give the impression that lower rated products were not safe to eat. Participants reflected on their own limited knowledge of meat processing and felt it would be important for the FSA to provide information to educate consumers so they could understand what any performance ratings meant. They also wanted information to be updated on a regular basis so that consumers can make informed choices based on recent performance. There was support for ratings to take into account a number of factors including hygiene and animal welfare standards. However, a small number of participants argued that it would be better not to provide this kind of information due to the potential to cause unnecessary confusion for consumers.

“I wonder how that would be useful to a consumer. I suppose if you buy your meat at a supermarket, you get some information. If, for instance, it was about some random slaughterhouse, how would you know if you’ve consumed from that place? It would be useful to know how they plan to make it useful to the consumer, rather than random figures. And

accessible language for the everyday person.” – **Initial workshop participant, England**

Participants who supported information being made available online suggested this would give consumers the option to find out where their food had come from. For some, this was the preferred approach as they felt it was unlikely to cause misunderstanding among consumers while allowing those who wanted to find out more the option to do so. One participant suggested that packaging could include a QR code that directed consumers to the relevant information online without putting too much additional material on packets themselves. However, there were concerns that this approach would exclude consumers who do not have access to the internet.

“Not everybody’s like me and checks everything. Having the option to do that’s good. If you don’t care, that’s up to you.” – **Reconvened workshop participant, England.**

Summary of reassurances: Transparent compliance

(TEXT TO BE ADDED)

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Overall, attitudes often came down to whether participants felt the potential risks of the FDM could be mitigated. To support a change to the current Official Controls process, participants needed to believe it would lead to an increase in standards.

Those persuaded by the case for change who believed the FDM would maintain or improve standards, felt comfortable with the proposals. They could see the potential benefits of the FDM and described the reassurances they wanted in place to give them confidence in the new model. For example, these participants recognised that increasing the number of unannounced inspections and making performance scores visible to the public could lead to greater compliance and improved standards.

“I think having transparency [is my priority]. That’s the driver of everything else. If you are forced to be honest, transparent and open, then you’d have to drive for a standard. You wouldn’t want a poor standard published. Everything cascades from that point.” – **Reconvened workshop participant, England**

They maintained the importance of the independence of the FSA and saw opportunities to improve. For example, these participants emphasised the potential to make greater use of technology and existing FSA resources by tailoring their presence and sharing more data with industry. However, it was essential that steps were taken to ensure standards did not slip including maintaining the current levels of FSA presence in lower performing businesses and providing independent training to food business employees carrying out inspections in the future.

“To continue the work they’ve put in over the years and to make sure they don’t forget why they were set up. To make sure that the changes make it better, improvements rather than to go backwards or to step away. It’s to keep engagement and to use the technology to their benefit.” – **Reconvened workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

Some participants remained sceptical about the FDM after hearing the case for change and discussing the implications in greater depth. These participants were often concerned about the impact of the FSA not being present in all businesses. They worried about giving responsibility for checking carcasses to the industry and felt that businesses may not act in the consumer's interest. As such, they argued the FDM could result in lower standards and wanted to maintain the current Official Controls process.

“My view hasn't changed from the start. I don't know if these changes are really needed. I'm worried about accountability. I worry about small businesses and large businesses saying this is the standard we need to reach to get things put through... There are no personal relationships anymore within the companies. I just don't think it's a better system.” - **Reconvened workshop participant, Northern Ireland**

Among this group, there was a degree of resistance to making changes that were not seen as necessary. They were concerned that this could put food safety at risk and worried about the implications to public health.

Low levels of awareness about meat processing and wider food regulation influenced participants' views. As they became more familiar with the Official Controls process and had time to consider the FDM from different perspectives, they were able to articulate the reassurances they wanted in place under the new model. For many, this alleviated their initial scepticism as illustrated by higher levels of support for the FDM at the end of the second workshop compared to the first. This highlights the importance of thinking carefully about how to communicate future changes to the Official Controls process given levels of existing knowledge among the public and a degree of scepticism towards current meat processing.

Appendices: Future Delivery Model report

Appendix 1: Achieved sample

Table 2: Summary of achieved participant numbers by key quotas

Location	Number of participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Socio-economic group
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England	11 participants	5 females and 6 males	4 aged 25 to 34 4 aged 35 to 54 3 aged 55+	7 white and 4 ethnic minority participants	Mix
England	22 participants	11 females and 11 males	1 aged 18 to 24 6 aged 25 to 34 9 aged 35 to 54 6 aged 55+	16 white and 6 ethnic minority participants	Mix

Northern Ireland	23 participants	12 females and 11 males	1 aged 18 to 24 8 aged 25 to 34 6 aged 35 to 54 8 aged 55+	23 white participants reflective of the local population	Mix
Wales	22 participants	13 females and 9 males	1 aged 18 to 24 3 aged 25 to 34 8 aged 35 to 54 4 aged 55+	18 white and 4 ethnic minority participants	Mix

Appendix 2: Research materials

2.1 Initial workshops 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

Workshops Schedule:

Initial workshops (week commencing 12th July)

Session number	Date	Time	Region	Workshop number	Number of break-out groups	Total number of participants
1	Monday 12 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	England	1	2 5 to 6 participants each	10 to 12
2	Tuesday 13 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	England	2-3	4 5 to 6 participants each	20 to 24
3	Thursday 15 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	Northern Ireland	4-5	4 5 to 6 participants each	20 to 24
4	Saturday 17 July 2021	10am to 12pm	Wales	6-7	4 5 to 6 participants each	20 to 24

Total number of participants: 70 to 84

Arrival (before start), 15 to 20 minutes

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.

Section 1: Introductions and warm up, 10 minutes

Plenary

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDES 1-5

Chair introduction:

- thank participants for taking part
- introduce self and Ipsos Mori, moderators, observers, and note-takers
- the discussion will last two hours and we'll have a short break part way through

Explain purpose of the discussion: This research is being carried out on behalf of the Food Standards Agency. They are looking at the way the food industry (specifically meat, dairy, and wine) is currently regulated and how they might change it in the future. For this purpose, they're

running a public consultation with stakeholders in the food industry and they have also commissioned us to run this research, as they are interested in gaining a better understanding of public views. Today we're going to talk in more detail about how the meat industry is currently regulated and what it might look like in the future.

- talk through the ground rules/ housekeeping. TOTALLY VOLUNTARY

WHEN INTRODUCING OBSERVERS, PLEASE SPECIFY: 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.

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 6.

Objectives covered

- introduce participants to the research
- introduce moderators, observers and note-takers
- clarify audio recording
- collect informed consent for participation

Section 2: Introducing the 'Farm to fork' journey exploring awareness about regulation in the food industry and introducing the current FDM, 10 minutes

Break-out groups

Reiterate ground rules

- 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.
- following these groups, we will be writing up our findings into a report for the FSA, and these will be published alongside results from the public consultation. However, no findings will be attributed to you and we will not include your name in any reports.
- any questions?
- can I check you are happy to take part in this research?

Ask if everyone is happy for the recording to begin TURN ON RECORDING and 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.

Introductions around the group. Please tell us:

- your first name
- where you're from (ROUGHLY, WE DON'T NEED SPECIFIC POSTCODES)
- what's your favourite meal

TURN ON RECORDER NOW

We want to start by talking about what happens before food arrives at the supermarket.

What do you know about where food comes from? This isn't a trick question!

- who do you think is involved? PROBE: farmers, different types of food businesses, inspectors?
- how do you think this is regulated?
- what do you think happens to make sure the food you can buy in the shops is safe to eat?

Objectives covered

Ice breaker exercise to get participants to know each other and build discussion dynamic.

Section 1: continuation, 10 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR INTRODUCES THE FOOD JOURNEY

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 7

How much of this information feels familiar to you?

- what had you heard about before? From where?
- is anything surprising? Unfamiliar? Confusing?
- do you have any questions?

What role do you think the FSA plays in this process?

- what do you think the FSA wants to achieve through this?
- is there anything else you think the FSA does?

Is anyone else responsible for regulating the safety of food?

- who do you think is involved?
- what do you think they do?

Objectives covered

Gauge awareness levels of regulation in the food industry and the FSA's role in this.

Section 1: continuation, 25 minutes

Break-out groups

MODERATOR INTRODUCES THE CURRENT APPROACH

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDES 8-14

MODERATOR TO PROBE FOR SPONTANEOUS REACTIONS:

Does the model make sense to you? Do you have any questions?

MODERATOR TO NOTE DOWN QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN THE PLENARY SESSION.

Is anything clear/ unclear about the current approach?

- is anything confusing?
- is anything surprising?

What do you think this approach is trying to achieve?

PROBE: food safety, supporting businesses etc.

What might be the benefits of this approach?

What do you like about it? Do you find anything reassuring?

What might be the challenges?

What concerns do you have?

PLENARY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE THE BREAK

Objectives covered

Gauge understanding and concerns about the current FDM.

Section 2: Introducing the proposed FDM, 5 minutes

PLENARY

Moderator to give a brief introduction of the proposed Future Delivery Model

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDES 15 and 16

Opportunity for questions and initial reactions from participants.

Objectives covered

Present participants with a broad overview of the proposed FDM and the changes it involves

Section 2 continuation: spontaneous reactions to the proposed FDM, 5 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

Initial responses to the presentation introducing the FDM:

IF NECESSARY, SHOW AGAIN STIMULUS: SLIDES 15-16

What do you think about the presentation about the Future Delivery Model?

Was anything confusing or unclear?

Was anything surprising?

What was the most interesting thing that you heard?

What there anything you particularly liked? Or disliked? •

Objectives covered

Explore spontaneous reactions to the proposed FDM

Section 3: Brief introduction of the four main elements, 35 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR INTRODUCES THE FOUR MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE FDM IN TURN

- tailored presence
- clearer accountability
- robust assurance regime
- transparent compliance

PLEASE SHOW STIMULUS FOR EACH ELEMENT: SLIDES 19-30.

MODERATOR TO SHOW STIMULUS AND READ OUT THE DESCRIPTION OF EACH ELEMENT.

General prompts for all elements:

What do you think about this element?

- does the element make sense? Is anything unclear?
- do you have any questions about this?
- what do you think it is trying to achieve?

How is this different from the current model?

- what do you think are the key changes?
- what is clear/unclear about it?

What do you think the changes might mean for:

- the FSA?
- food businesses?
- consumers?

What might be driving the FSA to make this change?

What makes you say that?

What might the potential benefits be to this approach?

Who might this affect?

Are there any other benefits you can think of?

What might be the potential risks or challenges of this approach?

Who might this affect?

Are there any other risks you can think of?

IF NEEDED, MODERATOR TO DRAW ON THE BENEFITS/CHALLENGES SLIDE.

REPEAT FOR THE REMAINING ELEMENTS

Objectives covered

To help participants understand how each element fits within the FDM and how it contributes to ensuring food is safe for consumption

To explore public views on the role of each element.

Section 3 continuation, 5 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR TO EXPLORE OVERALL REFLECTIONS ON THE DISCUSSION

- what stood out to you most? What stood out to you least?
- what do you think about the FSA and their role as a regulator now you know a little more?
- what should the FSA consider/ focus on in future?
- do you have any questions about what we've discussed today?

MODERATOR TO NOTE DOWN ANY QUESTIONS AND EXPLAIN WE WILL ANSWER THEM AT THE NEXT WORKSHOP.

Objectives covered

Summarise discussions and provide a chance to reflect.

Section 4: Final reflections, 5 minutes

PLENARY

Each moderator to give a brief summary of the most important take-aways from each group

- chair to sum up most important priorities for FSA when considering rolling out the new FDM
- thank participants and explain next steps including date of their next workshop

CHAIR TO SHARE SIGNPOSTING SLIDE ON SCREEN SHOW SLIDE 31

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.

Thank and close.

Objectives covered

Sum up the discussion and thank participants for their time.

2.2 Reconvened workshops 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

Workshops Schedule:

Workshop 2 (week commencing 19th July)

Session number	Date	Time	Region	Workshop number	Number of break-out groups	Total number of participants
1	Monday 19 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	England	1	2 5 to 6 participants each	10 to 12
2	Tuesday 20 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	England	2-3	4 5 to 6 participants each	20 to 24
3	Wednesday 21 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	Northern Ireland	4-5	4 5 to 6 participants each	20 to 24

Session number	Date	Time	Region	Workshop number	Number of break-out groups	Total number of participants
4	Thursday 22 July 2021	6pm to 8pm	Wales	6-7	4 5 to 6 participants each	20 to 24

Total number of participants: 70 to 84

Arrival (before start), 15 to 20 minutes

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.

Section 1: Introductions and reminder of the topic of discussion, 15 minutes

Setting the scene:

- reminder of the current model and the FDM
- presenting the case for change

PLENARY

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDES 1-5

Chair introduction:

- welcome participants back and thank them for taking part
- introduce self and Ipsos MORI, moderators, observers, and note-takers
- the discussion will last two hours and we'll have a short break part way through

Explain purpose of the discussion: This research is being carried out on behalf of the Food Standards Agency. They are looking at the way the food industry (specifically meat, dairy, and wine) is currently regulated and how they might change it in the future. For this purpose, they're running a public consultation with stakeholders in the food industry and they have also commissioned us to run this research, as they are interested in gaining a better understanding of public views. Today we're going to continue our conversation from last week in a bit more detail about how the meat industry is currently regulated and what it might look like in the future.

Talk through the ground rules/ housekeeping. TOTALLY VOLUNTARY

WHEN INTRODUCING OBSERVERS, PLEASE SPECIFY: 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.

CHAIR PROVIDES A REMINDER OF THE OFFICIAL CONTROLS PROCESS AND THE FDM INCLUDING RESPONDING TO KEY QUESTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 5-9

CHAIR INTRODUCES THE CASE FOR CHANGE

SHOW STIMULUS: SLIDE 10-11

Objectives covered

- introduce participants to the research
- introduce moderators, observers and note-takers
- clarify audio recording
- collect informed consent for participation

Section 2: Capture spontaneous views on the case for change and any differences in views since the last workshop, 10 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

Ask if everyone is happy for the recording to begin **TURN ON RECORDING** and 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.

TURN ON RECORDER NOW

Any questions?

Can I check you are happy to take part in this research?

Since the last workshop, have you thought more about food and where it comes from?

Have you talked to any friends or family about the discussions?

Have your thoughts changed at all?

Do have any questions about what we discussed last time?

What do you think about the presentation on the case for change we just heard?

Does it make sense to you? Do the motivations seem reasonable?

Do you have any questions about this?

MODERATOR TO NOTE DOWN QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN THE PLENARY SESSION.

MODERATOR PROVIDES A REMINDER OF THE CASE FOR CHANGE IF NEEDED

How do you feel about the Future Delivery Model now you've heard more about the reasons for making these changes?

Has this changed how you feel at all?

What do you think the benefits might be? **PROBE:** for the FSA, food businesses, consumers

What about the downsides? Do you have any concerns?

Objectives covered

Reminder of last week's conversation.

Section 3: Exploring the benefits and challenges for different groups, 20 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR INTRODUCES THE FSA PERSONAS

1. THE OFFICIAL VETERINARIAN (OV) PERSONA
2. THE MEAT HYGIENE INSPECTOR (MHI) PERSONA

REPEAT THESE PROBES FOR EACH PERSONA

How might this person's role change under the Future Delivery Model?

How might they feel about this?

Could the new approach provide opportunities for them?

Could the new approach create problems for them?

What might be the benefits for this person?

What might be the benefits for other FSA employees? For the food business? For consumers?

What might be the challenges for this person?

Is there anything that might reassure them about the proposed changes?

1. Arthur, Meat Hygiene Inspector

Arthur is nearing the end of his career. How might someone starting their career as a Meat Hygiene Inspector feel about the changes?

The role at the moment can be quite monotonous as it involves checking carcasses for 8-10 hours a day on the production line.

What opportunities might there be for Arthur and other Meat Hygiene Inspectors if they no longer need to spend as long on the production line?

Improvements in technology also mean that the processing of animals is getting faster, with more animals physically passing an inspector's eye in a given time. There is already technology available that can use cameras to detect things that an MHI is looking for at a much greater speed.

In what ways do you think these technological changes might affect the role of Meat Hygiene Inspectors?

How feasible is their inspection role as the production line speeds up?

Do you think there are any benefits or downsides to relying more on technology in this way?

2. Sarah, Official Veterinarian

Sarah may be able to focus more on supporting food businesses to improve their procedures and ensure they are meeting legal requirements.

What do you think about this change?

At the moment, Sarah spends most of her time in the same food business. She has good relationships and regularly socialises with the team outside of work.

What do you think the benefits might be for Sarah spending more time at different plants?

What could be the downsides to spending less time in the same plant?

AFTER DISCUSSING ALL PERSONAS IN THIS SECTION, MODERATOR TO REFLECT ON THE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FSA/ FSA EMPLOYEES

Overall, how do you feel about the proposed changes now?

What do you like about these changes? What concerns you?

What might be the benefits for the FSA/ FSA employees? What might be the challenges for the FSA / FSA employees?

MODERATORS TO MANAGE THEIR OWN BREAK DEPENDING ON PROGRESS – CHANCE TO BREAK HERE OR AFTER THE NEXT DISCUSSION. PARTICIPANTS REMAIN IN BREAKOUT GROUPS.

Objectives covered

Gauge reaction for the implications of the FDM changes for different actors

Section 3 continuation, 20 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR INTRODUCES THE FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS (FBO) PERSONAS

REPEAT THESE PROBES FOR EACH PERSONA

What might the changes mean for this business?
How might the business owner feel about this?
How might the people who work for the business feel about this?
Could the new approach provide opportunities for them?
Could the new approach create problems for them?

What might be the benefits for this business?
REFER TO SPECIFIC PROBES ON THE STIMULUS

What might be the challenges for this business?
REFER TO SPECIFIC PROBES ON THE STIMULUS

1. Jameson's Meat (High compliance FBO)

Under the new system, the business has to do more to demonstrate their compliance. The plant manager can find it difficult to find certain pieces of information that are required.

How might the business feel about this?
Could this affect smaller businesses to the same extent as larger ones?

What do you think the incentives are for Jameson's Meat to continue to comply with the regulations?

PROBE: transparency could lead to increased business, reduced regulatory burden could provide opportunities for trying different approaches, additional support from MHIs/ greater unannounced inspections/ changes to the audit regime.

What would reassure you/ consumers that high standards are being maintained?

2. Smith Brothers (Low compliance FBO)

What do you think the incentives are for Smith Brothers to comply with the regulations?

PROBE: transparency could lead to increased business, reduced regulatory burden could provide opportunities for trying different approaches, additional support from MHIs/ greater unannounced inspections/ changes to the audit regime.

What would reassure you/ consumers that high standards are being maintained?

As a small business, Smith Brothers does not have the resources to fund new technologies which could help them improve their compliance. The plant manager worries further about being left behind and may have to consider closing if the business stops being viable.

What do you think the impact of the changes might be on small businesses? How does this compare to larger businesses?

Could there be opportunities for high performing small businesses as a result of the regulatory burden being more proportionate for them?

It might be more difficult for smaller businesses to fund the training of plant staff in inspection duties. What might be the impact of this?

AFTER DISCUSSING ALL PERSONAS IN THIS SECTION, MODERATOR TO REFLECT ON THE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS FOR DIFFERENT BUSINESSES/ EMPLOYEES

Overall, how do you feel about the proposed changes now?
What do you like about these changes? What concerns you?

What might be the benefits for food businesses and the industry overall? What might be the challenges for food businesses?

Objectives covered

Gauge reaction for the implications of the FDM changes for different actors

Break, 10 minutes

Section 3 continuation, 20 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR INTRODUCES THE CONSUMER PERSONAS

REPEAT THESE PROBES FOR EACH PERSONA

What might the changes mean for this person/ business?

How might they feel about this?

Could the new approach provide opportunities for them?

Could the new approach create problems for them?

What might be the benefits for this person/ business?

What might be the challenges for this person/ business?

1. Tim, household shopper

Tim is concerned that the FSA has a reduced presence in some abattoirs. Even though they score highly, he feels this may mean businesses have an opportunity to lower their standards. What might reassure shoppers like Tony that standards have not been lowered?

What might be the impact on businesses of consumers preferring to buy meat with high performing labels?

Could there be any benefits?

Could there be any downsides?

How could increased transparency apply to other places including institutions, like schools or hospitals, or restaurants and takeaways?

Would you want to know more about how the meat they serve has been processed?

What could this look like?

2. Fast & Fresh supermarket

What changes might the supermarket make as a result of the new approach?

What might this mean for their customers?

How do you think Fast & Fresh will feel about sharing compliance data with the FSA?

Could there be any benefits? Or downsides?

AFTER DISCUSSING ALL PERSONAS IN THIS SECTION, MODERATOR TO REFLECT ON THE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS FOR DIFFERENT CONSUMERS

Overall, how do you feel about the proposed changes now?

What do you like about these changes? What concerns you?

What might be the benefits for consumers and supermarkets/retailers overall?

What might be the challenges?

Objectives covered

Gauge reaction for the implications of the FDM changes for different actors

Section 4: Priorities for the FSA in the future, 15 minutes

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

MODERATOR TO EXPLORE VIEWS ON PRIORITIES FOR THE FSA IN FUTURE

Overall, what do you think about the FSA's plans for the Future Delivery Model?

What do you think are the main benefits?

What are your key concerns?

What would you want the FSA to prioritise as they develop their plans?

IF NEEDED PROBE ON:

- • targeting FSA resources towards the least compliant food businesses?
- • creating system that supports small businesses to flourish?
- • increasing transparency for consumers and retailers?
- • taking a consistent approach towards regulating the meat industry?
- • maintaining levels of FSA presence in food businesses?

What would you want to be in place to reassure you that food is safe to eat?

What are your expectations for the FSA and their role as a regulator?

Do you have any final thoughts for the FSA?

Objectives covered

Explore views on what the FSA should prioritise in the future.

Section 5: Final reflections, 10 minutes

PLENARY

Opportunity to answer any questions raised during the group.

Each moderator to give a brief summary of the most important take-aways from each group

Chair to sum up most important priorities for FSA when considering rolling out the new FDM

Thank participants and explain next steps

CHAIR TO SHARE SIGNPOSTING SLIDE ON SCREEN SHOW SLIDE

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.

THANK AND CLOSE

Objectives covered

Sum up the discussion and thank participants for their time.

2.3 Initial workshops stimulus

PDF

[View Appendix 2.3 Initial workshops stimulus presentation slides as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#)
(689.39 KB)

The text from the presentation slides has been transcribed below:

Slide 1: The Food Standards Agency wants to better understand consumer (public) views on their Future Delivery Model

We are interested in your thoughts, views, concerns and questions!

You, FSA (the client), Ipsos Mori, observers, note takers.

Slide 2: Ground rules

1. Listen respectfully without interrupting.
2. Listen actively and with an ear to 'understanding others' views. Don't just think about what you are going to say while someone else is talking.
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6. Stay on topic and try to be concise.
7. Avoid blame, speculation and inflammatory language.
8. Allow everyone the chance to speak.
9. Avoid assumptions about any member of the group or generalisations about social groups. Do not ask individuals to speak their (perceived) social group.
10. Be patient with other participants and the team - we have a lot of information to get through.
11. Feel free to share your thoughts about this event with friends and family.

Slide 3: The project and who is involved

Workshops with the general public across England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Workshop 1: 2 hours

- Session 1: England (12 people)
- Session 2: England (24 people)
- Session 3: Northern Ireland (24 people)
- Session 4: Wales (24 people)

Workshop 2: 2 hours

- Session 1: England (12 people)
- Session 2: England (24 people)
- Session 3: Northern Ireland (24 people)
- Session 4: Wales (24 people)

Slide 4: Housekeeping

- keep distractions to a minimum (for example, mobile phones)
- take a break if you need to (for example, use the bathroom, or to attend to anything urgent)
- we will have an official break for 10 minutes

Slide 5: Food journey from source to consumer

UK meat producers and import supply

- UK farms
- Imports: the UK imports 26% of its meat supply

Meat processing facilities

- Abattoirs, meat processing businesses
- storage businesses

Meat distribution services

- transport vehicles adapted for the safe delivery of meat products

Retail and catering businesses

- butchers, supermarkets, small shops, online retailers
- restaurants, takeaways, institutions for example, schools

Consumer

- consumer purchases meat products for consumption

Slide 6: the current official

Every year 2.6 million cattle, 10 million pigs, 14 million sheep and lambs and 950 million birds are slaughtered in the UK.

1. meat processing facilities: abattoirs, meat processing businesses and/or storage businesses
2. animals arrive at an abattoir/slaughterhouse
3. slaughter and dressing: carcasses are skinned and cleaned
4. preservation by either chilling, freezing or further hygienic processing
5. cutting plant: cutting carcasses into smaller parts or 'cuts'
6. meat distribution services: transport vehicles deliver meat products for further processing or to retailers

This process is regulated by the FSA under their 'official controls'.

The FSA is an independent government department working to protect public health and consumers' wider interests. Official veterinarians (OV) and Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHI) employed by the FSA must have a presence in every slaughterhouse to ensure the safety of fresh meat and high welfare standards are maintained.

The same approach is taken for all relevant businesses.

Slide 7: The current official controls process

1. Approvals for new premises
2. Inspections, sampling and verification and audits
3. Enforcement action

Slide 8: Approvals

- initial approval of Food Operating Business premises to operate
- vital in ensuring that food businesses are run by suitable individuals, in appropriate premises capable of operating an effective Food Safety Management System with proper processes and controls

Slide 9: Inspections

- working with more than 1,200 food establishments to ensure meat entering the food chain is safe for human consumption
- approximately 1.2 million hours a year are spent on inspection
- inspection is necessary to ensure that products consistently meet the appropriate hygiene, safety and where appropriate, welfare standards.

Slide 10: Sampling and verification

- a proportion of meat is selected for sampling
- sampling provides a snapshot that certain specific standards are being met
- usually takes place at the end of a production process
- results are checked and meat is declared fit or unfit for human consumption

Slide 11: Audits

- risk-based audits of processes take place during on-site visits
- audits checks that food businesses have all the necessary systems and controls in place to comply with food safety law
- the frequency of audits is determined by previous performance. Further inspection is required if one or more major non-compliance areas are found during the audit.

Unannounced inspections

- tend to be of businesses without a continuous FSA presence
- unannounced inspections take place between full audits
- the findings will influence the following audits.

Full or partial audits

The outcomes are:

- good
- generally satisfactory
- improvement necessary
- urgent improvement necessary.

Slide 12: Enforcement

- enforcement procedures can result from the inspection process, sampling and verification activities and audit findings
- procedures allow the FSA to support businesses to rectify any areas of non-compliance and halt product if required
- serious non-compliance found at unannounced inspections can require formal enforcement

Slide 13: The Future Delivery Model

- seeks to take a more tailored, risk-based approach
- clearly sets out the role of the FSA in providing assurance activities with food businesses responsible for producing safe food
- greater focus on joint initiatives and sharing knowledge across the sector

Slide 14: The Future Delivery Model (continued)

1. Tailored presence based on the risks: reducing FSA presence with compliant businesses could drive greater overall compliance, and remove the burden from compliant food businesses leading to growth
2. Clearer accountability between industry and the FSA: taking a collaborative approach could improve compliance levels and consumer trust
3. Robust assurance regime linked to intelligence led evidence: a greater assurance regime will provide more intelligence that will help the FSA ensure food safety and better target FSA resources
4. Transparent compliance: greater transparency could improve the ability of retailers and consumers to make informed choices and improve levels of compliance.

Slide 15: 1. Tailored presence

Current model

- there is an FSA presence at all food businesses regardless of their level of compliance.
- this contributes to a largely 'one-size-fits-all' approach to regulation

Future delivery model

- FSA presence at food businesses will be tailored in line with the assessed risk of individual establishments
- risk-based assessments will be determined by a segmentation tool where we will categorise establishments on a risk scale
- this will use robust data and evidence gathered from multiple risk factors including compliance and animal welfare,

Slide 16: 1. Tailored presence (continued)

Inspections and sampling verification

- the FSA maintains a presence in food businesses
- more proportionate and measured assurance activities take place for lower risk establishments
- Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors may spend more time in higher risk establishments

Slide 17: 2. Clearer accountability

Current model

- industry is accountable for producing safe food. The FSA as the regulator is responsible for checking this.
- food businesses are sometimes unclear where their accountability ends as the FSA is always present through Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors.

Future delivery model

- industry will have responsibility and accountability for elements of carcass inspection
- industry remains accountable for producing safe food. The FSA will monitor and verify this as the regulator
- this will allow both the FSA and industry to be clearer about accountability and work more effectively together in the consumer's best interests.

Slide 18: Clearer accountability (continued)

Inspections, sampling and verification

The FSA plays an assurance role during these processes and can intervene where needed for example, providing training, guidance, identifying risks, sharing good practice as well as enforcement activities.

Stronger collaboration between the FSA and food businesses.

Food businesses are more involved in day-to-day implementation for example, inspecting carcasses.

Slide 19: Robust Assurance Regime

Current model

- FSA conducts a range of audits activities including full and partial audits
- these are carried out by Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors
- in addition they also undertake unannounced inspections of food business establishments.

Future delivery model

- the FSA will use robust and clear techniques to ensure a high level of assurance across all stages of food production
- the FSA will work with other assurance organisations and retailers to share data and intelligence to better target out assurance activities.

Slide 20: Robust Assurance Regime (continued)

Approvals, inspections, sampling and verification, audits and enforcement

- the FSA will continue to provide on-site and remote assurance including through: unannounced inspections, remote audits, one to one relationships, sharing best practice
- the FSA will work more with other organisations including collaborating with: Red Tractor, British Retail Consortium, RSPCA Assured and large supermarkets
- there will be a greater use of multiple sources of data.

Slide 21: Transparent compliance

Current model

- compliance data is currently recorded by the FSA but details of the areas of non-compliance are not published
- compliance data is currently not shared between organisations

Future delivery model

- the FSA intends to work with the industry on how best to publish and share compliance information to encourage improved standards and provide consumers with increased confidence

Slide 22: Transparent compliance (continued)

Audits and enforcement

The approach for publishing and sharing information has not been decided. Options could include:

- sharing information amongst a smaller group for example, industry stakeholders or similar food businesses
- publishing all information online for consumers and businesses to access
- could look similar to the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Slide 23: Thank you for taking part in this discussion.

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- [NHS: how to prepare and cook food safely](#)
- [NHS: Food poisoning](#)

If you are located in Wales, please visit:

- [Public Health Wales](#)

Food bank resources:

- [Citizens advice](#)
- [The Trussell Trust \(UK-wide\)](#)
- [FareShare](#) (also operates in Cardiff and Belfast)

2.4 Reconvened workshops stimulus

PDF

[View Appendix 2.4 Reconvened workshops stimulus presentation slides as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (507.63 KB)

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Slide 4: the current official controls process

Every year 2.6 million cattle, 10 million pigs, 14 million sheep and lambs and 950 million birds are slaughtered in the UK. The FSA regulates the meat industry through their Official Controls.

1. Approvals for new premises
2. Inspections, sampling and verification and audits
3. Enforcement action

Slide 5: The Future Delivery Model

- seeks to take a more tailored, risk-based approach
- clearly sets out the role of the FSA in providing assurance activities with food businesses responsible for producing safe food
- greater focus on joint initiatives and sharing knowledge across the sector

Slide 6: Your questions answered

What checks take place for meat being imported from outside the UK?

Imported meat is checked as part of border controls by the Port Health Authorities. It is up to the overseas plant and the overseas regulator to meet another country's standards. Meat imported into the UK has to meet the standards we set for domestic meat producers.

How long has the FSA been inspecting businesses?

The Meat Hygiene Service was established in 1995. The FSA was created in 2000 following the BSE outbreak.

Slide 7: Your questions answered (continued)

How does inspection differ depending on the animal involved?

All carcasses are visually and manually inspected to some degree for signs of pathology or other indicators of unfitness for human consumption. There are some variations between species as to whether inspection is visual only or also physical for example, feeling the carcass/cutting into it.

Do inspectors change or rotate between businesses?

FSA employed inspectors have a base plant. They are required to move around their area if needed, but this is normally infrequent.

Slide 8: Your questions answered (continued)

What enforcement activities can the FSA carry out?

The FSA can force businesses to shut permanently if there is sustained non-compliance and a clear threat to public health. They can also issue fines and take further legal action against a business owner. In some cases, this could result in a prison sentence.

What happens if a business is found to be non-compliant?

If a business is non-compliant, essentially all work stops until it can prove that it is compliant again. This would remain the case under the new approach.

Slide 9: The case for change

- developments both domestically and worldwide are rapidly reshaping the UK's food system and putting pressure on the current delivery model
- the FSA must adapt to these changes in order to ensure continued high standards of food safety and consumer protection
- there is also a need to more strongly incentivise compliance in order to further improve standards

Slide 10: Three key factors

- technology is changing the speed and methods of food production. There has also been an increase in data collection across the industry
- the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted challenges caused by the resource-intensive nature of the current model and has offered up opportunities to work differently. This includes remote audits and certain qualified plant staff undertaking some inspection duties
- the UK's exit from the EU has had a significant impact on the resources required to provide our trading partners with necessary assurances about the UK's food control system. For example, Official veterinarians have been involved with additional assurance activities around exported meat and meat products.

Slide 11: Arthur, Meat Hygiene Inspector

- Arthur has worked in plants across the Northern Region since he first began his career over 25 years ago.
- as he is not stood on the production line for 8 to 10 hours a day anymore, he has time to do things he previously struggled to fit in like Health and Safety training and performance management. For example, he can now carry out more animal welfare spot checks and sampling activities
- he can now download his day's duties directly from the system to his smartphone. Since he's had training and used it a few times, he really sees the benefits of this new technology
- as a long-serving Meat Hygiene Inspector, he believes that there should be 100% independent meat inspection in every plant and challenges the view that highly compliant plants should do some of their own carcass inspection. He feels this is how it has always been done and he is concerned about the impact on his job of the new approach.

Slide 12: Sarah, Official Veterinarian

- Sarah has worked as an Official Veterinarian for four years. She enjoys the variety of her role and the opportunities to learn about new things

- she provides guidance to food businesses to improve their procedures in the production of safe food. An important part of her job is to ensure that changes to legal requirements are followed up and implemented
- however, she is concerned that she will lose some control if food businesses have more accountability in certain processes and she spends less time on-site
- if she only attends the plant for audits and unannounced visits, she worries about losing her knowledge of the plant. She is also concerned that her relationship with the business employees may not be as good as it was.

Slide 13: Jameson's meat

- Jameson's meat is a slaughterhouse that specialises in beef and lamb. The business prides itself on meeting high standards related to hygiene and animal welfare, building on its long history in the industry
- it has had consistently excellent audit and unannounced inspection results for many years. The team are always striving to improve and maintain their reputation
- Because of their record of compliance, some staff at the plant have been trained in conducting aspects of carcass inspection and have started to do this as part of their role. A Meat Hygiene Inspector from the FSA still attends the the plant every day. But instead of inspecting the carcasses on the line, they carry out other activities instead. The plant is also audited and receives unannounced inspections.

Slide 14: Smith Brothers

- Smith Brothers has had a number of concerns identified at audits and unannounced inspection over the last few years. Although there has been some improvement recently, the plant receives a low score in the risk assessment tool. This means a Meat Hygiene Inspector will remain permanently present on the production line to inspect every carcass
- another Meat Hygiene Inspector from a high performing plant is now able to attend the business more frequently for unannounced inspections. They have received training from this MHI and they have started to put together a plan for improving their compliance
- although the plant manager is hopeful things will get better, he feels the system is unfair as their score does not reflect recent improvements. He also worries about the public having access to their compliance score as this could reduce demand for their products. Some retailers have already chosen not to use the business because of this.

Slide 15: Tim, household shopper

- Tim is a father of two who tries to buy organic ingredients when he can. He tends to do the weekly shop in his household and often looks at the labels of food before buying something
- he likes the way meat products now have a label showing the performance of the abattoir that the meat came from
- he will always buy meat with a high performing label. However, he worries about what his children eat at school as he doesn't know the performance of the plant where the meat came from.

Slide 16: Fast and Fresh supermarket

- the fast and fresh buying team know the power of consumer demand and expectations. They want to meet a range of consumer shopping budgets, ensure that the meat they source is safe for everyone and is traceable. They recognise the importance to some customers of high animal welfare standards

- regardless of the product range, consumer safety is their number one priority. They feel that the inclusion of the meat plant's compliance score on the packaging is valued by their customers
- the FSA shares its compliance data with the supermarket's own assurance teams and vice versa. This means they can check that the results are consistent and any issues and trends can be more easily identified. This helps the supermarket to act on any issues quickly and provides additional assurance about their supply chain.

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