

Summary of discussions at FSA Board meeting – 26 September 2022

Response to progress on the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill

Board members were provided with an update on [the FSA's work on the UK Government's Genetic Technology \(Precision Breeding\) Bill](#), which proposes changes to the law regulating food and feed products produced using techniques like precision breeding. As the law would only apply in England, Board members raised the importance of minimising divergence within GB and were keen to hear about the progress of the European Union's regulation of precision bred crops. ??

Consumer information was also recognised as an important part of the Bill's development and the Board welcomed the ongoing FSA research and engagement with stakeholders to determine what consumer information is needed and why. The Board also agreed the benefits of developing a public register of authorised precision bred food and feed products to promote consumer information and confidence.

FSA Chair Professor Susan Jebb said:

“The development of a public register is an essential component of the system to give people the information they need about food produced using this technology. The FSA must continue to gather evidence that represents the interests of consumers in relation to precision breeding as the Bill progresses.”

The Board agreed that the FSA should continue to develop a new regulatory framework for precision bred products which is proportionate, transparent, and based rigorously on the science and evidence to ensure products are brought to market without compromising food safety or consumer confidence.??A proposed two-tiered authorisation process was discussed, with products assigned to the relevant tier dependent on their level of risk. Those products where initial screening does not allow the risk to be understood would be assigned to a higher tier and subject to an additional step in the authorisation process.

The Board will be updated on progress again at the next Board meeting in December.?

The Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme

The Board was updated on the work of the Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme, which is modernising how local authorities check and inspect food businesses.

The Board endorsed the decision to consult on changes which would introduce a more proportionate, intelligence-driven model for local authorities to check businesses are following rules so that food is what it says it is. They also heard about a project to reform the way in which local authorities check businesses' food hygiene standards.

The Board was updated on a new pilot involving five large retailers and their primary authorities to trial a new approach to regulation at an enterprise level.

Work currently being undertaken with three major online delivery platforms (Uber Eats, Deliveroo and Just Eat) to develop a Food Safety Charter was also noted by the Board.

The Retained EU Law Bill

During her report to the Board, FSA Chief Executive Emily Miles reflected on the potential impact of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, introduced to Parliament last week. The Bill aims to end the special status of all EU-derived legislation by the end of December 2023, at which point any remaining retained laws will either be repealed or assimilated in UK domestic law.

Emily estimated that the FSA is responsible for over 100 pieces of legislation related to food hygiene and safety, in addition to over 30 pieces of legislation relating to food composition and labelling for which the FSA has responsibility in Wales. She added there is significant pressure to do that work as soon as possible but noted there would inevitably be a 'trade off' between speed and reform.

In her response to this, FSA Chair Susan Jebb said:

The [agenda and meeting papers for FSA Board Meeting - September 2022](#) are available to read and you can watch [FSA Board Meeting - September 2022](#) on YouTube. You can also hear more from our Chair, Susan Jebb, in her [piece on the Brexit Freedoms Bill](#).

“It’s clear we cannot simply sunset the laws for which we are responsible without risking both public health and our ability to trade internationally, and I’m sure this is not the government’s intention with these plans. It’s also important for us to remember that individual pieces of law are intertwined in a complex system which links to legislation held by other government departments.

“I am keen to consider whether we can create a new Food and Feed Bill to replace much of the EU Law. I will prioritise engaging with Ministers to discuss our pre-existing plans for reform and how they may be incorporated as part of this process and much of this will depend on their appetite for speed versus reform. I am also very conscious of our responsibilities to the devolved governments, and I will be looking to meet with them too.

“I hope the Executive team will work with stakeholders from both industry and consumer groups to understand their priorities so that by the December Board meeting, we will be in a better position to discuss the way we will approach this huge change in legislation whilst remaining fully committed to ensuring that food is safe and what it says it is.”