

FSA and Official Controls: methodology

Overview

A mixed method approach was chosen to meet the study's research objectives. A quantitative survey was conducted with 400 FBOs, across four sectors (dairy, meat including game, wine and shellfish), in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This was followed by in-depth interviews with 60 FBOs, who agreed to take part in the qualitative strand at the end of the survey. Fieldwork took place between June and August 2022.

This adopted a similar method to the first wave of the research, conducted in 2020. The 2020 research did not include FBOs in Northern Ireland, or those in the shellfish sector.

The full dataset from this survey will be available in the [FSA data catalog](#).

Sampling

The sample of FBOs was provided by the FSA. Tele-matching was conducted on the sample from Northern Ireland on all sectors, the meat and wine sectors in Wales, and the wine and shellfish sectors in England, achieving 65 more contacts in these areas.

Despite the additional tele-matching work, the sample was relatively limited in certain areas, particularly Northern Ireland (54), as well as the shellfish (22) and wine (163) sectors. This meant a limited level of analysis could be conducted on these areas at later stages of the research.

The sample provided by the FSA was sourced from slightly different places when we look at source by country and sector. The sample provided included: A full list of meat (cutting plants, slaughterhouses and game establishments) and dairy FBOs (registered dairy farms) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; a sample of wine FBOs (vineyards, warehouses and wholesalers) from each region who have had an inspection in the last few years (the same approach taken in 2020) and a list of shellfish FBOs in England and Northern Ireland which the FSA held contact details for.

The sample available at the start of fieldwork is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Sample available at the start of fieldwork

Sector	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total by sector
Diary	6,034	1,422	0	7,456
Meat	745	48	45	838
Shellfish	12	0	9	21

Sector	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total by sector
Wine	161	2	0	163
Total by country	6,952	1,472	54	8,478

Targets were set by both country and sector, to ensure sufficient representation across each subgroup. Any sample with a relevant telephone number was considered 'within scope' and where there was ample sample available, for example the dairy sector in England, random selection was applied to reach targets.

Prior to fieldwork starting IFF produced a communication plan. This included communication materials for FSA staff to share with industry, including trade bodies, and FSA staff working in field operations, to make them aware of the research and the requirement for FBOs.

Survey Methodology

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was largely based on the 2020 version to allow for time series analysis. This captured views on the FSA, its communication with FBOs, satisfaction with particular activities and views on compliance. However, updates were made to reflect changing policy considerations, research objectives and the changing environment for FBOs. New sections were added to cover perceptions of the FSA's response to COVID-19 and the UK's exit from the EU, as well as familiarity and views on OTP initiatives.

Both cognitive testing and a pilot phase was used to refine the survey.

Cognitive testing

Cognitive testing interviews were conducted to ensure that FBOs interpreted and understood the questions and response options within the survey accurately and to check relevance of topic content with the audience.

Although we focused on new or amended questions at this wave. It was not only used as an opportunity to test new sections of the survey, but also decisions were made to update historical aspects of the survey where priorities between keeping consistency and optimising the questionnaire wording had been weighed up.

A total of eight cognitive interviews were conducted, with the questionnaire updated subsequently to account for the feedback received.

Pilot survey

A short pilot fieldwork exercise was conducted between 13 June and 15 June 2022.

In total 25 interviews were conducted, with responses achieved across a range of subgroups. The questionnaire on the whole performed well, although some minor adjustments were made to optimise the survey for the mainstage. As only minor changes were made at this point, these responses are included in the final dataset.

Fieldwork

Mainstage quantitative fieldwork took place between 24 June and 18 July 2022. In total 375 interviews were completed, as targeted. The profile of the achieved by country and sector is presented in Table 3.2 below, incorporating both pilot and mainstage completes.

Owing to sample limitations only a handful of responses were achieved in Northern Ireland (6) and the shellfish sector (5).

Table 3.2. Quantitative survey, breakdown of completes by sector and country

Sector	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total completes by sector
Diary	200	64	0	264
Meat	83	10	6	99
Shellfish	5	0	0	5
Wine	32	0	0	32
Total completed by country	328	74	6	400

A total of 227 respondents agreed to be recontacted for a follow-up interview. This represented 57% of all completes.

Analysis

Following the end of fieldwork, open-ended responses were coded to an agreed specification. Excel data tabulations were then produced containing subgroups as cross-breaks to facilitate analysis.

Qualitative methodology

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 60 FBOs that took part in the survey.

The topic guide contained similar coverage as the survey, but was framed to understand in more detail the context of the businesses, and what informed the answers they provided in the survey. Similar to the 2020 topic guide, it included additional sections on COVID-19, EU exit and the OTP to cover objectives relevant to this wave.

Interviews typically lasted 40 to 45 minutes, with fieldwork occurring between 13 July and 15 August 2022. FBOs were provided a financial incentive as a thank you for taking part. The profile of the achieved responses by country and sector is presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3. Qualitative interviews, breakdown of completes by sector and country

Sector	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total completes by sector
Dairy	22	16	0	38
Meat	12	1	1	14
Shellfish	2	0	0	2
Wine	6	0	0	6
Total completes by country	42	17	1	60

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to explore key narratives developing through the interviews, using an Excel-based framework to achieve this. Key subgroups were also included to support analysis by sector and country in particular.

Reporting conventions

Throughout the report the term 'FBOs' for Food Business Operators is used to refer to the sample and target audience.

Charts have been set up using an accessible colour and pattern template. Arrows indicate a significant difference from 2020, while an asterisk '**' indicates a significant difference between one sector and all other sectors in 2022.

All differences between sub-groups and previous waves of the research stated in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless otherwise stated.

When considering time series analysis, it is important to consider the slightly different composition of the sample. The 2022 data contains some responses from Northern Ireland FBOs and those in the shellfish sector, which were not obtained in 2020. Furthermore, in 2022 there was a slightly higher proportion of responses from those in the dairy sector and a lower proportion of responses from those in the wine sector, compared to 2020. 'Don't know' options were provided as a new answer category for some questions in 2022, which may affect the comparability of these questions.

Key subgroups of interest are business sector and country, although other subgroup areas of interest are presented for relevant measures. Owing to the limited sample available for Northern Ireland and Shellfish, findings within these subgroups have not been presented in this report (although they do appear in the overall survey findings and in the data tables accompanying this report). Furthermore, findings pertaining to the wine sector should be treated with caution owing to the low base size (32).