

FSA and Official Controls: Communication with the FSA

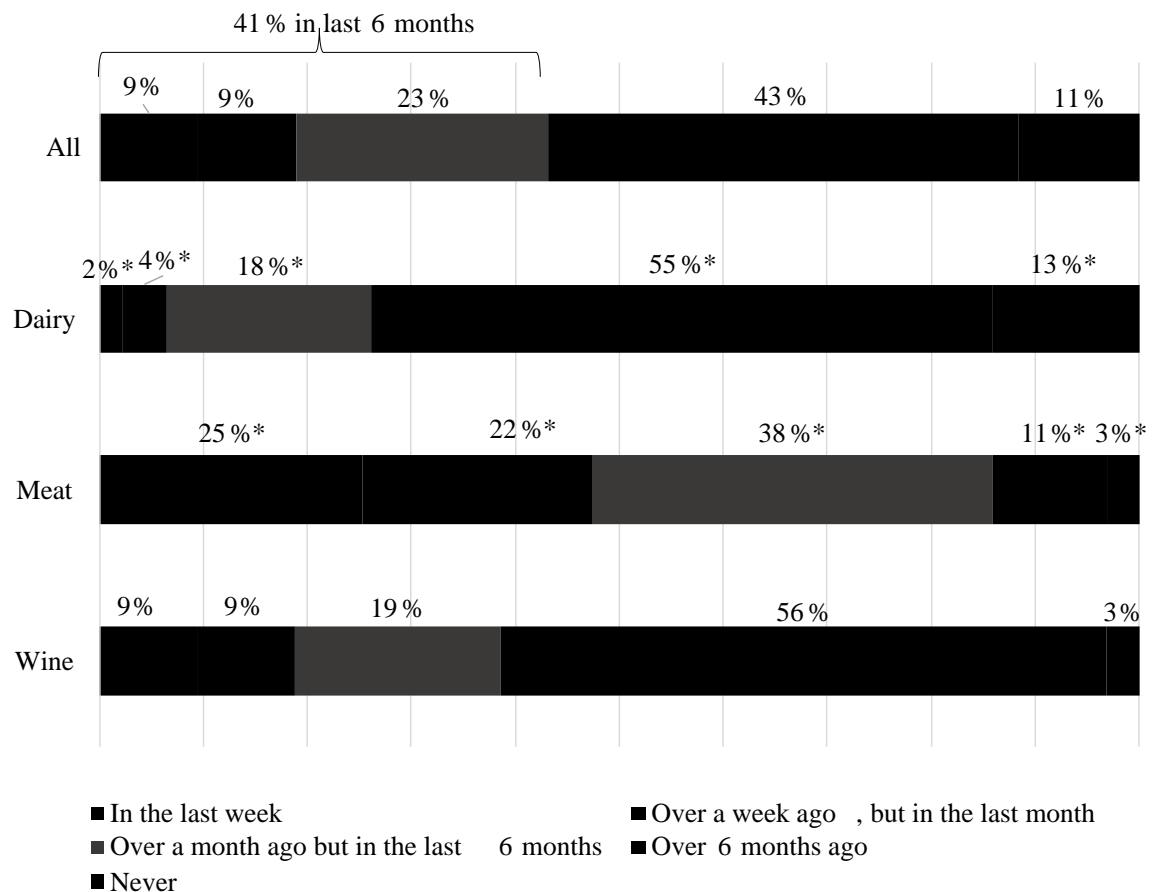
Due to the differences in regulatory approach, FBOs in the meat sector will have daily contact with the FSA through Meat Hygiene Inspectors and Official Veterinarians based on-site while routine inspections in the wine and dairy sectors are less frequent.

Last contact with the FSA

All FBOs participating were asked when they last had contact with the FSA. Frequency of communication varied: two-fifths (41%) had received contact from the FSA in the last 6 months, while a similar proportion (43%) had received contact from the FSA longer than 6 months ago. A minority had never have contact with or had not heard from the FSA (11%), as shown in Figure 5.1. These proportions were consistent with 2020.

FSA contact with FBOs in the meat sector was far more frequent than in other sectors as expected due to Meat Hygiene Inspectors and Official Veterinarians being based on site. For example, a quarter (25%) of FBOs in the meat sector reported that they had last had contact with the FSA in the last week. This compared to 9% of FBOs in the wine sector and just 2% in dairy. Indeed, at least half of FBOs in the dairy sector (55%) and wine sector (56%) reported that it had been over six months since they last had contact with the FSA. This reflects the pattern in the 2020 results. There were no country differences.

Figure 5.1 Last contact with the FSA



B1. When did you last have contact with or hear from the FSA? Base: All businesses (400); Dairy (264), Meat (99), Wine (32). ‘*’ indicates a significant difference from all other sectors. Don’t know figures have not been presented in the chart

In terms of the type of communication, face-to-face meetings were most common (67%), followed by letters (44%) and phone calls (41%). The proportion of FBOs who had had face-to-face meetings with the FSA had increased from 59% in 2020 to 67% in 2022. Meanwhile, the receipt of letters specifically addressed to the FBO went down from 53% in 2020 to 44% in 2022.

There was considerable variation by sector. As shown in Table 5.1, FBOs in the meat sector in particular were more likely to receive a range of forms of communication than FBOs in other sectors (in particular those in dairy). However, across all sectors, face-to-face meetings were still the most common type of communication.

Table 5.1 Types of communication received from the FSA

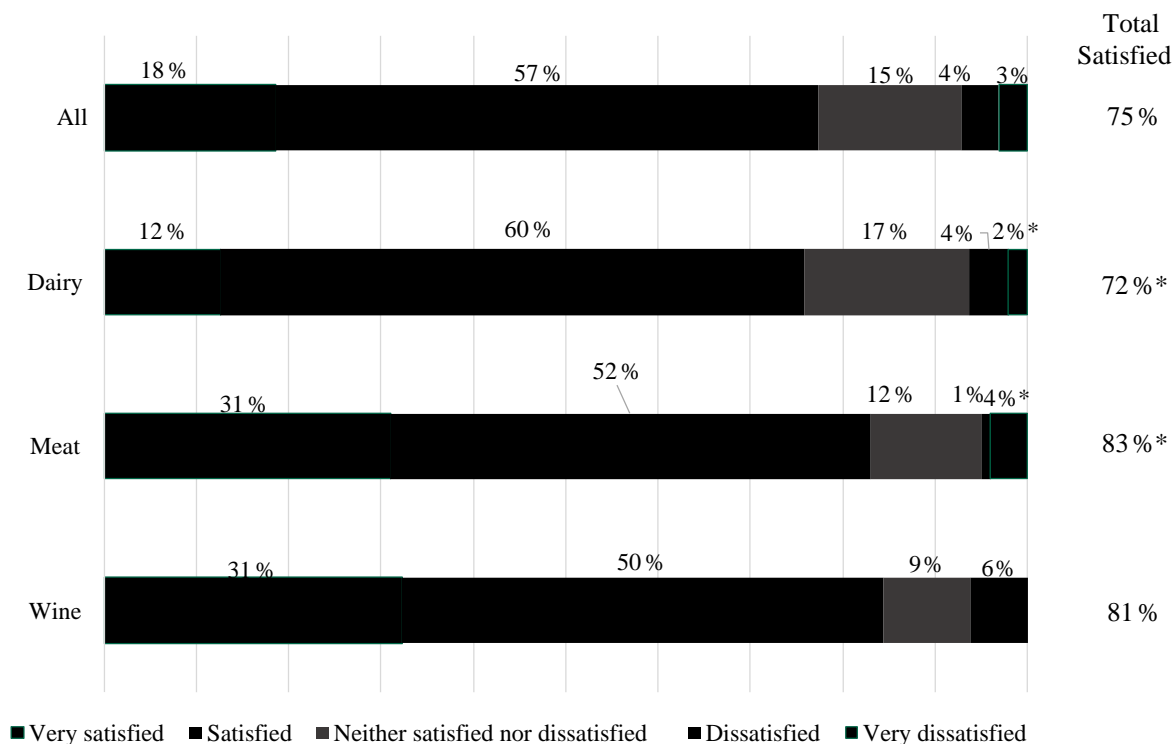
Sector	All	Dairy	Meat	Wine
Face to face meetings	67% (increase)	*56%	*90%	*94%
Letter specially for the FBO	44% (decrease)	*39%	*67%	*22%
Phone calls	41%	*28%	*69%	*63%

Sector	All	Dairy	Meat	Wine
Emails specifically for the FBO	39%	*20%	*79%	*63%
Emails from mailing list	32%	*17%	*69%	38%
Newsletters	29%	28%	*38%	6%
Social media feeds	8%	6%	11%	6%

Base: All businesses (400); Dairy (264), Meat (99), Wine (32). Arrows indicate a significant difference from 2020. ‘*’ indicates a significant difference from all other sectors. Codes where the overall proportion is under 8% are not shown.

All FBOs were asked how satisfied they were with the FSA’s communication with them. Overall, three quarters (75%) were satisfied with the communications they receive from the FSA (18% ‘very’ satisfied), and just six per cent were dissatisfied. There were no differences between 2022 and 2020. By sector, there was higher satisfaction in the meat (83%) and wine (81%) sectors when compared to the dairy sector (72%), as shown in Figure 5.2. There was very little difference by country.

Figure 5.2 Satisfaction with the communication received from the FSA



D4. Overall how satisfied would you say you are with FSA’s communication with you? Base: All businesses (400); Dairy (264), Meat (99), Wine (32). ‘*’ indicates a significant difference from all other sectors. Don’t know figures have not been presented in the chart

Reasons for dissatisfaction with communications

The qualitative interviews revealed some of the key reasons for dissatisfaction with the FSA's communications. It is important to note that only a small minority (6%) of FBOs were dissatisfied with the communication they had.

Firstly, many FBOs were happy that 'no news is good news' in relation to their contact with the FSA. They felt that most of their communication was face-to-face, and that this was sufficient for them. However, there were also FBOs that were unhappy with the lack of proactivity by the FSA in terms of sharing information on key changes to guidelines or legislative changes that will affect FBOs. In some cases, FBOs noted how this compared poorly to some of the other bodies they work with in regulations.

"The FSA could be more proactive in getting across to farmers what changes they want them to implement are and why." (Dairy, England)

"I would like an email once a year with updates on what their plan is specifically with the dairy industry [e.g.] things they've noticed, problems they've had" (Dairy, England)

The second most common reason for dissatisfaction with the FSA's communication was due to the delay in the FSA getting back to FBOs on queries they have.

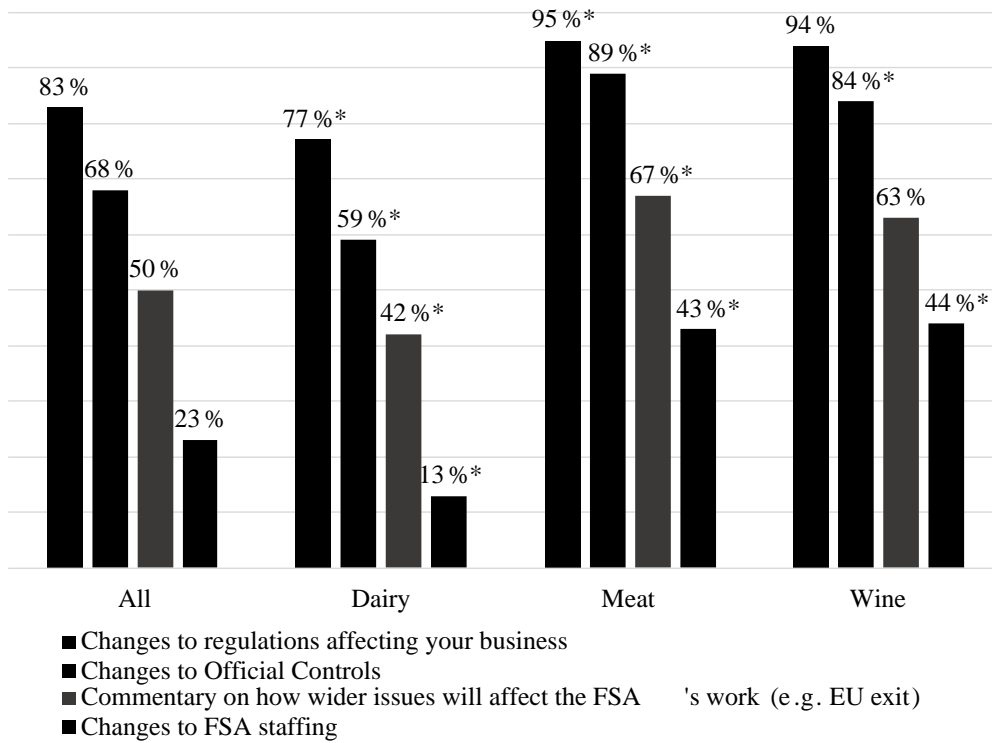
"They have a shortage of staff. This time of year things slip, so it takes 10 days before they come back to you." (Meat, Wales)

Types of messages and information that FBOs value

In the 2022 survey, FBOs were asked what types of messages and information they value receiving from the FSA. They were presented with a list, which included changes to regulations affecting their business, changes to Official Controls etc, commentary on how wider issues will affect the FSA's work and changes to FSA staffing.

Overall, communication that focussed on specific regulations was typically deemed most valuable. The vast majority (83%) reported that messages concerning changes to relevant regulations was valuable, while over two-thirds (68%) also noted the importance of communications about the change to Official Controls. Messages pertaining to wider issues and noting changes to FSA staffing were less widely valued (50% and 23% respectively). As shown in Figure 5.3, these figures differed somewhat by sector, although the order of preference remained consistent.

Figure 5.3 Types of information and messages from the FSA and the extent they are valued



D5. What types of messages and information do you value from the FSA? Base: All businesses (400); Dairy (264), Meat (99), Wine (32). ‘*’ indicates a significant difference from all other sectors. This chart only includes the top 4 results.