Research and evidence

The FSA remains a science-driven organisation.

Science is integral to our work. We continue to put science at the heart of everything we do to ensure that robust evidence is used to inform decisions made by the organisation and others. The FSA remains a science-driven organisation. To ensure that the UK has effective, post-EU food regulation in place, we have invested in a new ‘best in class’ risk analysis process. Essential to this is an expanded and enhanced risk assessment capability, designed to replace the one currently provided via the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Objectives 2021/22

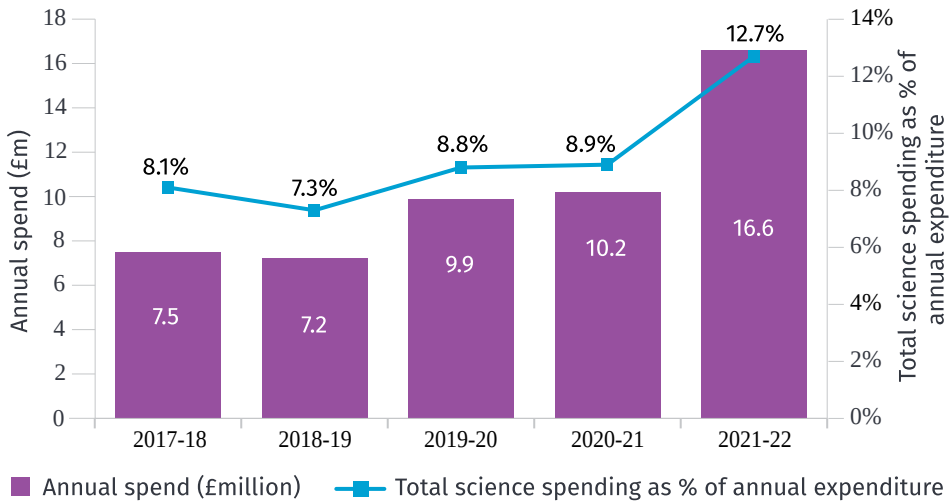
- making risk analysis work
- building science excellence
- prepared for the future
- growing our influence and impact

Science spend

We have increased investment in our capability, which has enabled us to deliver the additional post-EU Exit responsibilities and build a more strategic research function.

£16.6 Million total spending for science, evidence, and research in 2021/22, compared to £10.2 million in 2020/21. This means science spending accounts for 12.7% of the Annual FSA Net Expenditure which is an increase from previous years.

Figure 5 Science spend

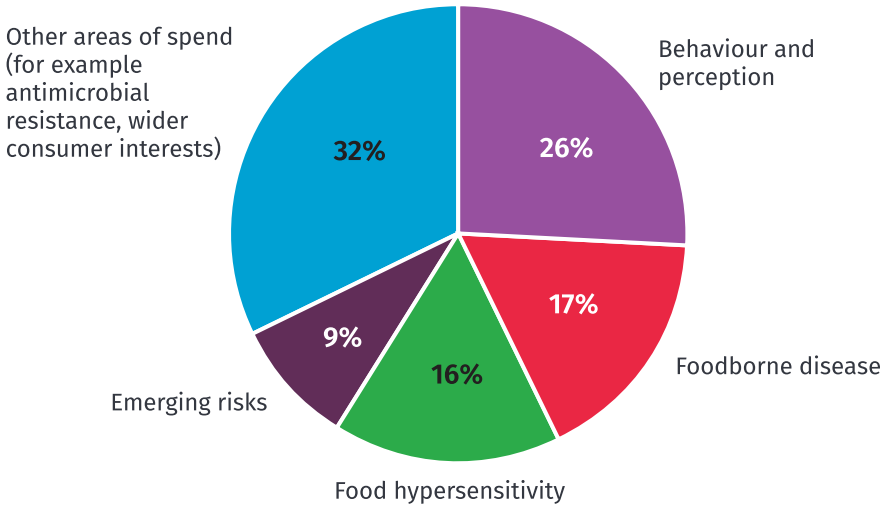


Progress against objectives

- increased the number of science staff by over 40% within the reporting period, ensuring capacity and capability to continue to deliver science excellence.

- delivered the risk assessment function for food and feed in the first year post transition, both for previously delivered work areas and the newly repatriated
- requirements to support the Great Britain market authorisations of regulated products and trade. The combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and working separately from the EU have not affected the ability of the FSA to deliver food and feed incident risk assessments.
- established and embedded 11 effective research and evidence programmes to promote the prioritised, efficient, and transparent delivery of quality science and evidence.
- published approximately 60 scientific reports produced as part of our research programmes, including 6 peer-reviewed journals.
- leading on the cross-government PATH-SAFE research programme (detail below).

Figure 6 Distribution of spend across the FSA research and evidence programme



Risk assessment

Our work on risk assessment is delivered in the context of the risk analysis process, details of which you can find in the Risk analysis process and regulated products section below. In the reporting year we have:

- increased our capability to respond to the increased demands for our service. This was both in terms of our staff and the access to experts though our advisory committees.
- ensured robust and effective quality assurance processes were in place to ensure our work is proportionate and timely to address risk management questions.
- applied a continuous improvement approach to our regulated products assessment processes to make best use of the available resources to meet FSA priorities in this area.

PATH-SAFE – The Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and Environment (PATH?SAFE) programme is a £19.2 million Shared Outcomes Fund (SOF) research programme which aims to develop a national surveillance network, using the latest DNA-sequencing technology and environmental sampling to improve the detection, and tracking of foodborne pathogens and AMR through the whole agri-food system. The heart of this 'virtual' network will be a new data platform which will permit the analysis, storage and sharing of pathogen sequence and source data, collected from multiple locations across the UK by diverse government and public organisations. The programme includes pilot studies across all four nations of the UK, with strong working relationships developing and proposals in preparation across all administrations. This single, user-friendly data system will enable rapid identification and tracking of foodborne pathogens and AMR, improving public health, and minimising the economic and environmental impact of outbreaks.

The programme started in 201 after initial delays. Recruitment to project teams (both technical and project management) took place in earnest across all partner organisations, along with procurement activities across all workstreams. Our Advisory Boards were set up, our governance procedures, Delivery Board and Strategic Board were put in place. The programme undertook engagement opportunities to develop our stakeholder base across academia, government, business and the voluntary sector. Between November 2021 and March 2022, we focused on scoping activities across the programme to deliver our four workstreams.

Workstream aims

- establish a curated, national foodborne disease genomic data platform
- develop a pilot infrastructure for regular, multi-location sampling for FBD pathogens and AMR in the agri-food environment
- understand the feasibility of using portable diagnostics as inspection tools
- develop a pilot environmental AMR surveillance system

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