Risk Analysis process

Risk Analysis is how we ensure the UK maintains high standards of food and feed safety and protect consumers.

Risk analysis is the process of assessing, managing and communicating the safety risks within food and animal feed. It is how we ensure the UK maintains high standards of food and feed safety and protect consumers by identifying and assessing risks, providing guidance to mitigate against them. From 1 January 2021, the FSA (together with FSS) took on the responsibility for many functions previously carried out by the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority.

Objectives in 2021/22

The aim of the risk analysis process is:

- to provide confidence that FSA advice delivers public health protection
- consider consumers' other interests in relation to food
- to be informed by science and evidence
- to be independent

Our objective for 2021/22 was to refine detailed operational procedures underpinning the process to ensure our work had these fully embedded.

Progress against objectives

The FSA follows globally recognised frameworks for risk analysis. The stages of the risk analysis process can be seen on our published flow diagram. Our risk analysis approach has been applied as part of a new UK process to advise government ministers on authorising regulated food and feed products.

The Board received regular reports about issues currently progressing through the risk analysis process. There are three broad categories of issue within the risk analysis process:

- **'Self-tasked'**: issues where the FSA identifies a food or feed safety issue for consideration
- **'Externally requested':** issues where the FSA is asked to provide risk assessment and/or risk management advice by Ministers or officials in other parts of government.
- **Regulated products:** for specific categories of food and feed must follow an authorisation processes laid down in legislation.

In the first year of operation, we have:

- commenced risk analysis work relating to: the chemical contaminants Dioxin and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB); Perfluorinated Alkyl Substances (PFAS); and the safety of Titanium Dioxide (E 171) as a food additive. We completed a review of radiological controls on imports from Japan following the Fukushima nuclear incident
- received 2 requests from Defra to provide risk assessment and public health advice to support development of future borders policy.
  progressed work on 420 live regulated products applications.

To support our commitment to transparent risk analysis, we publish and regularly update two registers which set out the applications in our regulated products service, and the issues going through the risk analysis process. Additionally, we held public consultations on:

- 9 genetically modified organism applications
- 6 novel food applications
- we have reviewed Fukushima import controls which led to a risk assessment published with more to follow.

We provided extensive training and support to industry in the run up to launch of the Regulated Products service, including a series of webinars. We provided pre-application support and input for companies making applications for CBD products and continue to communicate with industry.

Under provisional UK Frameworks and our risk analysis process we have mechanisms such as cross-government working groups in place to enable a four-nation approach, so we can deliver risk management interventions that are effective for the UK as a whole or for individual countries as needed. UK Frameworks include scope for interministerial discussions on decisions if needed.

Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, Northern Ireland must comply with EU food and feed law, resulting in different regulatory arrangements applying in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK. We continue to consider the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland, whilst accepting that the protocol will restrict the decisions that can be taken in Northern Ireland, in respect to UK risk analysis outcomes. For more information on regulated products, please read the Regulated products section below.

Supporting innovation in the food industry

Since leaving the EU, the responsibility for the assessment of regulated food and feed products in the UK now sits with the FSA and FSS. We will be reviewing the authorisation processes and looking for opportunities for reform to enable us to better respond to challenges such as new developments in technology and changes in consumer demand. As part of this work, the FSA are commissioning a review of the novel foods regulatory framework. This will evaluate the current framework and develop proposals for new models and approaches. It will form part of a wider reform programme looking at opportunities to remove unnecessary burden from authorisation processes, support food industry innovation and deliver a world-class service whilst upholding food standards.

Protecting consumer interests and upholding food standards will always be our top priority in any proposed changes we make to create a transparent and effective system that is the best in the world for innovators, investors, and consumers.

Back to the Main report: Activities and Performances 2021/22.