

Welsh Food Advisory Committee Director's Report – February 2023

Report by Nathan Barnhouse, Director of FSA in Wales.

1. Summary

1.1 This report provides a brief summary of subjects introduced by the Chief Executive at the last Board meeting, held on 7 December 2022, and other activities relevant to the FSA remit in Wales.

1.2 Members of the committee are invited to:

- note the update
- invite the Director to expand on any issues for further discussion

2. Chief Executive's Report to the Board

2.1 The Board received the [Chief Executive's Report](#).

3. FSA in Wales Senior External Engagement

3.1 Since the last WFAC themed meeting on 20 October, senior management have been involved in the following external engagement opportunities:

- 1 November – Chief Medical Officer's Health Protection Advisory Group meeting.
- 9 November – Attendance at the BBC 4 Food and Farming Awards.
- 16 November – The Changing Food Landscape: The United Kingdom Association for Food Protection Annual Conference. Robin May and Nathan presented on the 'FSA's Role in a Changing Food System'. The event was organised by Zero2Five, the food industry centre in Cardiff Metropolitan University. You can read more about the conference Cardiff Met's news article.
- 24 November – Ministerial meeting with the Minister for Economy, Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing and Board Chair to discuss the Border Target Operating Model.
- 29 November – FSA in Wales and Welsh Government Quarterly Liaison meeting to discuss key issues.
- 17 January – Nathan and Jonathan Davies attended the Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA) Annual Plan Consultation Event for Stakeholders in Wales to learn more about the CMA's forward plan and network with other regulators in Wales.
- 23 January – FSA in Wales and Welsh Government Quarterly Liaison meeting to discuss key issues.
- 26 January – Meeting of the Safe, Sustainable, Authentic Food Wales group to include an update on ongoing issues within industry from UK Hospitality and the Nationwide Caterers Association (NCASS).

3.2 External engagement forward look:

- 14 February – Visit to accompany a Food Hygiene Inspection with Torfaen CBC

- 7 March – Chief Medical Officer’s Health Protection Advisory Group meeting.
- 25 April – FSA in Wales/Welsh Government quarterly liaison meeting

4. Matters of interest to WFAC pertaining to FSA in Wales

4.1 Precision breeding (PB)

The FSA in Wales held a successful workshop with Welsh Government (WG) officials on 22 November to discuss the FSA’s policy position and work around PB. The workshop helped the FSA understand WG views on the key areas of policy development, including traceability, the register and consumer interests. It was also an opportunity to discuss WG’s key priorities on precision breeding and the next steps for engagement with WG officials. This was a good first step in gaining a better understanding on the WG position. We have continued to maintain regular contact and have a constructive working relationship with WG policy officials.

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill removes plants and animals produced using modern biotechnologies, and the food and feed derived from them, from Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) regulations in England if those organisms could have occurred naturally or been produced by traditional methods. A debate was held in the Senedd on 17 January 2023 and the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) motion laid by Welsh Ministers was not approved, meaning members voted to withhold consent on the Bill. The Senedd sent the outcome of the vote to the UK Government, and this has been published on the Bill’s website. The UK Government view is that an LCM was not required for this Bill and consequently there are no further actions for them to take. The Bill is currently at the report stage in the House of Lords and we continue to monitor its progress.

4.2 Wales Annual Report and Accounts

The Food Standards Agency in Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2021-2022 were laid bilingually in the Senedd on 19 January 2023. A copy of the report can be found on the [Senedd website](#).

4.3 Senedd Plenary to debate The Food and Feed (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) (EU Exit) Regulations 2022 (“Wash Up 4”)

Following a successful pre-meeting with the Deputy Minister to discuss the Wash Up Statutory Instrument (SI), the Senedd debated its content on 13 December. The FSA team in Wales and Welsh Government (WG) officials supported the Minister during the pre-meeting and this involved a significant amount of input from FSA in Wales officials. The SI was successfully passed by a vote of 34 to 15 and the Hygiene Policy team will now be working with WG officials to correct some drafting errors to the SI.

4.4 Recall of a small number of human breast milk incident

The Incidents Team in Wales were involved in the incident involving elevated levels of lead in human breastmilk (NeoKare products). Of the 7 hospitals supplied with this product, one was in Wales. The response to this incident was a collaboration between the FSA, Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, NHS Wales, Department of Health and Social Care, UK Health Security Agency, NHS England, and Food Standards Scotland. [Proactive communications](#) were issued on 6 January.

4.5 Recognition of FSA Welsh Language Services

The Welsh Language Commissioner recently identified the Food Standards Agency as an exemplar for bilingual communication campaigns in Wales. As such, Lisa Pugh, Welsh Language Manager and Lowri Williams, Senior Comms Manager were invited by the Commissioner to present at the Commissioner’s ‘Using Welsh Language Services’ webinar. This best practice case

study will also be included on the Commissioner's website and best practice toolkit for other organisations.

4.6 FSA in Wales office move

As previously updated in WFAC meetings, the FSA Cardiff office will be moving into the Welsh Government building in Cathays Park in July 2023. Our respective legal teams are currently finalising lease arrangements and we are designing our space based on staff requirements. Staff are also being kept informed on developments on a regular basis.

4.7 Annual review of the Farm Assured Welsh Livestock scheme (FAWL)

The Audit and Assurance team in Wales have recently completed the annual assessment of the FAWL earned recognition scheme ([footnote 1](#)). The FSA in Wales has approved the FAWL assurance scheme for the purposes of earned recognition for the delivery of animal feed official controls and as part of the governance arrangements have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers (WLBP). This requires the FSA to review the scheme on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to meet the required standard for earned recognition. This work will result in the continued operation of the scheme by WLBP for a further 12 months.

4.8 Smoked fish consumer messaging

In the run up to Christmas our communications team in Wales worked with colleagues across the 3 nations to issue messaging aimed at certain groups reminding them to heat ready-to-eat smoked fish until steaming hot before eating it, due to risk of Listeria. These consumers include those who are pregnant, people over 65 and those with certain underlying conditions or taking medications which can weaken the immune system.

4.9 Winter food affordability communications campaign

As part of a long-term campaign to support wider activity on the cost-of-living challenges, the Communications team in Wales has been proactively providing consumer advice on topics focused on the 4Cs (chilling, cooking, cross-contamination, cleaning) such as bulk cooking, freezing food and best before dates, with a focus on activities that enable the consumer to reduce both costs and waste during the autumn to winter period. We're focusing these messages through social media, using paid for promotion and boosting adverts to target the most vulnerable groups.

5. Consultations

5.1 Live Consultations:

Consultation on a proposed updated FSA Official Control Compliance Framework for Registered Dairy Establishments in England and Wales

This consultation is seeking stakeholder comments on a proposal to apply an updated compliance framework to primary production official control inspections completed by FSA at registered dairy establishments in England and Wales and subsequent use of this framework to dictate the frequency of the next inspection.

Date launched: 12 December 2022

Closing date: 10 March 2023

Applications for authorisation of miscellaneous regulated products: one novel food and one food additive

This consultation is seeking stakeholders' views in relation to regulated product applications for authorisation of miscellaneous regulated products: one novel food and one food additive.

Date launched: 23 January 2023

Closing date: 6 February 2023

5.2 Forward look:

Here to Help 2.0 communications campaign (March 2023)

This follows a previous Here to Help campaign to support businesses during times of economic uncertainty. With government emphasis on promoting business growth and our own strategic emphasis on helping businesses do the right thing, we will continue to highlight and champion FSA support available to businesses, including in Wales. The aim is to showcase how we're working to make it easier for businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing for consumers by removing obstacles that may impact them achieving high standards.

Alerts and Recalls communications campaign (March 2023)

This campaign is to raise awareness of the alerts and recalls platform, educate consumers on the role the FSA plays in food safety and showing us as a trusted organisation and to encourage sign ups. This will be aimed at consumers in general but also a specific drive to reach the allergy community.

1. The FAWL scheme is operated by Welsh Lamb and Beef producers Ltd (WLBP) which is a co-operative owned by over 7200 Welsh farmers. To become a member of FAWL farms are assessed regularly by UKAS accredited auditors to ensure they meet the required standards to demonstrate high standards of animal welfare, husbandry and traceability. Members of the scheme are then able to market their produce under the red tractor banner and are not subject to the usual LA inspections frequencies as long as they are a member.