

Welsh Food Advisory Committee Director's Report - July 2023

Report by Nathan Barnhouse, Director of FSA in Wales

1. Summary

1.1 This report provides a summary of subjects introduced by the Chief Executive at the last Board meeting, held on 21 June 2023, 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 11 May, senior management have been involved in the following external engagement opportunities that may be of interest to WFAC:

- 17 May – Food Hygiene Delivery Model engagement event with Welsh Local Authorities – in person meeting in Llandrindod Wells.
- 6 June – Chief Medical Officer's Health Protection Advisory Group meeting.
- 20-22 June – Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) Conference, Birmingham.
- 27 June – British Veterinary Association Annual Welsh Dinner.

3.2 External engagement forward look:

- 24-27 July – Royal Welsh show.
- 11 September – Chief Medical Officer's Health Protection Advisory Group meeting.

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

4.1 **Ministerial statement** – the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing has published a [written statement](#) on her expectations for the FSA's regulatory review and reform programme alongside the collaborative agreement between the FSA, Welsh Government and local authorities. The agreement was drafted collaboratively, and is consistent with the Achieving Business Compliance programme. We welcome the emphasis on working collaboratively across Welsh Government, local authorities and the FSA.

4.2 Precision Breeding (PB) – We are continuing to liaise closely with Welsh Government officials as they continue their review of gene editing policy. We met on 16 May to explain the FSA’s role in providing food safety policy advice, the recent work of the FSA in relation to PB including consumer research, the March FSA Board meeting and feedback from recent PB workshops that the FSA has held.

4.3 Smokies (skin on sheep meat) – we met with the skin-on sheep industry working group on 9 May to provide feedback on their proposal for legislative change. FSA has concluded that further scientific evidence is needed to progress. SERD will provide additional information on the research required so that the industry group can make an informed decision on their next steps, including whether they wish to progress with the proposal.

4.4 Food Hygiene Delivery Model engagement event – the Wales LA Partnership team supported colleagues from the Regulatory Compliance Division (RCD) held an engagement event with Welsh LAs on 17 May 2023. The event was part of a series of sessions across Wales, England and NI. The engagement was well received. Some LAs in Wales expressed concerns over the evidence base and the impact the proposals would have on individual LAs and businesses. These have been acknowledged by the project team which includes FSA in Wales, Northern Ireland and RCD. We will liaise with colleagues in RCD to plan next steps.

4.5 CTSI conference – this year the conference was themed around ‘working in partnership’. Katie Pettifer, Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance, took part in a “meet the regulators” panel discussion which opened the conference. The event was a good networking opportunity with local authorities, WLGA and other national regulators who are facing similar challenges. We sponsored and presented two awards recognising students who attained the highest score in food related exams.

4.6 Cobalt Authorisations – Ministers have approved the urgent authorisation of four cobalt additives in Wales, Scotland and England with a harmonised coming into force date in GB of 15 July. This will maintain the market supply of these trace elements which are essential for animal health. This is the culmination of intensive, fast paced and excellent collaborative working across FSA and FSS teams which the team in Wales have played a significant part.

4.7 Office move – the team has been busy working behind the scenes planning and preparing for our move into the Welsh Government building in Cathays Park in August. This has included agreeing and actioning designs, security measures and moving plans. Our first day in the new office will be 21 August.

4.8 Retained EU Law – Royal Assent for the REUL Act was granted on 29 June 2023. FSA has 8 pieces of REUL on the Bill's revocation schedule, 2 of those apply in relation to Wales. All REUL not on the revocation schedule is due to be assimilated into UK law at the end of the year. The REUL programme will now focus on phase two reform.

4.9 Communications campaigns – over the last few months the communications team in Wales have worked with colleagues across the FSA on the following campaigns and media bids:

- **Y Byd ar Bedwar** – I recently provided an interview for ITV to be included in the Y Byd ar Bedwar current affairs programme aired on S4C. The programme itself focused on a small supermarket in Pembrokeshire which was reported to be selling meat past its use by date and had a food hygiene rating of 1. Whilst we explained to the producer that the Local Authority is responsible for implementing the Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme (FHRS) as well as investigating claims made in the programme, I provided FSA lines on the rating scheme, the difference between ‘best-before’ and ‘use-by’ dates, possible risks to health from eating meat past its use by date and what the public should do if they come across it in a shop or at home.

- Here to Help (May 2023) – this campaign was developed to help food businesses do the right thing for consumers. As part of this activity, we updated our online guidance for businesses placing it all in an accessible online hub and developed and shared a [series of case studies](#) featuring two Welsh businesses, [Swig Smoothies](#) and [Llaeth Llanfair](#). We worked with local authorities to promote the role of the [Environmental Health Officer](#) through a case study and to share this campaign and promote the work of LAs across social platforms. The campaign targeted small and micro food businesses making it clear that our advice and local authority support is there to help businesses avoid unsafe practices or food incidents, rather than create unnecessary burden on their resources.
- Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme (FHRS) social media campaign – held from 22 May to 4 June, this campaign was to increase consumer awareness and usage of the FHRS where consumers wouldn't usually think to check a rating or know that a place has a rating. These places include cinemas, pop-up coffee shops, markets, festivals and online food sellers through Facebook or Instagram.
- Summer Food Safety and Hygiene social media campaign – the campaign is being promoted over social media during June, July and August focusing on food safety messages around warm weather and the upcoming 'BBQ season'. We tailored messaging around picnics and barbecuing, providing consumer advice on the 4Cs (cleaning, cooking, cross-contamination and chilling). Our aim is to enhance public understanding of safe food practices and drive traffic to our consumer web pages, with boosted social media posts targeting the general public in Wales.

5. Consultations

5.1 Live Consultations

- [Consultation on twelve applications for feed additives for use in animal feed](#) - This consultation seeks stakeholders' views, comments and feedback in relation to the twelve regulated product applications, which have been submitted for authorisation. **Date launched:** 25 May 2023 **Closing date:** 20 July 2023
- [Call for Evidence: Plastic food contact materials containing bamboo and similar plant-based material as additives](#) - The FSA and FSS are seeking evidence in relation to the safety and stability of plastic food contact materials and articles containing bamboo or other plant-based material. **Date launched:** 6 June 2023 **Closing date:** 12 December 2023

6. Forward look

6.1 Upcoming communications campaigns:

- **FHRS 10 year anniversary** – this year marks the 10th anniversary of the statutory Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme in Wales. As such, we are planning a joint communications campaign with Welsh Government promoting the positive effect of this scheme on both consumer choice and in driving hygiene standards within businesses. We will also highlight the key role played by local authorities in delivering this scheme and will invite local authorities to sit on the project group to help steer this work. We are also hoping to hold an event for stakeholders and Members of the Senedd in November, hopefully in the Senedd, to mark and celebrate this notable date. We will of course keep all concerned informed of plans.