

# Memorandum of Understanding: Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the working relationship between the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and the principles that FSA and FSS will follow in the course of day-to-day working relationships.

The MoU recognises and upholds the Memorandum of Understanding and Supplementary Agreements Between the United Kingdom Government, the Scottish Ministers, the Welsh Ministers and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee, referred to as the 'Devolution MoU' which will have primacy over the MoU between the FSA and the FSS in all matters of interpretation and effect.

This MoU serves as an agreement between FSS and the FSA on matters relating to food and feed for which the FSA is the relevant UK Government Department. It is underpinned by five relevant protocols which set out in more detail operational considerations of how the bodies will work together. This agreement has been drafted to allow the protocols identified within it to be amended over time to reflect future trends, needs and external drivers of change.

The principles underpinning this MoU are:

- **Effectiveness:** Ensuring that interests of consumers are protected in all parts of the UK.
- **Mutual respect for obligations:** Ensuring that both the FSA and FSS are able to discharge their respective responsibilities as competent authorities.
- **Efficiency:** Ensuring that public money is spent efficiently through the encouragement of joint working between the FSA and FSS, wherever appropriate.
- **Reciprocity:** Ensuring that arrangements for sharing information and resources are fully reciprocal, unless otherwise agreed.
- **Cordiality:** Ensuring that officials of the FSA and FSS at all levels maintain positive relationships with their counterparts based on shared aims and mutual understanding of the differing political environments within which each body operates.
- **Transparency:** Where possible, the FSA and FSS will share information openly to ensure effective joint working practices.

Both the FSA and FSS recognise that each has a contribution to make to an effective food and feed safety regime in the United Kingdom (UK), whilst recognising that their policy, priorities and objectives may not always be identical.

The FSA and FSS agree to:

- Co-operate and work closely to ensure that consumers in Scotland and across the rest of the UK remain protected.
- Co-operate in the management and communication of food and feed incidents that may pose a risk to consumers, including food and feed standards incidents.
- Co-operate and collaborate with regards to science and evidence gathering to ensure there is a coherent evidence base across Scotland and the rest of the UK to underpin policy development and support incident handling.
- Identify and share outputs from horizon scanning, intelligence gathering, incidents and other food and feed data sources.
- Share and discuss initiatives to identify opportunities to collaborate during policy and strategy development.
- Facilitate appropriate food and feed safety and standards control measures where food products pose, or may pose, a risk to consumers.

- Co-operate and work collaboratively to ensure that, when working internationally, the UK position is arrived at in a way that takes account of the interests of all parts of the UK and respects devolution.
- To work collaboratively to reduce the impact of food crime in Scotland and the rest of the UK and investigate jointly where necessary and appropriate.
- Work collaboratively on risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.
- Pay any significant costs for services provided by one body to another providing those costs have been agreed in advance by both bodies.
- Work together to meet the commitments made under the Common Framework for Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene.