

Welsh Food Advisory Committee Director's Report – October 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 20 September 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 12 July, senior management have been involved in the following external engagement opportunities that may be of interest to WFAC:

- 19 July – Health Protection Advisory Group (HPAG) Environmental Public Health sub-group.
- 24-25 July – Royal Welsh Show. We used our presence at the Royal Welsh Show this year as a platform for the Chair and Chief Executive to engage with a wider range of key stakeholders, with a full programme of introductory meetings and discussions on policy matters of note in Wales.
- 11 September – Chief Medical Officer's HPAG meeting.
- 14 September – Quarterly liaison meeting with Welsh Government. Also attended a meeting with the Board Chair and Welsh Ministers on Precision Breeding.
- 20 September – I presented the [Director of Wales](#) paper to the Board.
- 22 September – Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW) meeting.
- 18 October – FSA in Wales all-staff Away Day in the new office.

3.2 External engagement forward look:

- 8-9 November – Chartered Trading Standards Institute Wales Branch Training Event.
- 9 November – Water Health Partnership Conference.
- 22 November – [UK Association of Food Protection Conference](#), Cardiff Metropolitan University.
- 23 November – Trading Standards Wales Business Planning event.
- 29 November – Senedd event to launch Annual Standards Report and celebrate 10 years of mandatory FHRs in Wales.

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

4.1 WFAC appointments – I would like to take this opportunity to formally welcome the new WFAC Chair, Rhian Hayward, to her new role. We are looking forward to working with Rhian and will support her in every way we can as she guides WFAC through future discussions.

4.2 Precision Breeding (PB) – The FSA Board met on 20 September to discuss and decide on aspects of the new process to regulate the use of precision bred organisms (PBOs) for use in food and feed. More detail can be found in the [news article about the board discussion](#).

FSA officials are preparing a public consultation on the proposed regulatory framework in England. The consultation is scheduled for publication in November 2023 and stakeholders from across the UK will be encouraged to respond.

FSA in Wales officials are continuing to liaise with Welsh Government officials who have recently undertaken a period of evidence gathering to help inform a review of gene editing policy, which Welsh Government officials intend to summarise in a report to their cabinet in January 2024.

4.3 Regulated Products – in parallel with England and Scotland, Ministerial advice was sent on 12 September recommending the authorisation of 13 feed additives in tranche 2. The Deputy Minister has agreed the recommendation. We are working towards a coming into force date of 22 December. We are working closely across the four nations on tranche 3 and engaging with Welsh Government to consider areas where the process can be made more efficient. We are also part of the core project team contributing to work on regulatory reform, policy options and the approach to Ministerial engagement.

4.4 CBD – the team have recently been involved in issuing updated FSA consumer advice recommending an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) of CBD of 10mg/day for healthy adults (reduced from 70mg/day – the interim advice provided in 2020). This coincided with the release of a joint statement from two of our Scientific Advisory Committees (Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) and Committee on Toxicity (COT)) regarding the revised ADI for CBD. There are currently no authorised CBD extracts or isolates on the market. All products awaiting authorisation, which have a credible application in with the FSA, can be viewed on the FSA's public list.

4.5 Food Standards Delivery Model – the Wales team have completed the onboarding work including training with the local authorities who are participating in the pilot. The pilot commenced on 1 September and will run for 6 months.

4.6 LA audits – a series of LA audits in Wales has commenced to assess service planning and delivery of interventions following the end of the Recovery Plan, as well as reviewing any relevant open audit actions following previous audits. The team conducted their first audit on 27-28 September at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and are now working with the authority to agree the draft report. The team are also in the process of analysing the data submitted by Caerphilly County Borough Council prior to the on-site element of the audit on 25-26 October. The third and fourth LAs to be audited are the City & County of Swansea and Powys County Council. The onsite element of the City & County of Swansea audit will take place on the 15-16 November and the on-site element of Powys County Council audit will take place on 6-7 December 2023.

4.7 FSA in Wales office move – on 21 August the Wales team officially moved into the Welsh Government building in Cathays Park, the culmination of an 18-month project. The transition was smooth and with limited disruption, staff are benefitting from improved facilities and an office space designed around their needs, based on their input. I would like to express my thanks to all those involved.

4.8 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:

- We provided an information segment on the Shân Cothi programme on BBC Radio Cymru sharing consumer advice on storing food safely and the importance of ‘use by’ dates.
- Always On: Foraging campaign – this campaign was held in September to promote consumer guidance on how to forage safely. Some plants and mushrooms growing wild are poisonous, and some are even deadly according to the Woodland Trust. This campaign was focussed on the importance of making sure food that is gathered is safe to eat with the aim of improving consumer awareness of how to forage safely and driving traffic to the foraging web page: [Guidance for safe foraging](#). We collaborated with Welsh Language influencer @Adamynyrardd on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to reach his 30k followers with targeted foraging advice.
- Always On: Students campaign – this campaign launched at the start of September to improve awareness of good food safety and hygiene practices in the student population. Research carried out by the FSA in 2021 and 2022 highlighted particular challenges and behaviours for this group. The key objectives for this campaign were to improve awareness of food safety and hygiene best practices in students and young people (ages 16 - 24) and increase traffic to the Student Food Safety web pages (+5%).
- The team also recently worked with the new WFAC Chair and New Food Magazine to provide this [Stepping up to the plate](#) interview.

5. Consultations

5.1 Live consultations:

- [Call for data on the levels of T-2 and HT-2 toxins present in food](#) - The FSA and FSS are seeking data from throughout the cereals supply chain, from field to retail level to understand the levels of T-2 and HT-2 that consumers are being exposed to. **Date launched:** 18 July 2023, **Closing date:** 31 October 2023

6. Forward look

6.1 Upcoming activity:

- 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 and local authorities 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 have included LAs on the project group to help steer this work. The campaign will run from 27 November – 1 December.
- Launch of a new assessment of UK food standards in November – the FSA and Food Standards Scotland will be publishing their annual assessment of food standards in the UK this month. This report will offer an insight into the biggest issues facing the food system, from the impact of rising grocery bills on our diets, to the current pressures on the workforce providing vital checks on food. Our Chair will be hosting a lunchtime event at the Senedd on Wednesday 29 November to launch the report and brief stakeholders on the findings from the latest report. We will also use the event to celebrate and mark 10 years since the launch of the mandatory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Wales.