

FSA Board pays tribute to food and feed industries for ‘an outstanding job in keeping food on the shelves’

FSA Chair Heather Hancock opened Wednesday 17 June’s online only meeting by extending her gratitude to all those working in food and feed industries for continuing to supply and make accessible food for consumers.

She said:

“Those people who work in the food and feed sector – which we should remember is the country’s largest manufacturing sector and a critically important retail sector – have done an outstanding job in keeping food on the shelves, factories running, supply chains and logistics taking enormous strains, and altering their businesses to meet consumer needs, especially where for our most vulnerable.”

Thanks were also offered to our staff, and those who carry out meat hygiene inspections on behalf of the FSA, as well as to local authority officers, independent scientific advisers, and port health officials, for their efforts – most of which have been on the front line keeping the food supply going.

Board members heard about the FSA’s robust, effective yet flexible response to the pandemic whilst supporting staff in protecting themselves and others throughout the outbreak – and that it remains very unlikely that you can catch coronavirus from food.

Meanwhile, members were told that the FSA remains vigilant and firmly committed to helping the food and feed industry sustain its high standards as the economy continues to reopen, particularly in helping the hospitality sector navigate the challenges it faces, whilst always protecting the consumer.

In his final report to the Board as Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Guy Poppy told members that COVID-19 had emphasised the vital importance of the risk analysis work that the FSA carries out, and how that risk can best be communicated to others. He also encouraged the increased use of the scientific resources the FSA has established, such as the independent scientific advisory committees and Strategic Evidence Fund.

The agenda also included an update on the FSA’s role after the end of the EU Exit transition period. FSA Director Paul Morrison reiterated the Government’s position that the transition period will not be extended and reminded the Board of the principles that the FSA continues to apply in preparation for the Government’s approach. The arrangements should:

- be at least as effective, or more effective, in protecting public health
- maintain or increase confidence in food safety, and in the regulatory regime
- minimise disruption for consumers and industry
- seek to achieve as unified a system as possible, in the consumer interest, whilst respecting devolution arrangements.

The Board also discussed the potential implications of the Northern Ireland Protocol and what the FSA is doing to prepare for this. This will require the FSA to continue to work closely with other UK government departments and the devolved administrations, maintaining the cooperative and positive relationships to date.