

FSA Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy sets out our commitment to support the UK government in meeting its target of reducing emissions by 2035, helping the UK to be net zero by 2050.

Executive Summary

The effects of climate change will be globally devastating without genuine commitment from governments, organisations, and individuals to take action. In this strategy we've identified specific areas where we believe Food Standards Agency (FSA) can make a difference and advance the green agenda by taking actions to improve our environmental sustainability through our policies and business practices, and where we can seek to influence our stakeholders and partners to do the same.

We've made a positive start towards reducing our environmental impact. In recent years we've reduced our estate which has allowed us to cut our water and energy use; we operate a cycle to work scheme and use a fleet car scheme that prioritises low emissions vehicles; we provide separate bins in our offices for food waste and other recyclable materials; and we are increasingly utilising smart technology for business, providing a range of tools for digital collaboration and reducing our need for official travel. But we want to go further.

In this strategy we set out our commitment to further reducing our carbon footprint, promoting sustainable best practice, conserving natural resources, and building environment awareness through our policies and practices.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the switch to remote working and reduced travel for many of us had a positive impact on our carbon emissions. As we adapt post-pandemic, we have an opportunity to really embed environmental sustainability into the way we think and work, in particular by maximising our OWOW (Our Ways of Working) flexibilities, and our Information Communication Technology and Digital services to meet our targets.

This goes to the very heart of what we do in the FSA. Climate change can and will negatively impact on food systems and supply chains if left unchecked and this in turn will make it increasingly challenging for us to fulfil our mission of food we can trust. The FSA is committed to ensuring our strategy is delivered in line with legally binding national targets as well as fulfilling our obligations under the Greening Governments Commitment, and its success rests on its adoption and implementation by all of us.

The FSA has set up a Climate and Environment Action Group (CEAG) - a staff network of volunteers - to support colleagues in each business area to embed a greener working culture. This group has already helped increase awareness across the FSA and are currently working hard to attain the ISO 14001 Environmental Management Accreditation – a globally recognised standard – on behalf of the FSA.

To help ensure we deliver, we will track progress as we go along, monitoring progress against the targets on a quarterly basis. The targets that are aligned to the Greening Government Commitments (GGC) targets will be reported centrally as part of the quarterly GGC return. An overall summary of progress against key targets and how we're developing and implementing our Environmental Sustainability Strategy will be reported annually in our Annual Report and

Accounts.

Introduction

The world is facing an unprecedented crises of climate change and loss of bio-biodiversity. Global temperatures are expected to rise more than 3°C this century and with biodiversity declining faster than at any time in human history, around a million species face extinction unless urgent action is taken reduce the effects of climate change.

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050. Furthermore, in November 2021, the UK hosted COP26, bringing together more than 190 world leaders, in a pivotal moment in the fight against climate change.

To help drive and support the achievement of net zero by 2050, in April 2021, the UK government set the world's most ambitious climate change target into law, to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This builds upon all UK government departments, and their agencies, commitment to taking actions to reduce their impacts on the environment in [Greening Government Commitments](#).

In developing this strategy we've identified three areas where we believe the FSA can make positive, measurable and lasting gains towards achieving net zero. It is not an exhaustive list, but where we believe we can make most impact. The three areas are:

- reducing our carbon footprint
- conserving natural resources
- prioritising sustainable procurement

The development of our strategy has been led by the FSA Climate and Environment Action Group (CEAG) working in collaboration with key business streams including estates and commercial.

1. Reducing our carbon footprint

Transport is the largest emitting sector of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the UK, contributing 27% of UK domestic emissions in 2019. While the FSA has already made material changes to staff contracts to support and encourage remote virtual working practices, there is still more that can be done to build upon the culture shift created by the COVID-19 pandemic, to further reduce the environmental impact of business travel.

Overarching aim

To contribute to government targets for a 78% reduction by 2035 by progressively reducing our CO2 emissions linked to staff air, rail and road travel.

Lead Target

To reduce CO2 emissions by 26% from a 2017/18 baseline (prior to COVID-19 distortion) by 2025, moving the FSA a third of the way towards achieving the government wide targets for 2035.

Supporting targets

- to reduce the number of business miles travelled by 50% from a 2017/18 baseline (prior to COVID-19 distortion)
- to reduce distance travelled by domestic flights by 20% from a 2017/18 baseline
Commitment to report distance travelled by international flights
- meet the Government Fleet Commitment for 25% Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) for FSA lease cars by 2022 and 100% by 2027.

Key performance indicators

- overall reduction in CO2 emissions from official travel data (tonnes/FTE)
- reduction in travel bookings to attend internal meetings – indicative of a shift to more digital collaboration resulting in fewer interoffice journeys being made (%)
- reduction in domestic flights (%)
- increase in use of electric fleet; vehicles for official travel (%)

Key implementation mechanisms

- update our travel policy to reflect the environmental benefits of avoiding travel where possible and, where journeys are essential, using less carbon-intensive modes of transport, such as rail

- inclusion of directorate specific CO2 emission quotas in our Travel and Subsistence policy to reflect our ambition to reduce our carbon footprint
- use technology/digital first as the key policy driver to reduce travel/energy and waste
- greater promotion of digital tools and OWOW (Our Ways of Working) flexibilities to encourage alternatives to face-to-face meetings and a reduction in unnecessary travel
- sustainability check/confirmation on transport booking to encourage greenest method of travel
- commitment to Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs) for lease cars and update our policy to reflect this
- communication drive to increase awareness of sustainable travel.

Case Study: Our Ways of Working (OWOW): Flexible Working

The FSA has been at the forefront of flexible and remote working across government since introducing OWOW in 2017. The benefits of enabling and encouraging staff to consider working from places other than traditional offices has multiple positive environmental impacts: Reducing the greenhouse gas emissions caused by commuters travelling to and from offices. Home enabled staff work from home the majority of the time and if they do fancy a change of scene, they are more likely to head to locations within walking or cycling distance rather than drive, fly or catch a train. Their business travel and commuting is greatly reduced and our ethos of 'doing it digitally' means we always consider how to include remote workers before arranging face to face meetings. People working from home 50% of the time or more use less paper as remote and hybrid workers are more likely to share or work on documents digitally to save space at home and facilitating long-distance collaboration in real time. People having access to their own tableware, storage and cooking facilities when working at home leads to reduced consumption of single use plastics like takeaways cups, food packaging and more. People tend to be more careful not to leave lights on or keep devices on standby when they are paying the bill, leading to reduced energy consumption! People are free to move away from cities (whether to accommodate family commitments or suit their preferences), easing the environmental strain caused by dense populations on urban areas and stimulating small-town development. Many FSA staff have relocated away from our offices whilst maintaining their roles and careers, enabled by the introduction of OWOW.

2. Conserving natural resources

The consumption of natural resources is increasing. In order to maintain the environment for future generations, we need to take action to minimise waste.

Overarching aim

- to protect natural resources and minimise waste across our estate by actively pursuing and promoting measures to reduce, re-use and re-cycle.
- targets to help achieve the Greening Government Commitments
- reduce the overall amount of waste generated by 20% from the 2017/18 baseline
- reduce the amount of waste going to landfill to less than 5% of overall waste
- increase the proportion of waste which is recycled to at least 70% of overall waste
- reduce the amount of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) waste going to landfill to 0%
- a yearly increase in the amount of ICT that is reused and materials recycled 100% traceability of ICT at end of life (mapping) by 2025
- work with our building landlords to increase the use of renewable energy across our estate
- reduce water consumption by at least 8% from the 2017/18 baseline.

Key performance indicators

- waste sent to landfill (tonnes)
- IT equipment recycled, reused or refurbished (%)
- percentage of waste generated that is recycled (%)
- renewable energy use (%)
- yearly consumption of water reduction as change in use relative to the previous year (%).

Key implementation mechanisms

- provision of appropriate recycling infrastructure
- use of green IT recycling/refurbishing services
- review of energy contracts and policies
- monitoring and analysis of energy use data
- working with our government landlords to ensure they are working towards meeting the GGC targets.

3. Sustainable Supply Chain

Sustainable procurement helps reduce waste, carbon emissions, energy and water consumption and protect biodiversity, while also contributing to social and financial benefits.

Overarching aim

To positively influence the sustainability performance of suppliers and evaluate the sustainability credentials of the goods and services that we purchase.

Target

- adopt the use of the Social Value Model on all applicable procurements and embed into contract management with effect from 2021
- government departments will use the Social Value Model to assess and score suppliers on the wider positive benefits they bring by delivering the contract. This will mean that value for money for the taxpayer can be maximised while also building a more resilient and diverse supplier base.
- develop a sustainable procurement policy covering all aspects of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) by December 2021
- procuring products and services with 100% compliance to the Social Value Framework for contracts over £213,477 (inclusive of VAT) by 2025.

Key performance indicators

- sustainable procurement policy communicated across the FSA and training provide where necessary
- metrics devised, implemented, and reported against to measure delivery against the policy
- all above threshold contracts awarded to have a KPI relating to social values, with these KPIs being published quarterly.

Key implementation mechanisms

- Compliance with the Government Buying Standards when buying goods and services
- business-wide policies and procedures promoting sustainable procurement and encouraging use of them
- sustainability measurements including economic, social and environmental impacts and whole life costs of goods and services purchased
- training programmes for staff involved in purchasing decisions and contract management
- targeted supplier engagement programme to promote continual improvements by both suppliers and the FSA focusing on elements identified in the contract.

Embedding environmental sustainability into our decision making

The targets laid out in this Strategy largely focus on our people, buildings, and internal policies. However, we're also committed to ensuring that we focus on the wider social return on investment when making key decisions around our strategy, future policy development and delivery reform.

We are in a unique position to help influence the wider food ecosystem to ensure it grows back better after the COVID-19 pandemic and will expand on our targets to reflect our actions and influence here. Environmental considerations are already at the forefront of many key projects being delivered through our strategic programmes.

Our Achieving Business Compliance Programme is exploring the opportunities to support Local Authorities with remote assessments and audits. While our Operations Transformation Programme is assessing the opportunities for reform, modernising the Delivery of Official Controls and driving a reduction in waste.

We are already supporting other initiatives impacting environmental issues such as environmental sustainability charity [WRAP's food waste reduction](#) roadmap and was an early supporter of the [Courtauld Commitment](#), as well as working with food charities on safety guidance around food redistribution. There are emergent technologies such as cultured meat and gene editing which also potentially offer sustainability gains in terms of reduction in production inputs. Environmental considerations will be considered when these technologies are ready for regulatory approval.

There is also the impact of national environmental conditions on our policies on food safety. As examples, these include issues such as water quality and the impact on shellfish beds which the FSA classifies, agricultural and livestock run offs affecting other shellfish and potentially e.coli levels in vegetable crops. This will require the FSA to influence other Departments in order to improve upstream environmental impacts in order to improving general food safety in primary produce to the benefit of the consumer As these emergent workstreams become better defined we will develop our reporting to monitor how they contribute to the delivery of our overarching priorities.