

# Our strategy

The FSA's 5-year strategy and vision for a better food system.

The FSA's job, set out in law, is to safeguard public health and protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. We work closely with the UK Government and the governments in Wales and Northern Ireland, but we act independently and transparently, led by science and evidence.

Our fundamental mission is food you can trust. This mission has remained constant since our previous strategy, published in 2015. However, the food system is evolving and our strategy to deliver this mission needs to reflect and anticipate change.

The FSA has greater responsibilities now that the UK is outside of the EU. New technologies and business models and changing consumer behaviours, means the FSA needs to think differently about how we deliver our mission. We also need to take account of growing public concern about health, sustainability and of affordability.

By food you can trust, we mean a food system in which:

- [Food is safe](#)
- [Food is what it says it is](#)
- [Food is healthier and more sustainable](#)

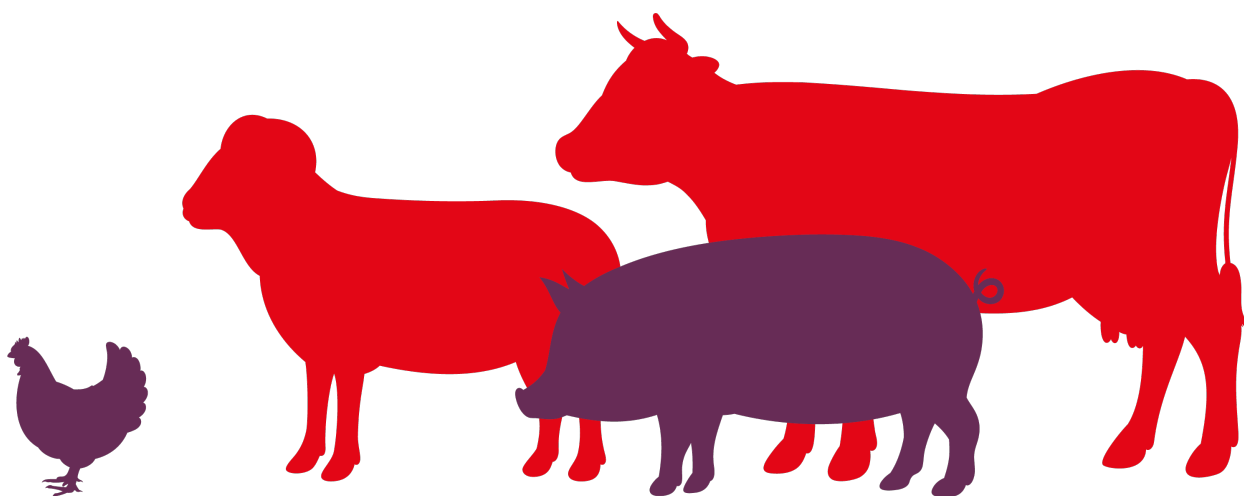
This is our vision for the food system for the next five years.

A full PDF version is available for download:

## England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Food you can trust - FSA Strategy 2022-2027 as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (2.75 MB)



The FSA is a non-ministerial government department. Our objectives, powers and duties are set out in legislation, primarily the [Food Standards Act 1999](#).

Our main statutory objective is to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food (including risks caused by the way in which it is produced or supplied) and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.

Where we refer to 'food' in our strategy, we also include this wider role in the way food is produced or supplied, for example animal feed and animal welfare.

We operate in **England, Northern Ireland and Wales**. Most of food policy making is devolved, so we maintain strong working relationships with the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the NI Executive. But we act independently of ministers and are governed by an independent board.

We work closely with [Food Standards Scotland \(FSS\)](#), an independent public body with responsibility for food policy and implementation in Scotland. We always factor circumstances or data specific to each nation into the approaches we take and the advice we provide. This strategy covers our role in each country, reflecting our 'one FSA' approach.

We have more guidance on devolved responsibilities and collaborative working across the UK in [four-country working](#).

## Our policy context

The UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive are setting out their own plans on the strategic direction for the food system and other relevant areas. We will work closely with them as we deliver our strategy.

For example, we are a key partner in the [Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework](#) which sets out a shared vision to guide long term food decision making. Phase two will be the development of implementation plans and metrics which will be further informed by the [Green Growth Strategy](#) (the Northern Ireland Executive's multi decade strategy, balancing climate, environment and the economy) and the [Kendall Review of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Sector](#) which includes recommendations for several further sustainability initiatives.

We intend to work closely with the UK Government to deliver its strategy for the food sector following the recommendations published in Henry Dimbleby's independent review entitled [National Food Strategy](#).

We will also work with the UK Government to inform any future potential changes to retained EU law on food, in line with the [Benefits of Brexit Command Paper](#), and to deliver commitments made in the [Levelling Up White Paper](#). In preparing our strategy, we have taken account of the UK Government's priorities for 'Reforming the Framework for Better Regulation', and these will inform our work programme in relevant areas.

We work closely with the Welsh Government on various areas of shared interest of their [Programme for Government 2021-26](#). It includes the commitments to develop a Wales Community Food Strategy to encourage the supply of locally sourced food in Wales and to develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare.

In formulating and delivering our strategy, we have also borne in mind the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems, including health inequalities. Although we are not a named body under the Act, we work to the principles it contains.

The UK, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments have each set out more general net zero ambitions, including the [UK Net Zero Strategy](#), the [All Wales Plan](#) and the [Northern Ireland Green Growth Strategy](#).

Similarly, each government has set out goals around people's health. We are working with the Department for Health and Social Care on their upcoming White Paper on Health Disparities, to provide insights and ensure that communities across the UK have access to healthy and nutritious diets.

The Welsh Government has set out the [Healthy Weight Healthy Wales](#) delivery plan to prevent and reduce obesity. This plan will help support a green recovery and generate changes to the way we move and eat. The Department of Health in Northern Ireland leads on the cross-Departmental Framework: [A Fitter Future for All](#), preventing overweight and obesity across the life course of the population. Work is underway to develop a successor strategy. The food sector has an important part in delivering these.

## **Food is safe**

Food is vital to everyone, every day. We all have the right to expect that the food we eat will not make us ill.

This is why we will prioritise keeping the level of foodborne disease low. We do this in many ways; from our direct inspection work in the meat, dairy and wine industries to our surveillance and preventative programmes.

Delivering this part of the vision will require us to continue to innovate, evolve and react to changes across the food system.

## **Delivering Official Controls**

The FSA has direct responsibility for inspecting, auditing and assuring businesses in England and Wales producing meat, wine and dairy. We deliver Official Controls in abattoirs and game handling establishments, and we audit and inspect meat cutting plants, wine producers and on-farm dairy establishments. The FSA and local authorities together deliver shellfish controls. Effective regulation of these areas remains one of our top priorities.

In the field, day in and day out, Meat Hygiene Inspectors and Official Veterinarians deliver inspections to ensure businesses in the meat industry meet their obligations regarding food safety and animal health and welfare, to protect consumers and in support of international trade.

## **Working with local authorities**

Local authorities are responsible for delivering activities such as inspections, audits and surveillance, sampling (known as Official Controls) in most food and feed establishments. These controls relate to food hygiene (microbiological quality and contamination of food by micro-organisms or foreign matter) and food standards (composition, chemical contamination, adulteration and labelling of food).

We work with all 344 local authorities in England, 22 in Wales and 11 in Northern Ireland and with The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) who also deliver some controls in Northern Ireland. Of these local authorities, 89 also perform port health controls at the border together with four separate port health authorities.

## **Food is what it says it is**

Consumers should be confident that food is what it says it is. That is why we will ensure food is authentic and properly described. This is essential to maintain the confidence of the public and our international trading partners in UK food. Food authenticity is also closely linked to food safety.

## **Food crime**

Our National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) works to tackle serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains. Food crime, which often involves compromising the authenticity of food, is estimated to cost society up to £3.6 billion a year. The work of the NFCU is essential to help protect the reputation of UK exports and to help reduce the burden of food crime for on the UK economy.

## **Food hypersensitivity**

In the UK, an estimated two million people are living with a diagnosed food allergy and six hundred thousand people with Coeliac Disease. The FSA is responsible for allergen labelling and providing guidance to consumers with food hypersensitivity (which includes food allergy, Coeliac Disease and food intolerance).

We work closely with food businesses to ensure they understand their responsibilities and embed the management of food hypersensitivity in a strong food safety culture. This means consumers can make safer choices about the food they buy.

## **Food is healthier and more sustainable**

Dietary health and sustainability are growing priorities for the UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, and for the consumers whose interests we protect.

To meet these ambitions, the food system needs to contribute.

We need to play our part in supporting government partners and others in the wider food system to make it easier for consumers to access a healthier and more sustainable diet.

These issues also affect the other parts of our vision. For example, rising temperatures mean food and feed chains are at greater risk from pathogens and other hazards like aflatoxins, the toxic substances caused by fungus. If we don't act now to play our part in tackling climate change, we will be much less able to keep food safe. Extreme weather events can affect supply chains, which in turn can mean pre-printed labels are no longer accurate if ingredients are substituted at short notice. The desire for sustainable proteins will result in food industry innovation, and any novel foods need risk assessing by the FSA.

We know that consumers want to see change. Over three in five participants in the FSA's most recent consumer insights tracking survey reported feeling concerned about the impact of food production on the environment. Over half of those surveyed reported concern about the healthiness of their personal diet ([FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, November 2021](#)).

Other departments have primary responsibility for health and sustainability, but as the only government body that looks solely at food, we can help to support efforts by the three governments to make food healthier and more sustainable.

We also have specific policy responsibilities in relation to nutritional standards in Northern Ireland.

## **Eating Well Choosing Better programme**

Our Eating Well Choosing Better (EWCB) programme supports small and medium sized food businesses in Northern Ireland to reduce the calorie, sugar, saturated fat and salt content of the food they produce, sell or serve, as well as reducing portion sizes to help consumers make healthier choices. The EWCB programme aligns with the UK Government's sugar reduction and wider reformulation programme with UK retailers and producers operating in Northern Ireland.

To deliver this programme we work closely with representatives from across Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, the Republic of Ireland Department of Health, Invest NI, the food industry, district councils and academic institutions.

## **Making sure everybody has food you can trust**

The FSA's mission – food you can trust – is an outcome we want for everyone, wherever in the UK they live and whatever their personal circumstances. This will only happen if everyone is able to access the food they need and to make informed choices about the food they eat. These issues cut across all three parts of our vision.

We therefore need to understand the factors that affect people's ability to access food and the choices they make. We will continue to monitor and report high quality data on these areas, to inform our own work and those making decisions across the food system.

### FSA Explains

In the UK, five people every minute are made sick from eating contaminated food. There are more than **2.4 million foodborne disease related cases per year** of which 15,500 receive hospital treatment and an estimated 160 deaths.



This costs UK society around **£9.1 billion per year** ([Burden of Foodborne Disease, FSA, 2018](#)). Our work reduces the likelihood of incidents of foodborne disease.

We also invest in preventative programmes such as the **Campylobacter Reduction Strategy**, which averted **c.100,000 cases** in 2016 ([Annual Report and consolidated accounts 2016/17](#)), compared to [the average number of cases between 2009 and 2013](#).