

FSA 22-06-03 - Chief Executive's Report to Board

Emily Miles presents the Chief Executive's report to the FSA Board

Strategy

1. Following discussion at the Board meeting in March, we have now published our [new strategy](#). The **strategy** confirms our mission, which is 'food you can trust'. We make clear in the strategy that by this we mean 'food that is safe,' 'food that is what it says it is,' and 'food that is healthier and more sustainable'.

2. Our online **strategy launch** event was attended by 80 representatives across different stakeholder groups including consumer representatives, industry, science and academia and other government departments. Over 400 staff joined our internal launch event, and over 2,000 people have visited our new strategy web page. Anecdotal feedback from external stakeholders welcomed elements such as the addition of 'food that is healthier and more sustainable' to the strategy. In April, our internal staff survey found that respondents are more familiar with our mission, vision and guiding principles than they were with our previous strategic narrative and guiding principles (around 80% familiar, vs around 60% previously). Around 70% of staff said they could see how different parts of the strategy applied to their work, which is an increase but suggests we have more work to do here.

3. In March, the Board agreed our [corporate priorities](#) for the current year. These priorities make clear that the great majority of our work this year will be on making sure that food is safe and is what it says it is. But they also include some targeted work to build our contribution to food that is healthier and more sustainable. For example, we are preparing to pilot a new approach to assuring compliance with school food standards. We have just published research on the [UK public's interests, needs and concerns around food](#). We are also working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on how food data could be gathered and used to inform consumers and to monitor progress towards healthier and more sustainable food, and we expect Government proposals on this will be announced in the forthcoming food strategy. We are now working on a **three-year corporate plan**, to guide the FSA's work from March 2023 onwards. We will bring a draft plan to the December Board meeting.

4. The [paper](#) provided to the Board this month on **food affordability** outlines how the increasing cost of living is changing the context in which the FSA is works.

Civil Service Workforce reductions

5. The Board will be aware of the Government's intention to **reduce the size of the Civil Service** workforce to 2016 levels. This represents a 20% cut to numbers of civil servants. The FSA, along with other departments, has received a commission from the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury to model different workforce planning scenarios, setting out the impact of reductions in headcount of 20%, 30% and 40% respectively, by 2025. This is using a March 2022 baseline, so this exercise supersedes our previous spending review settlement that had been agreed with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT). Last Autumn we made a strong case to HMT of the need for

additional resources based upon our significantly expanded role following EU Exit and the wider economic importance of consumer, business and international confidence in the UK food system. We expect to have conversations with the Cabinet Office and HMT across the summer and into the autumn before a final decision is made on any final adjustments to the Spending Review settlement.

Ukraine

6. The Board will be aware that the **Ukraine conflict** has had an impact on the UK food supply chain, in particular sunflower oil. A significant proportion of food products contain sunflower oil as an ingredient and without action there would have been interruptions to the availability of many different food products within the UK. A [paper](#) is tabled for today's Board meeting providing a consolidated update on what has happened so far and remaining issues around compliance. I am very grateful to all those in the organisation in science, regulatory compliance, legal, incidents, policy and communications, amongst others, who have worked hard on these matters, including out of hours.

Risk analysis and regulated products

7. The **alternative proteins** market continues to grow in importance, offering foods that may help with climate change impacts as well as sustainability and land use. We have had applications through the novel foods process already, - including Barley Rice Protein, Mung Bean Protein, Bambara Groundnut and Duckweed. ?????

8. We will hold a workshop for the alternative protein industry in July to get industry together to explain our process. Several companies are close to applying and are engaging the FSA for advice on developing their dossiers. We expect our first application for cultivated meat in the near future, possibly this year.???????

9. At the end of March, the FSA published its public **list of CBD products** which have a credible application for authorisation with the FSA. There are currently almost 6,000 products on the list connected to about 100 applications. The list is primarily a tool for local authorities and retailers. We are pleased to note that it is already being used to prioritise enforcement activity. Additional products that meet the criteria will be added to the list in what we expect to be the final update at the end of June.

??????10. The launch of the **public database** at the end of March prompted companies to come forward with new evidence linking large numbers of individual products to applications. This was an unexpected development as we had asked for this product information earlier in the process. To support businesses to achieve compliance for their products, we made one final call for businesses to submit evidence to us by 26 May to link their products to credible applications.

11. Retailers and producers must be responsible when marketing and selling these products, in relation to health claims and other aspects of food law. Businesses should also be wary of misleading consumers by overstating their public list status – being placed on the list is no guarantee that products will be authorised. It has been a challenging process, but we have achieved a significant milestone with the public list and will now focus on the next phase of the authorisation process so that consumers can trust what they are buying.???????

12. As part of our ongoing work to develop our knowledge of CBD, we have commissioned research to inform our risk assessment and assist us in the design of future sampling and surveillance activity. This report is due to be published imminently. The Board should also note the recently published European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) [review](#) of the toxicology of CBD. **EFSA** has reached the same conclusions as the UK's Committee on Toxicity did two years ago:

there are still evidence gaps relating to CBD as a food and relevant data is needed to prove a safety case for CBD foods. They have stopped the clock on their applications pending this further data. ??????

13. The FSA has provided recommendations and support to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Welsh Ministers in authorising the placing on the market of a number of **regulated products** in the field of genetically modified food and feed and novel food and authorising the modification of authorisations for various smoke flavourings. Previously EFSA was responsible for granting authorisations and this is a new role taken on by the FSA post-EU Exit. The authorisations are made by the following statutory instruments:

[The Genetically Modified Food and Feed \(Authorisations\) \(England\) Regulations 2022](#); [The Genetically Modified Food and Feed \(Authorisations\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2022](#) which came into force on 20 May 2022; [The Novel Food \(Authorisations\) and Smoke Flavourings \(Modification of Authorisations\) \(England\) Regulations 2022](#); and [The Novel Food \(Authorisations\) and Smoke Flavourings \(Modification of Authorisations\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2022](#) which come into force in respect of smoke flavourings on 18 June 2022 and in respect of novel food on 30 June 2022.

14. ???????We also provided a recommendation and support to the Secretary of State and Welsh Ministers in respect of removing additional controls imposed by the EU on the import of feed and food originating from Japan following the **Fukushima** nuclear power station accident. We worked closely with Food Standards Scotland (FSS) on their advice to Scottish Ministers. These controls will be lifted, and the relevant legislation revoked on 29 June 2022 via:

[The Food and Feed \(Fukushima Restrictions\) \(Revocation\) \(England\) Regulations 2022](#); and [The Food and Feed \(Fukushima Restrictions\) \(Revocation\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2022](#).

Trade, imports & Northern Ireland Protocol???????

15. On 13 May we received a commission from Minister for Trade, Penny Mordaunt for the FSA/ FSS to provide joint advice on whether the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with New Zealand maintains statutory protections for human health. Our advice was annexed to a [UK Government report](#), which was laid before Parliament on 6 June alongside the FTA as required under **Section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020**. The full report also includes analysis of statutory protections for animal health and welfare, plant health and the environment, which the government has asked the Trade and Agriculture Commission to advise on. Whilst our advice for the Australia FTA earlier this year focussed on food safety, for New Zealand we will additionally cover statutory protections for nutrition in line with the full FSA/FSS statutory remits across the UK. In developing our advice, we have sought views from stakeholders, including at a recent roundtable discussion. The deadline for providing our advice is 16 June. ????????

16. You will know that the Minister for Brexit Opportunities announced on 28 April 2022 that the government will not be introducing the planned border **import controls** on EU goods coming into GB from 1 July 2022. Instead, a new Target Operating Model for a global approach to border controls will be developed with a target implementation date from the end of 2023. ????????

17. This presents some challenges, but the FSA is committed to supporting the Government's ambitions and we are working closely on the development of the new Target Operating Model to deliver proportionate, effective and efficient border controls.???????

18. To solve the current **Northern Ireland Protocol** issues, the UK Government's preferred outcome is a long term negotiated solution with the EU. On 17 May, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss

updated the House of Commons on the government's intention to introduce legislation to make changes to the Northern Ireland Protocol in the case that bilateral negotiations fail to produce solutions. FSA officials are working closely with DEFRA, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and DHSC counterparts on all options to ensure that they maintain Northern Ireland's high food safety standards and support wider consumer interests.

Foodborne disease???????

19. Since 2017 major retailers have sampled and tested chicken to an agreed common protocol developed by the FSA. Retailers have continued to sample to this protocol, sharing their results with the FSA, and publishing the results on their individual websites for customers. Retailers' own data (for the year ending December 2021) shows that **Campylobacter** levels on retail chickens have remained steady overall.???????

20. The FSA has continued to sample chicken from the smaller retail outlets. The data from this sampling shows that the proportion of fresh whole chicken on retail sale that are contaminated with the highest level of Campylobacter (>1000 cfu/g) has decreased since 2014, and we have seen further reductions in the period from 2017 to 2020. However, a greater percentage of chickens from these types of stores are contaminated at higher levels - above FSA thresholds - compared to those from the larger retailers. We are therefore focusing on Campylobacter reduction in small to medium processors to reduce contamination levels on chickens supplied to these markets.

Queen's Speech ????????

21. In May, the **Queen's speech** marked the state opening of parliament for the new session. Of the bills mentioned in the speech two had particular relevance for the FSA:

Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill: The FSA has worked closely with Defra, as the lead department on this bill, to make sure that they take account of our role as the competent authority for authorising any future precision bred food and feed. This will be discussed further in the Board session on 15 June 2022 with the ['The Genetic Technology \(Precision Breeding\) Bill'](#) paper.

Brexit Freedoms Bill: The FSA has continued to work closely with the Cabinet Office to ensure that the implications of this proposal for food and feed legislation are well understood. The detail of the bill is not yet clear, so we are continuing to monitor its progress to assess the impact to the FSA.

National Audit Office Report: 'Regulating after EU Exit' ????????

22. In May, the National Audit Office published its report ['Regulating after EU Exit'](#). This focused on how three regulators, the FSA, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have responded to the opportunities and challenges following EU Exit. The report highlighted a number of key features for the FSA; that along with other regulators we have taken on significant new responsibilities following our exit from the EU; that although we have invested heavily in our science capability and have mitigations in place we have still had challenges in recruiting specialist staff, such as Official Veterinarians and toxicologists; that longer term planning has been challenging, due to the changing situation, such as the delay to the introduction of full import controls on high risk food imports from the EU and the larger than anticipated number of new regulated product applications; and that although we have lost access to data and information sharing arrangement with other regulators we are taking steps to mitigate this and have taken steps to strengthen our international relationships.

In response to the publication of this report, I am scheduled to give evidence at the Public Accounts Committee on Monday 13 June alongside Sarah Albon, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of HSE and Dr Michael Grenfell, Executive Director, Enforcement at CMA.

Engagements

23. Since my last report I have met: Richard Griffiths, CEO of the British Poultry Council, Karen Betts, Food & Drink Federation CEO and Olly Buston of Future Advocacy who supports the Jamie Oliver Group. I also joined the Chair in a meeting with President of the National Farmers Union, Minette Batters and Director General, Terry Jones.

24. In March, I attended a National Leadership Cohort residential in Liverpool where I met Dr Naomi Maynard, Good Food Programme Director of Feeding Liverpool – the city's food alliance. I visited Aintree Hospital meeting Dr Lucy Antal, Regional Food Economies North-West Senior Manager and Lead for Food Justice; I saw a mobile fruit and vegetable bus project in action here. I also visited the University of Liverpool to meet lecturer in appetite and obesity, Dr Emma Boyland. I also met Tom Lambeth, CEO at Food For Thought Schools, a social enterprise school food company and finally, I visited The Community Shop and met Gary Stott, Chair of Board of Directors. He explained how Community Shop enables the biggest retailers, manufactures, food service and logistics providers to unlock value from surplus stock, which may have otherwise gone to waste.

25. I joined the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum for their third meeting.

26. I gave evidence at the Northern Ireland Health Committee hearing on Food Compositional Standards and Labelling Common Framework alongside Maria Jennings, Director of NI.

27. I met Herman Diricks, Chief Executive of the Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain to discuss potential bilateral collaboration.

28. I have accompanied the Chair to meetings with Ministers Prentis and Churchill and I have supported her at engagements with the British Retail Consortium and Food Standards Scotland and the FSA Stakeholder Consumer Forum which includes representatives from The Food Foundation, Food Ethics Council, Which, Soil Association, Sustain and the WWF.

29. I have also met Professor Christianne Glossop OBE, Wales Chief Veterinary Officer, Professor Sandy Thomas, Chair of the Science Council and Food Standards Scotland CEO, Geoff Ogle.

30. I have undertaken several visits since my last report including a visit to Tesco HQ with the Chair and several members of the Executive Management Team (EMT). In April, I visited Cornwall Port Health Authority which included a trip to a depuration plant. In May, I visited Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority at the Port of Felixstowe, the Trading Standards team at Norfolk County Council, WL Duffields & Sons - a feed business in Norwich and 2 Sisters Food Group – a chicken abattoir in Flixton.

31. In May, I welcomed Vice Minister Arai from the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and representatives from the Saudi Food & Drug Authority including CEO, HE Professor Hisham Aljadhey.

32. I have held a meeting with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, President, Kate Richards and CEO, Lizzie Lockett.

33. have met my counterparts at the Care Quality Commission, Civil Aviation Authority, Office for Nuclear Regulation, Health and Safety Executive and the Office of Rail and Road.

34. In May I attended a Civil Service Leadership event on government reform strategy and contributed to a panel session on leading in a changing environment as part of The Future Leadership Scheme.

35. I have also had routine engagement with Government officials from other departments.
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36. At the beginning of June, Director of Policy, Rebecca Sudworth and I met Paul and Daniel Carey, father and brother of Owen Carey.?????

37. I joined Gabrielle Rifkind, Director of Oxford Process, and the thinktank, RethinkX for a dinner involving several food stakeholders to discuss the expanding alternative proteins market, with foods that may help with climate change consequences, as well as sustainability and land usage.