

December 2020 Board Meeting - Questions



Question 1

I saw the paper submitted for consideration at the FSA Board meeting on 2 December and noted the large number of current information schemes described in Annex 3.

We have wanted to publish allergen scores on our own website for some considerable time, but have been dissuaded because of the large number of 'standards' together with a reliable method of collection. No doubt similar issues would need to be considered before incorporating such publication into the FHRs.

We noticed, just a few short weeks ago, the Codex international standard for allergen management reached the approved for use, Step 8 stage.

Nirvana - or so we thought.

Steve Wearne played a pivotal role in developing this standard, so we expected this might be put forward for adoption, as the basis of the UK standard by FSA. If implemented as the baseline for audits, data might then be collated according to a common standard and published consistently to consumers..

I was therefore surprised not to see any reference to Codex in the paper.

It would be interesting to understand your views as to how Codex fits in to this work, and whether it might be considered as part of the programme in the future?

Our response to Question 1 was:

The FSA's work to develop a food allergy safety scheme is in its early stages. We have carried out research and scoping work, but we are still determining exactly how the scheme will work and how it will be delivered.

Once this work is more developed, we will consider how best to incorporate standard setting measures.

The FSA welcomes the adoption this year of the internationally recognised Codex Code of Practice on Allergen Management [LINK: http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?Ink=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FStandards%252FCXC%2B80-2020%252FCXC_080e.pdf]. The FSA, representing the UK, co-chaired the drafting of this document along with the USA and Australia.

The FSA has included many of the points into our recently published online allergy and intolerance training [LINK: <https://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>], and will continue to consider how best to incorporate the guidance on allergen management into our work.

Question 2

During the Board meeting we received the following:

- 1 Star rating system any new changes instead?
- 2 Registered home cooking and delivery, must be exempt from rating system,
- 3 Any plan to implement or replace star rating?

Allergen training need to be mandatory.

Regards

Food safety traioner advisor

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Our response was:

We recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), which we deliver in partnership with local authorities in England Wales and Northern Ireland. Over those ten years the FHRS has played a key role in protecting public health and there is robust evidence that it has driven up standards in food businesses.

The operation of the scheme is kept under review and the key change that has been made since its launch was the introduction of legislation in Wales and Northern Ireland requiring display of ratings at food business premises. The FSA has presented a business case to Ministers in support of also making it mandatory for food business operators in England to display their rating and this is currently being considered.

As online food ordering has become increasingly important, more so during the COVID-19 pandemic, the business case also covers mandatory provision of ratings at point of choice online. Legislation regarding online display is expected to be introduced in Northern Ireland in due course and we are working with Welsh Government officials to develop proposals to present to Welsh Ministers for similar legislation for Wales. In the meantime, we have successfully encouraged the main online order platforms to voluntarily provide ratings information for the businesses with which they partner.

The FSA has a programme of work in place to evolve and reform the regulatory system and the FHRS will remain at the heart of this.

In terms of home cooking and delivery, these businesses are selling direct to the consumer like other businesses covered by the scheme and the rating gives transparency on their hygiene standards which informs choice. Consumers would not expect them to be exempt from the scheme.

We are still at a relatively early stage on considerations on how we might develop a food allergy safety scheme. We are looking at possible options including consumer views as to what they would like to see and how they might use such a scheme. The evidence review

summarised in the Food Hypersensitivity board paper gives us some helpful findings on which to build.

Food businesses must ensure that all food handlers receive instruction or training in food safety appropriate to their specific work duties. Any training or instruction provided should ensure that food handlers have sufficient knowledge and competence to handle food safely. There is no frequency set out in legislation for training and it is up to a food business to decide when staff require refresher training.

The FSA's online allergy and intolerance training offers practical advice to anyone wanting to learn more about food allergy, such as managers and staff in the manufacturing and catering industries. It can be accessed at <https://allergytraining.food.gov.uk>.