

Chief Executive's Report to the Board, June 2025

FSA 25-06-03 - Report by Katie Pettifer

Spending Review

1. On 11 June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the outcome of the Government's Spending Review (SR25) in Parliament. As part of SR25, the FSA has been allocated a resource budget of £117m per year for each of the next three financial years. This maintains the budget that the department secured for this current financial year and represents a positive, though challenging, result, given the wider fiscal environment. The FSA also secured an uplift to our research and development capital funding, through which we will continue to fulfil our responsibilities on scientific research.
2. Our Executive Team will now work through the implications of the settlement, recognising that prioritisation decisions will be required to absorb inflationary pressures across the Spending Review period.

Trade and International Agreements

3. It has been a busy few months for the UK Government in relation to international trade, with several developments relevant to food.
4. On 6 May the UK and Republic of India concluded talks on a free trade agreement. The text of the agreement will be published in due course, when we expect the FSA and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) to be jointly commissioned by the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) to provide advice on whether it maintains statutory protections for food safety and nutrition. The FSA advice will inform a report DBT are required to lay before Parliament under Section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020.
5. Following negotiations, a new trade deal between the US and UK was announced on 9 May. The deal is focussed on issues such as tariffs and digital trade. UK ministers have been clear throughout negotiations that maintaining food standards is very important for the UK and that current provisions on chlorine-washed chicken and hormone treated beef would be maintained.
6. The UK Government made a public announcement at the UK-EU Summit on 19 May regarding the intention to negotiate a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement with the EU. The way in which the UK and EU will work towards agreeing a common sanitary and phytosanitary area is set out in the [common understanding document](#).
7. In making the announcements, ministers made clear that the UK remains committed to high food standards, and the importance of protecting our biosecurity and public health.

8. The FSA will have an important role in providing technical advice to Government as part of the negotiations, to ensure that any agreement protects public health and protects the interests of consumers. Based upon the common understanding text, we believe that these protections could be maintained in an agreement but will remain closely engaged as the agreement develops.

9. While the UK Government will be negotiating the deal on behalf of the UK, we will support its efforts to work on a four-country basis and will engage closely with government departments across the UK. We will, as always, work as transparently as possible with our stakeholders across the industry while protecting the confidentiality of the negotiations.

10. The outcome of these negotiations will have an impact on some of the work that the FSA undertakes, and we will need to review our business planning as the negotiations progress. We will also need to consider carefully our approach to any work that increases divergence between the UK and the EU. The work to support negotiations, as well as the planning for implementation of an SPS Agreement, will need to be undertaken within our current resource and budget.

Innovation in food and feed products

11. The FSA has begun a new research programme on innovative food products, supported by the additional funding of up to £1.4m provided by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). This programme will have a particular focus on precision fermentation – a technology that used microbes to produce food ingredients, ensuring these foods are safe for consumers. The new programme aims to increase the efficiency of our regulatory assessment of this technology, whilst making the requirements of regulation clearer for businesses looking to innovate. It will also conduct horizon scanning on wider developments in innovative foods to ensure the FSA is prepared for the regulatory challenges they may pose.

12. This new research programme complements our existing regulatory sandbox on cell-cultivated products (CCPs). The sandbox is now in its delivery phase and the FSA has held four workshops with our participating organisations to discuss the production processes, nutritional content and allergenicity questions posed by this new technology. In addition, the FSA, alongside Food Standards Scotland (FSS), has successfully launched a cross-government forum and an international regulators network to learn from best practice and discuss the challenges posed by the regulation of this new technology. We have also conducted pre-submission consultations with four businesses this quarter who are looking to make CCP applications in Great Britain. This approach will generate insights to help the FSA develop proportionate regulation for CCPs that protects the safety of consumers whilst enabling innovation.

13. Finally, following a successful House of Lords' debate on 6 May, the [Genetic Technology \(Precision Breeding\) Regulations 2025 Statutory Instrument](#) was made and signed into law on 13 May. The FSA is preparing to implement the new authorisation regime, working closely with colleagues in Defra.

Animal welfare and recent withdrawal of approval

14. Footage from undercover filming was shared with our Operations teams in February, raising animal welfare issues at a West Midlands slaughterhouse. On early investigation the footage was from last summer. Enforcement action had already been taken several months earlier, and further steps have been taken since. Further investigations have led to additional enforcement activity which includes the suspension and revocation of individual Certificates of Competence relating to slaughter activities.

15. The premises approval was reviewed and after considering detailed and robust evidence FSA removed the approval in early May. An application for a new approval has been received and will

be considered in line with our operational policy for approving food establishments.

16. Local residents have also raised with us other issues which do not fall within the FSA's areas of responsibility, and we have collaborated and shared relevant information with the local authorities and police.

Biosurveillance and biosecurity

17. The FSA have successfully bid into the Integrated Security Fund (ISF) biosecurity portfolio, created in 2025 and administered by the Cabinet Office, as a further mechanism for delivering the UK Biological Security Strategy (BSS). Through this bid, the FSA has been awarded £1M of funding in 25/26 to continue bio surveillance pilot work started under the PATH-SAFE Programme, which ended in March 2025.

18. Combined with funding from the FSA's Research & Evidence Programme and funded projects from other departments (FSS and Defra), this will give a combined programme of around £2M in 25/26, focusing on three priority areas: data and tools (building on the pilot data sharing platform built under PATH-SAFE), Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) surveillance (including work to better understand the sources of new strains) and onsite diagnostics (working with Defra to develop flexible capabilities for animal, plant and food testing).

Business campaign – Safer food means better business

19. Our communications business campaign, 'Safer food means better business', launched on 23 April and is designed to help us build engagement with small and micro businesses, and help ensure that they are not missing key information and resources to protect their customers and help their businesses thrive. The core campaign messaging is that the FSA provides a range of valuable, free, training products and resources to support your business and protect your customers – reiterating that safer food is better for their business.

20. So far, this campaign has been promoted on our own FSA channels, including a stakeholder message and blog, but the majority of this activity is being driven by our partners and stakeholders, including Uber Eats, Deliveroo, UK Hospitality and The Nationwide Catering Association.

21. Since the campaign launch, we have seen a 133% increase in visitors to our business guidance page, with trackable links showing most of these come from partner referrals. Longer term, we will look to measure campaign impact through the small and micro FBO tracking survey.

Consumer campaign – Bacteria love it here

22. Launched to coincide with World Food Safety Day, on 7 June 2025, our communications consumer campaign aims to drive positive behaviour change in the kitchen, encouraging consumers to think about their food hygiene habits, and what they should be doing to help reduce the risk of developing foodborne illnesses.

23. We will be targeting a broad consumer audience, with a focus on reaching consumers that are less engaged with the FSA (such as men and younger people) as well as targeting vulnerable consumers who are at higher risk of developing foodborne illnesses, such as those who are immunocompromised and older people. The campaign is based on insights from Kitchen Life 2 and Food & You 2, and we have worked closely with SERD colleagues to undergo message and creative testing.

24. The campaign will run in several phases over the next 10-12 months, allowing us to address different behaviours in the kitchen and to use seasonal hooks (such as Christmas) and arising incidents to address important behaviours.

25. The first phase of the campaign will consist of social media posts and paid ads on FSA channels as well as collaboration with our partnership agency to engage our target audiences.

26. In the second phase, which will launch in August or September, we intend to carry out proactive media engagement and use partners to reach harder to reach audiences.

Celebrating 25 years of the FSA with colleagues

27. The FSA Internal comms team hosted two all-staff virtual events to mark the FSA's 25th anniversary. Almost 800 colleagues joined a call which included an intro from our Chair Susan Jebb, a session from Professor Chris Elliott from Queen's University Belfast on the current and future challenges of our food system, alongside a session on the future of regulation. On the same day, we held the FSA staff awards, celebrated individuals and teams who were nominated for their outstanding work across eight categories, including protecting consumer interests and evidential excellence. These events form part of a set of internal activity marking the anniversary, which has also included 25 weekly staff stories and a two-week Learning Festival, with a focus on skills and knowledge building across the agency.

International Heads of Food Agencies Forum

28. I attended the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum (IHFAF) which was held in Chile in early April. This gave me an opportunity to strengthen relationships with my counterparts from 14 different countries, as well as the World Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation. The theme of the meeting was the use of innovation, data and artificial intelligence. I gave a presentation at the plenary session about how the FSA is using data to inform regulation, describing as examples our signals dashboard and the work that we are doing on National Level Regulation. These case studies provoked a good discussion during the session and in the margins of the meeting. I also found it extremely interesting to hear how other regulators are trialling or using data and AI tools in regulation, in a range of areas from identification of signs of disease in animal carcasses to triage for border controls.

29. During my visit I held bilateral meetings with several other attendees, including with colleagues from Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Germany, New Zealand, and the Chilean Agricultural and Livestock Service and their Ministry of Health. These meetings were valuable and insightful. The underlying theme of all the meetings was that we were all facing similar challenges and by working collaboratively we would all be better placed to resolve them.

30. The UK is hosting this Forum in 2027, and I have been invited to join the Executive Committee for the next three years. Our international team has begun developing plans for the 2027 meeting. I look forward to continuing to build on the relationships that we have made.

Engagements

31. Since the last Board meeting, I have continued to my regular engagement with counterparts across government and in other regulators. This includes meetings with senior officials in Department of Business and Trade, Department of Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Health and Social Care, and His Majesty's Treasury. I have met with the Chief Executives of other regulators and bodies, including FSS, the Animal Plant and Health Agency, the Environment Agency, the Office for Environmental Protection the Planning Inspectorate and the UK Health and

Safety Agency.

32. I attended the regular meeting of CEOs of Safety Regulators forum and met colleagues from the National Audit Office to discuss the role of Non-Executive Directors. I had an introductory meeting with Lorand Bartels, Chair of the Government Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC). Robin May, Susan Jebb and I also met Gisela Abbam (Chair), Duncan Rudkin (Chief Executive), and Roz Gittins (Chief Pharmacy Officer) from the General Pharmaceutical Council to discuss joint working. I also met Ana López-Santacruz Serraller (Executive Director, Spanish Agency for Food & Nutrition).

33. I continued to engage with food industry representatives. I had bilateral meetings with Karin Goodburn, Director General of the Chilled Food Association and Jason Aldiss, the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers. Rebecca Sudworth, Director of Policy, and I participated in a regular call with Technical Directors organised by the British Retail Consortium. She and I also met Professor Chris Elliott from Queen's University Belfast and Jago Pearson, chairman of the Coalition against Nitrites. With several colleagues, I visited Pilgrim's Europe, chicken abattoir at their Dungannon site and I also met Brian Hyland, Food Quality and Safety Director at Dunbia (Dawn Meats).

34. As usual, I attended the regular Defra-led meeting, chaired by Minister Daniel Zeichner, with representatives from the British Retail Council, UK Hospitality, the Food and Drink Federation and the National Farmers Union.

35. I joined a ministerial roundtable with stakeholders on school food chaired by Minister Stephen Morgan. I also attended a stakeholder roundtable chaired by Minister Creagh at Defra on the circular economy and the role of the agri-food sector within it. I had the opportunity to meet a range of people connected with community food redistribution at the Felix Project 2025 Founders Dinner.

36. Furthermore, I have attended and spoken at several events in the last quarter. I gave a speech at the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers annual conference in April. More recently, I spoke about examples of innovation in FSA at the Institute of Regulation's panel event on *Unlocking the Opportunity of the new Regulatory Innovation Office*.