

FSA in England and Northern Ireland launch consultation on the Food Law Code of Practice, Practice Guidance and Competency Framework

We've launched a formal four-week consultation on proposals to amend the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code) and Food Law Practice Guidance (the Practice Guidance), and implement the FSA knowledge and skills for the effective delivery of official food and feed controls and other activities (Competency Framework). This formal consultation follows a series of stakeholder engagement events over the last four weeks.

The Codes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales sets out instructions and criteria to which local authorities and port health authorities, in England and Wales, and District Councils in Northern Ireland must have regard to when discharging their duties in relation to the delivery of official food control activities.

The FSA is required to consult on amendments to the Code prior to implementation. The Code requires regular review and revision to ensure that it reflects current priorities, policy, and legislative requirements so that local authority, port health authority and district council delivery of food control activities remains effective, consistent, and proportionate.

The main proposed changes include:

- modernisation of the baseline knowledge, skills, and experience requirements to enable a wider cohort of environmental health and trading standards professionals to undertake official food controls and other official activities, which the current Code restricts
- replacing the existing competency requirements with a Competency Framework that defines competency by activity rather than by role
- introducing a provision to enable the FSA to be more responsive in issuing instructions, whereby local authorities and district councils may legitimately depart from the Code, in limited circumstances
- updating the Code to reflect the Official Control Regulation (EU) 2017/625, and EU exit implications, where the negotiated position is known

Maria Jennings, Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland, said:

'The proposed amendments to the Codes, the Practice Guidance and the implementation of the Competency Framework will enable local authorities, port health authorities and district councils to urgently recruit additional officers to deal with the anticipated increase in food controls on imported and exported food, that will be required at the end of the EU transition period, and to redeploy staff during this unprecedented time.

The consultation ends on 10 December so we would encourage all those who have an interest in this area to respond over the next four weeks.'

For more information about the consultation and to take part, visit the FSA consultation webpages for [England](#) or [Northern Ireland](#). The consultation will close at midnight on Thursday 10 December 2020.

The Food Standards Agency in Wales will publish the consultation in early 2021.