

Review of UK meat processing identifies improvements

- Draft review makes recommendations for industry and regulatory authorities to improve compliance and assurance.
- Recommendations to be considered by the Boards of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) on 17 October.

The six-month review was launched in the wake of a number of high profile non-compliance issues identified at cutting plants.

The review took a fundamental look at how the current arrangements could work better and focused on tackling the root causes of common issues, and not just the symptoms.

The recommendations, which are subject to the approval of each organisation's Board at a meeting in Edinburgh on 17 October, are designed to prioritise food safety and improve overall industry standards in the meat supply chain.

The 19 recommendations for industry and regulators include:

- greater involvement of industry to produce clearer guidance to meet the needs of food businesses
- increased focus on skills and capabilities across industry
- greater data transparency and sharing across industry and with the regulators
- more effective use of data by regulatory authorities and improved regulatory coordination and consistency
- trialling the feasibility of using a single organisation to deliver all official controls in a geographic location

Jason Feeney, Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency, said:

'We launched this review following a series of high profile events over the last 12 months at a number of meat businesses. These incidents cast a shadow over the whole sector and not just the businesses directly at fault. This challenged consumer confidence and trust in the industry as a whole.

'This in-depth review has identified actions that the meat industry and the regulatory authorities can take to make improvements.

'There are good reasons why the meat industry has specific controls in place to protect public health and provide assurance about the authenticity of meat products on the market.

'We are pleased the industry participated so fully in this approach and we expect them to continue to work with us to deliver the recommendations once they have been agreed.'

Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive of Food Standards Scotland, said:

'This review is essential for ensuring the public continues to have full confidence in the safety of the UK's meat industry. The majority of our meat sector acts responsibly ensuring food safety compliance across their process, and it is important that the actions of a minority do not damage the reputation of the whole sector.

'That's why we and the Food Standards Agency have looked at a comprehensive evidence base and have made wide-ranging recommendations for improvement for both industry and regulators that will ensure the high standards and safety we expect in our meat industry.

'The input of industry bodies in this review has been, and will continue to be, paramount and we thank everyone who has contributed.

'When our respective Boards have agreed the next steps, we will work to deliver the improvements identified. All decisions and actions will continue to be taken in the best interests of consumers and will be based on the evidence base and expert scientific advice. We all have a part to play in ensuring the safety of our meat and meat products.'

Background to the review

The review was [announced in February 2018](#) to identify potential improvements in the way the sector is regulated in the wake of non-compliance issues identified at cutting plants. [Emerging findings were published](#) and discussed at the FSA and FSS Board meetings in May and June.

A comprehensive stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering process has been conducted which included:

- contacting all 419 local authorities in the UK and 325 Food Business Organisations to seek their views
- holding six workshops across the UK attended by almost 100 organisations food businesses, local authorities and trade bodies
- engaging with more than 60 industry stakeholder organisations and others who represent professional members working in regulation and assurance

Draft report and board paper

The draft report and board paper can be accessed at the [meat cutting plant and cold store review page](#).