

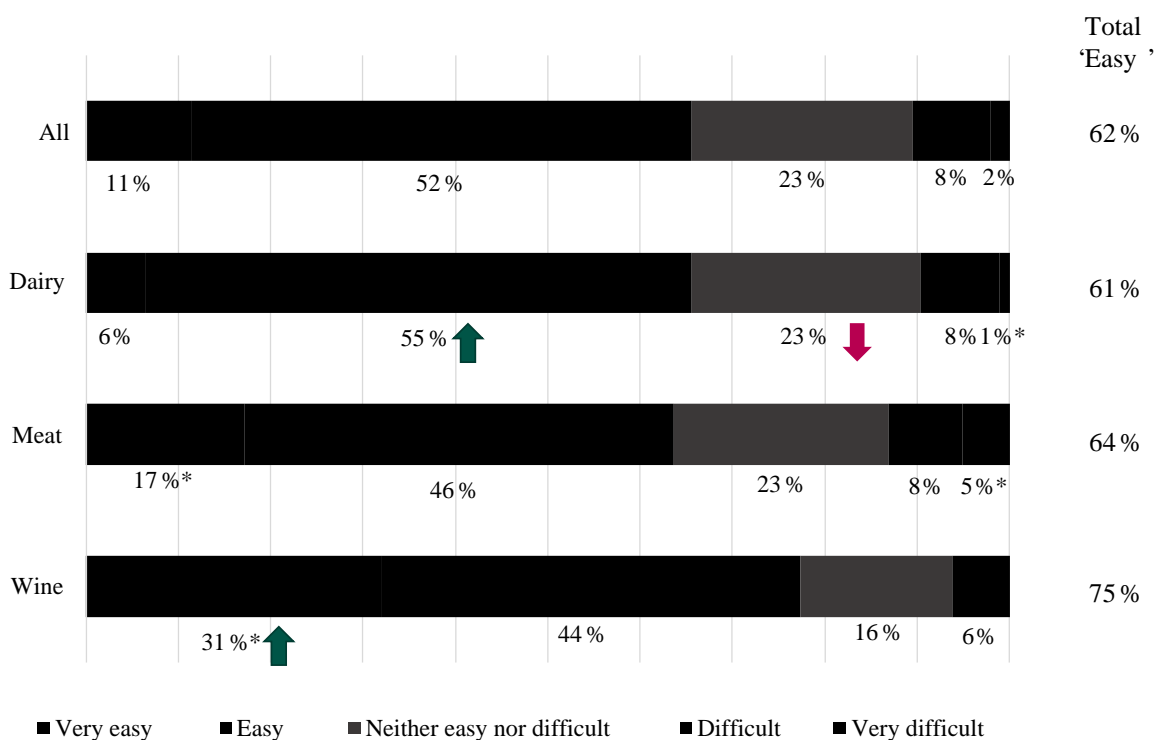
FSA and Official Controls: Ability to comply with FSA guidelines

Ease of complying with FSA guidelines

All FBOs were asked how easy or difficult they find complying with FSA guidelines. Around six in ten (62%) stated that they found it easy (11% 'very' easy), and 10% reported finding it difficult. This presents no change from the 2020 findings.

By sector, FBOs in the wine sector were most likely to find compliance very easy (31%) compared to the average and dairy was least likely (6%), as shown in Figure 7.1. Those in the meat sector were also more likely than the average to find compliance very easy (17%) but also had a larger cohort than the average that found compliance very difficult (5%).

Figure 7.1 Ease or difficulty in complying with FSA guidelines

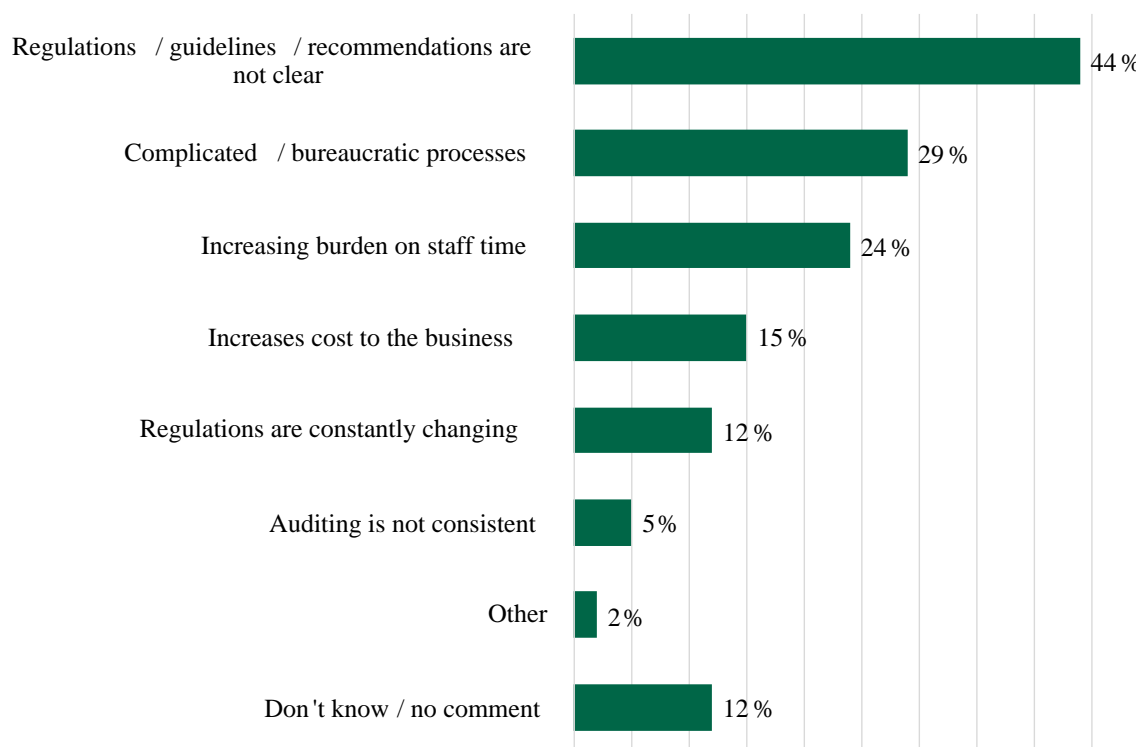


Base : Dairy 2022 (264), Dairy 2020 (200). Arrows indicate significant difference from 2020. * Indicates significant difference from all other sectors. Don't know figures have not been presented in the chart

Reasons for difficulty in complying with FSA guidelines

Those FBOs that found it difficult to comply with FSA guidelines were asked to explain why they were finding it difficult. As shown in Figure 7.2, the most common reason for difficulty related to the clarity of the guidance (44%), followed by complicated processes (29%), and increasing burdens on staff time (24%).

Figure 7.2 Reasons for difficulty in complying with FSA guidelines



Base : All FBOs (400). Arrows indicate significant difference from 2020. * Indicates significant difference from all in 2022.
D2. Please can you briefly explain why? Base: All who found compliance with guidelines difficult (41).

The qualitative interviews provided further information on the difficulties experienced when trying to comply with FSA guidelines. Most commonly mentioned was the confusion between different standards set by other organisations and the duplication of effort this caused FBOs.

"I wouldn't know what the FSA guidelines are ... are they any different than what we have to do for our Red Tractor? I follow those and Arla Garden [guidelines] to the T, but I'm not aware of anything different the FSA want." (Dairy, England)

"I'm fairly clear on everything ... what we have to do for one audit, we have to do for the others ... I think there are too many organisations doing the same thing [audits]." (Dairy, Wales)

There were also concerns regarding the inconsistency of the FSA's inspectors and a feeling from those that find compliance difficult that they are interpreting the guidelines differently.

"It's all dependent on the Official Vet at the time.... There is no one size fits all they all follow their own rules I think". (Meat, England)

A few FBOs also reported the costs of compliance as being the main barrier to compliance.

"I wouldn't say it was easy because it depends on what they want you to comply with... It depends on how much money we are going to have to spend to comply with whatever they want us to comply with at that time." (Meat, England)

Linked, one small FBO in the dairy sector felt that in both the design and application of regulations the FSA could give more consideration to the size of businesses. They felt they did not have the same infrastructure or funds as larger farms to necessarily fully comply, and that they were therefore at a competitive disadvantage.

Lastly, some FBOs experiencing difficulties in compliance stated that the main problem they experienced was keeping accurate and up-to-date records.

"Near enough is not good enough. You have to be precise." (Wine, England)

Reflecting the quantitative survey, most of the qualitative respondents were satisfied and had no improvements to recommend on how compliance could be made easier. The handful of recommendations proposed included:

Continuing the digitisation process, to reduce duplication of work and administration time.

"We used to do it all by paper and files and it was a lot harder work. Now it's computerised it's simpler and easier and you can populate information into different categories automatically to save duplicating the information into several sectors." (Dairy, England)

The FSA providing more clarity on the reasons for new regulations, so that FBOs can understand the importance and implication of the change.

"Compliance is always easier when you can see and understand why you need to comply yourself, if you see something as pointless compliance is a bit more difficult." (Dairy, Wales)

The FSA to raise awareness more widely across government of the barriers to compliance that FBOs face (one FBO noted how they are currently using a trade body to do this but felt the FSA could do more).

The FSA could be better in its communications on how guidelines are changing and clearer on the language they use in official documents.

"I find out that I've had to speak to a couple of other people who are in the same situation as me...they've said, 'Were you aware of, this is the latest thing you've got to do', and I've found myself not knowing about it." (Meat, England)

"Make it easier for people to process; speak plain English." (Meat, England).