

Our Food 2022: Foreword

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There can be little doubt that 2022 was a year of major upheaval in the UK food system. For consumers, grocery prices rose faster than the rate of inflation, driving the biggest increases in our shopping bills for a generation. For businesses, a combination of war in Ukraine, harvest failures, labour shortages and increased production costs added pressure to a system still managing the fall-out of the COVID-19 pandemic and adjusting to a new post-EU exit landscape.

In last year's Our Food report, we concluded that UK food standards in 2021 had held firm despite the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainties presented by the end of the EU exit transition period. Yet we also acknowledged the challenges that lay ahead: a likely surge in food prices, the absence of import controls on food from the EU, and the decline in local authority resourcing. These challenges were not exclusive to 2021 – they continued to cause concern in 2022. We pick up on these themes again in our latest report as we delve into the challenges that remain beyond the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every point of failure in the food chain, particularly when it relates to the authenticity and safety of what we eat, has the potential to cause harm or distress. The data in this annual report reminds us that while our food system has many strengths, it is not infallible. Maintaining the public's trust and confidence in our food system begins with transparency and openness: that is, by being honest about how standards are changing, where they may be vulnerable, and how we need to act together to improve things for the future.

By laying out the facts and sharing all the available data and evidence we hold across our respective organisations, we hope this year's report once again shines a light on the areas of strength and weakness in our food system. How we respond is the challenge for us as regulators as well as government, industry, enforcement authorities and consumers themselves.

Professor Susan Jebb, Chair, The Food Standards Agency



Heather Kelman, Chair, Food Standards Scotland

