

Who we are

Who we are, what we do, and how we do it at the Food Standards Agency

The FSA is an independent, non-ministerial department, established in 2000 following several high-profile outbreaks of foodborne illness such as BSE (mad cow disease).

Our objectives, powers and duties are mainly set out in the Food Standards Act 1999. We work across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our main objectives in law are to protect public health from risks arising from the consumption of food and generally to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.

We are determined to drive change in the food system so it delivers better outcomes for consumers. We protect the public by ensuring that food is safe and is what it says it is, and by playing our part in helping to make food healthier and more sustainable for everyone. We work across the food system to encourage transparency and openness, make it easier for businesses to do the right thing, and increase compliance to high food standards to protect public health.

Our role includes providing policy advice to ministers; inspecting, auditing and assuring businesses producing meat, wine and dairy; and generating the evidence to ensure our decisions and advice are based on the best available science. Our functions include providing information and advice to policy-makers and to the general public in connection with the matters within our statutory objectives, monitoring developments in science and technology on these matters and commissioning research on them. We have similar functions in relation to the safety of animal feed and other interests of users of animal feed.

Our statutory powers include the power to issue guidance on control of foodborne disease, and the power to gather and publish information about the food system in support of our objectives, and to publish our own advice. We also have specific powers as a regulator, to enforce food controls directly with some businesses and to oversee the enforcement of them by local authorities, which are described in the food regulatory system section below.

[We are governed by a Board](#), rather than ministers. Our chair and other members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and the Welsh and Northern Ireland governments. We work closely with Food Standards Scotland, which is the equivalent public body for Scotland.

Our work is underpinned by the latest science and evidence and agreed at our open Board meetings. Transparency is a guiding principle for the FSA.

HM Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive contribute to our budget, which in recent years has [been about £140 million](#).



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