

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 to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.

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 uphold high standards and to make it easier for businesses to do the right thing. Our work helps ensure that the public, and international trading partners, can have confidence in UK food.

Our role includes providing policy advice to ministers, monitoring developments in science and technology and commissioning research, ensuring our decisions and advice are always based on the best and most recent science. We also provide information and advice to other policy-makers and to the general public in connection with matters within our statutory objectives. We have similar functions in relation to 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 safety controls directly with some businesses and to oversee the enforcement of them by local authorities, which are described in the our responsibilities across the three countries section below. Since the UK left the EU, we also assess all applications for new foods, feed, or food contact material to be sold in England and Wales, and advise health ministers on authorisations.

[We are governed by an independent 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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