

# Welsh Food Advisory Committee Directors Report - April 2025

Report by Anjali Juneja, Director for UK & International Affairs and Sian Bowsley Director for FSA in Wales

## 1. Summary

1.1 This report provides:

- a summary of subjects introduced by the Chief Executive at the last Board meeting, held on 26 March 2025
- a summary of senior engagement across the UK and International Affairs (UKIA) Directorate; and
- an overview of developments and matters of interest to WFAC relating to Wales.

1.2 Members of the committee are invited to:

- note the update
- invite the Directors to expand on any issues for further discussion

## 2. Chief Executive's Report to the Board

2.1 This is the latest [Chief Executive's Report](#) presented to the March Board meeting.

## 3. Overview from the Director of UK and International Affairs (UKIA)

3.1 This section provides an overview of some of the key work undertaken by the Director of UKIA, Anjali Juneja, that will be of interest to WFAC since the last report in February.

### Budgets and Business Planning

3.2 As a whole, the organisation has been focused on the corporate priorities of the first phase of the Spending Review which set budgets for 2025/26 and subsequent business planning. We have received our budgets for Wales and Westminster for 2025/2026 and have agreed our

business plan for the coming financial year.

3.3 We are currently developing our response to the second phase of the Spending Review which will set resource budgets to 2028/29 and capital budgets until 2029/30. While this will impact mainly on teams based in England, we will also be engaging with Welsh Government about securing better sight of future years budgets.

3.4 In Wales, now that the Welsh Government's budget has been agreed in the Senedd, the FSA in Wales budget for 2025/26 has been confirmed in principle and I have been working with Sian and the leadership team to agree the priorities and business plan for Wales for the upcoming reporting year. These will be reflected in Welsh Government's official funding letter which will be subject to review by our Chief Executive, as Principal Accounting Officer for the FSA, which will be subject to final agreement by the Welsh Government. These will be reflected in Welsh Government's official funding letter which will be subject to review by our Chief Executive, as Principal Accounting Officer for the FSA, which will be subject to final agreement by the Welsh Government.

#### National Level Regulation

3.5 Noting the interest in National Level Regulation last Autumn, we have continued to engage with stakeholders on next steps at a national level through the Senior Steering Forum (SSF). WLGA and DPPW are represented on this group, and Welsh local authority representatives also sit on the National Food Hygiene Focus group and the Business Compliance Advisory Forum. Furthermore, last month the FSA in Wales team held a face-to-face workshop with over 40 local authority representatives, where we talked through the National Level Regulation trial. All stakeholder groups have been asked to contribute any ideas around how the business insight could be used in the current system, and the SSF will work with the FSA to refine this into something we can share with the FSA Board in June.

#### Engaging with Welsh Government

3.6 In early March, Sian and I met with Gian-Marco Currado, Rural Affairs Director and Richard Irvine, Chief Veterinary Officer at Welsh Government. Much of the work of the FSA in relation to food sits under the remit of the Deputy First Minister, Huw- Irranca Davies, so it's vital that we engage with his officials – we discussed the meat charging discount scheme, shellfish, and Welsh Government priorities on food.

3.7 Following a meeting in December with the Welsh Government Permanent Secretary Andrew Goodall, Sian and I also met with Welsh Government's Director of Local Government in February where we discussed the FSA cost recovery proposals, enhanced registration, LA resourcing and better use of data, including for example, through National Level Regulation.

#### Westminster activity

3.8 In international activity, in February our Chair Susan Jebb carried out a series of engagements with EU partners in Paris, Geneva and Madrid. These included meetings with the French and Spanish national food authorities as well as the World Health Organisation's Food Safety & Nutrition department. The aim was to strengthen relationships with key partners, and we reiterated our ongoing support for their International Food Safety Authorities Network as a crucial tool for global information exchange. In April, our Chief Executive will be participating in this year's meeting of the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum, a senior-level forum of like-minded food agencies that the FSA will be hosting in 2027.

### **4. Update from the Director for FSA in Wales**

4.1 Since the last WFAC meeting in February, the team have agreed our 2025-26 priorities and business plan, as well as progressing priority work areas as detailed below.

4.2 We are engaging with the review team at Cardiff Met to support the Welsh Government's review of the FSA in Wales. This includes sharing key reports and other documents as requested to support their desktop research phase and providing a list of suggested key contacts for the interview phase. I have attended two oversight group meetings to date, alongside colleagues from Welsh Government and DPPW. The expectation is that the report and recommendations will be finalised in July 2025.

4.3 Along with the FSA Chair and Rhian, I met with the Future Generations Commissioner last month to discuss his upcoming progress report on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. This will have specific recommendations for the food sector and I'm looking forward to the launch of the report on 29 April.

4.4 Over the last few months, FSA in Wales policy teams have:

4.4.1 Facilitated a meeting on precision breeding between Welsh Government, FSA in Wales and Aberystwyth University. We discussed divergence in the regulation of precision bred organisms between Wales and England and will keep engaging closely with the policy team in Welsh Government as this progresses.

4.4.2 Supported the publication of new allergen best practice guidance for food businesses in the out-of-home sector (such as restaurants and cafes). The guidance emphasises the importance of providing allergen information both in writing and verbally in these settings. The guidance was published in Welsh and English and was shared with the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Welsh Government policy officials, plus seven other Members of the Senedd who had previously shown an interest in allergens in Senedd discussions.

4.4.3 Arranged and facilitated an event for Welsh stakeholders on the future of the discounts to meat charging in Cardiff. It was a positive meeting with valuable insights from stakeholders who were pleased to have the opportunity to input their views in advance of the June Board discussion.

4.4.4 Progressed work on BAU market authorisations and reform of the authorisation process - On 19 February a consultation on 10 regulated food and feed products closed. This consultation included; one food additive, one feed additive, one food flavouring and the removal of 8 permitted flavouring substances, one food contact material, 3 genetically modified organisms (for food and feed uses) and 2 novel foods. Responses to the consultation are being considered and we will progress to sending recommendations on the authorisation of these products to the Welsh Ministers later this Spring. A second consultation for an additional batch of regulated food and feed applications is also planned to launch later this Spring. The Feed Additives (Authorisations) and Uses of Feed Intended for Particular Nutritional Purposes (Amendment of Commission Regulation (EU) 2020/354) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 were laid on or before 28 March 2025 to amend errors identified in the Welsh language version of the SI originally laid in November 2024 following scrutiny. The Food and Feed (Regulated Products) (Amendment, Revocation, Consequential and Transitional Provision) Regulations 2025 will come into force on 1 April 2025. These regulations implement the first phase of reform for market authorisations.

4.5 Since the February meeting, the teams working with local authorities (LAs) have:

4.5.1 Planned and delivered an information session for LAs in Wales on 19 March to update them on the outcomes of the food standards pilots, the consultation on the Food Law Code of Practice, cost recovery and the background to national level regulation and the outcomes of the sandbox trial in England.

4.5.2 Held an enhanced registration working group meeting on 10 March to work collaboratively with LAs to explore the need for enhanced registration for food businesses. Over the next few months we will be collecting data to evidence if there is an issue in the current legislative framework. The working group will meet monthly to progress this work. An update was provided to LAs at the engagement event held on 19 March (paragraph 3.5.1).

4.5.3 Launched a consultation on [proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice](#) on 21 February which will run for 12-weeks (further details in Consultations section below).

4.5.4 Informed local authorities of the audit programme for 2025/26, which will be a focused audit assessing the implementation of the Food Information Regulations, in relation to allergens. The audit plan will be shared with DPPW representatives before being finalised.

4.6 The incidents and National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) have also been busy over recent months:

4.6.1 Colleagues in incidents have been involved in the non-routine incident relating to Listeria. At the time of writing, the position in Wales remains stable and we are working closely with NHS Procurement, Welsh Government and LAs to ensure that actions are being taken to ensure affected products are not served to patients. Case numbers remain at 5 with none reported in 2025 (1 in Wales).

4.7 Our bilingual communications team in Wales have continued to ensure key FSA messages have been communicated across Wales, which has included:

4.7.1 As part of the activity to publish the best practice guidance on the provision of allergy information, the team launched a communications campaign to raise awareness among food businesses about the new guidance and provide them with the necessary tools to implement the guidance effectively, to support local authorities in assisting food business operators in adopting the new practices and to inform consumers about the changes, empowering them to make safer food choices.

4.7.2 On 1 April 2025, the FSA will celebrate its 25th anniversary (FSA25) and to mark the occasion, we will be coordinating internal activity to motivate and connect colleagues by looking back at outstanding achievements and look forward to equipping the FSA for future work. This will include internal videos of staff celebrating FSA's achievements, posts highlighting big achievements over the years and a staff awards event in May. We will also be sharing stakeholder messages externally to highlight the FSA's big milestones, in addition to using the parliamentary event in July to highlight FSA25 key messaging.

4.7.3 This month we are also launching a consumer food hygiene campaign, aiming to highlight risky behaviours consumers may be taking in the kitchen that could increase the risk of foodborne illnesses. The campaign will aim to encourage behaviour change, helping consumers think about risks they may be taking, and advise on good hygiene food practices. We will be using findings from Kitchen Life 2 and Food and You 2 to help us build our campaign and we are aiming to run this campaign over a longer period of time, with several phases (compared to our usual campaigns that run across 2-3 weeks) to achieve further insight.

4.8 As part of the FSA's statutory Welsh Language Scheme, we are regularly monitored by the regulator, the Welsh Language Commissioner, which includes 'mystery customer' monitoring activity. The most recent activity has found positive practice and excellent compliance across the board in the FSA, and the Commissioner has also approved the FSA's annual monitoring report with no issues or questions raised.

## **5. Consultations**

5.1 The following consultations are live at present:

- [Consultation on proposed amendments to the Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance - Wales](#) – seeking stakeholders' views on proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice and the Practice Guidance in Wales.

Date launched: 24 February 2025

Closing date: 19 May 2025

- [Amendments to assimilated Regulation 2019/1793: Changes to Official Controls and Emergency Measures Applied to Imported High Risk Food and Feed not of Animal Origin](#) – a consultation on proposed amendments to the lists within assimilated Commission Implementing Regulation 2019/1793 which applies a temporary increase of official controls and special conditions governing the entry into Great Britain of specified food and feed of non-animal origin from specified countries.

Date launched: 26 February 2025

Closing date: 9 April 2025

## **6. Forward look**

6.1 Much of the work we have updated on in this report will continue over the coming months, including supporting the Welsh Government review of the FSA in Wales and implementing any recommendations. In addition, we will also be working to progress the following projects and workstreams.

6.2 In terms of our communication and stakeholder activity for the next few months:

6.2.1 Our event in Wales to launch the Annual Report on Food Standards this year, which will also be an opportunity to celebrate 25 years of the FSA, will take place on Wednesday 9 July in the Pierhead building. It will an opportunity to hear from our Chair who will take a look back at what the FSA has achieved in this time, and a forward look to the challenges ahead. We will also hear from the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Sarah Murphy MS.

6.2.2 In addition we will be attending a the Wales Food and Drink Awards in May where the FSA in Wales will be sponsoring the Local Community Award, and are developing an engagement plan for this year's Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in July and the National Eisteddfod for Wales in August.

6.2.3 We will also be working with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office to update our statutory Welsh Language Scheme over the next year to ensure it remains fit for purpose in a digitally developing world. Our aim is to ensure a continued proactive language choice for consumers in Wales across all of our communication platforms, future proof our Welsh Language policy, and demonstrate our continued commitment to Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy and the language goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.