

FSA Strategy: Annual update on progress indicators

FSA 25/06/10 - Report from Rachel Cooper and Beth Chaudhary

1. Introduction

1.1 The [FSA strategy](#) “Food you can trust” was agreed by the Board in March 2022. The strategy commits the organisation to the vision of food that is safe; food that is what it says it is; and food that is healthier and more sustainable. The FSA’s [Three Year Corporate Plan](#) was published in July 2023 and sets out how the strategy will be delivered and progress monitored through a set of high-level progress indicators.

1.2 This paper is the second annual update on the progress indicators, following a [paper](#) in 2024. Baseline data for the progress indicators was provided in the [Three Year Corporate Plan](#).

1.3 Delivery of the strategy is monitored against three strategic ambitions:

- Ambition 1: Maintaining food you can trust
- Ambition 2: Maintaining food standards, so that food is safe and is what it says it is
- Ambition 3: Growing our contribution to, and influence on, food that is healthier and more sustainable

1.4 The progress indicators contained in this paper provide a high-level, strategic overview of trends relating to our strategy, through which the FSA can identify changes which may require closer scrutiny. The data is obtained from both FSA and external sources. The most up to date data for each indicator ranges from 2023 to 2025. Where there is no updated data since last year’s paper, this has been noted.

1.5 More detailed reporting on the FSA’s delivery of activities in the corporate plan is provided through the Business Committee quarterly performance review and Annual Report and Accounts, and a fuller review of the food system is available in the Annual Report on Food Standards ‘Our Food’ (2024 report is to be published in June 2025, 2023 report is [available here](#)). The progress indicators draw on data that is also used in these reports to provide an annual snapshot, to identify areas that may require further investigation and/or response.

2. Ambition 1: Maintaining food you can trust

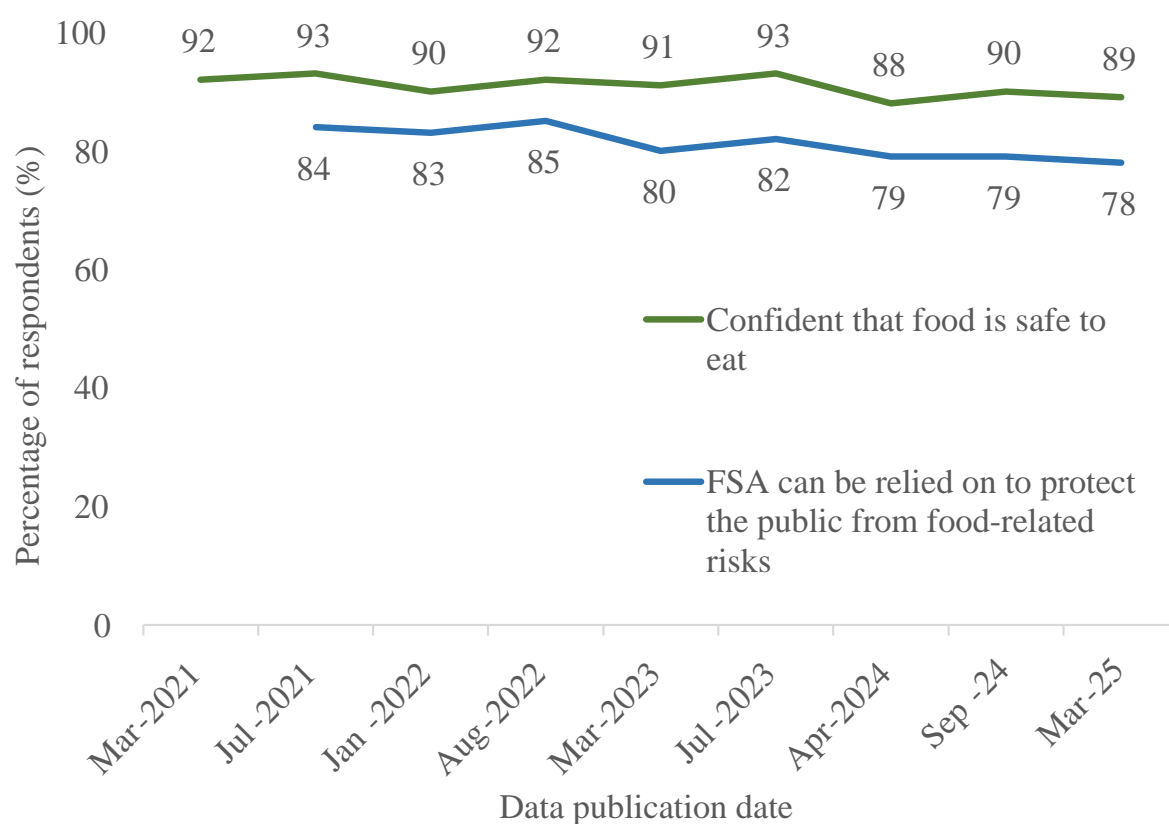
2.1 Our indicators for ambition one are:

Food and You 2 survey questions on consumer confidence in the FSA and the food system, specifically:

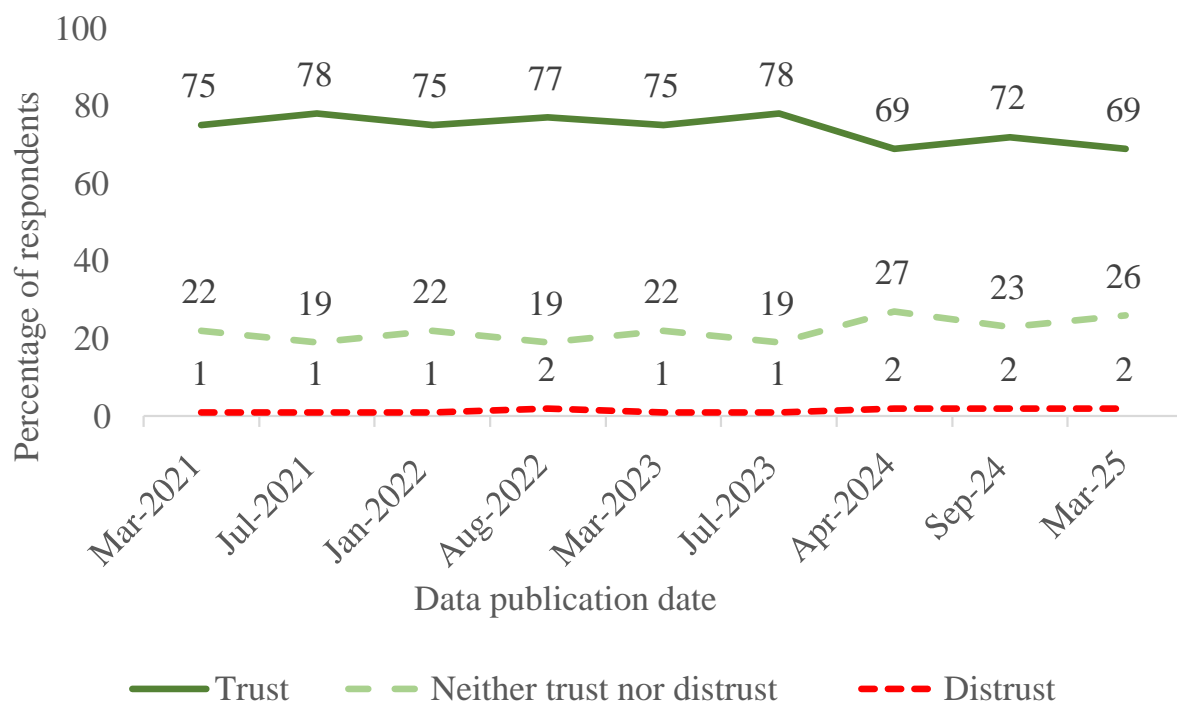
- Confidence that the FSA ([footnote 1](#)) can be relied upon to protect the public from food related risks;
- Confidence that the food we buy is safe to eat;
- Trust in the FSA (amongst those with some knowledge); and
- Research with our wider stakeholders on trust in the FSA.

2.2 Food and You 2: Food and You 2, reported twice a year, provides the FSA's key (official statistic) measure of consumer trust in the FSA and the food system. This update draws on the latest data from Wave 8 (collected in October 2023 – January 2024 and published in September 2024) and Wave 9 (collected April 2024 - July 2024 and published in March 2025).

2.3 The data shows that confidence in the areas related to consumer trust remains high, showing little change over the past 12 months (Figure 1).



2.4 In the 2024 update to the board, we reported a decline in trust in the FSA in mid-2023 (from 78% to 69%) amongst those with some knowledge of the FSA (Figure 2). This was accompanied by an increase in respondents saying they 'neither trust nor distrust' the FSA (from 19% to 27%), as opposed to an increase in distrust, which has remained low and stable (1-2%). Data from wave 8 and 9 of Food and You 2 shows levels of trust have remained relatively stable since then with around 7 in 10 respondents trusting the FSA (69 - 72%).



2.5 Since April 2022, there have been no significant changes in the proportion of respondents who know of the FSA (either a little or a lot) which has remained between 54% and 57%. In the latest survey (wave 9) 57% knew a little or a lot about the FSA and what it does, 32% had heard of the FSA but knew nothing about it, and 11% had not heard of the FSA (either ever or before being contacted about the survey).

2.6 **Stakeholders:** The latest published data from the small and micro FBO Tracker (data collected in 2023 and [published in 2024](#)) was reported on in the 2024 update to the board. That report showed that almost all of the businesses who responded (98%) had heard of the FSA, and that trust in the FSA, as well as confidence in the FSA achieving its aims and objectives, had remained stable between 2021 and 2023. This data is collected every two years meaning that we will be able to present up-to-date information on this indicator in next year's (2026) update.

2.7 A further key group in 2024/25 is MPs, with 52% of the House of Commons comprising new MPs following July 2024 general election. Many of them might be unfamiliar with the FSA's work, as might many of the returning MPs who may not have engaged with the FSA during previous parliaments. Parliamentarians across England, Wales and NI are an important stakeholder group for the FSA and it is known from previous engagement that those who are familiar with FSA's work tend to have a favourable view of it. It is therefore a priority for us to engage with MPs, MSs and MLAs.

2.8 **2024 recommendation update:** In the June 2024 progress update, it was noted that there was a decline against trust indicators. In response FSA commissioned a study with Ipsos UK which reviewed potential drivers for a decline in trust and options of how to respond. The [study](#) drew on literature reviews, Food and You 2 survey data and depth interviews with relevant government organisations. It noted that trust in food is shaped by views of the state and food industry along with individual characteristics and preferences, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between trust, the consumer and the FSA. Following the conclusion of the study, FSA has identified options to improve the reach and impact of our communications, including raising awareness among consumers of our work on consumer protection and improving the reach of our communications to broader audiences. These findings on trust, alongside insight into how consumers receive and interpret information, will continue to shape our communication campaigns

2.9 Conclusion for ambition 1: Trust in the wider food system remains high with 89-90% confident that the food they buy is safe. Following a decline in trust in the FSA in mid-2023, trust in the FSA (amongst those with some knowledge) has remained stable and reasonably high over the last year with levels of distrust remaining very low. Levels of those who are aware of the FSA have remained unchanged since April 2022. We recognise however that trust in public bodies is fragile. We therefore propose to review further to understand drivers of trust amongst different groups, and to follow up on the study recommendations to retain and build trust, including raising awareness amongst groups who currently have little or no awareness of the FSA.

3. Ambition 2: Maintaining food standards, so that food is safe and is what it says it is

3.1 Food businesses are responsible for delivering food that is safe and is what it says it is. Through its regulator role, the FSA ensures that it does so both directly, through our own regulatory activities, and indirectly, via our work with local authorities (LAs) who actively regulate most food businesses.

3.2 The indicators against this strategic goal are:

- rates of food borne disease (4 key pathogens);
- rates of business compliance (Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS);
- meat processing establishment and dairy inspections);
- food incidents and allergen related food incidents; and
- responses to food crime.

3.3 Foodborne disease: the FSA monitors the numbers of reported cases of foodborne disease associated with the annual rate of four key pathogens, as set out in the Foodborne Disease Framework. The data is supplied to the FSA by the UK Health Security Agency with the most recent data covering the period 1 January – 31 December 2023. Detailed graphs and data have not been provided in this report but are published in the [2023-2024 Annual Report and Accounts](#). The Board also received an [update on foodborne disease in March 2025](#).

3.4 In 2023, reports of all four pathogens returned to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, STEC O157 (one of the pathogens) reports dropped compared to 2022, when two large national outbreaks were identified (one foodborne and one person-to-person), leading to the highest reported UK rate since 2015. During 2023, the FSA investigated 59 new or ongoing outbreaks and incidents of gastro-intestinal (GI) illness linked with foodborne disease (FBD), working with UK public health agencies and LAs. Several successful investigations identified the food source, after which control measures were implemented.

3.5 Business compliance: food businesses are inspected to ensure that they comply with both food hygiene and food standards requirements. Inspection results [\(footnote 2\)](#) are key indicators of food safety and standards. The indicators linked to rates of business compliance demonstrate the maintenance of high standards across the three nations since the establishment of the 2021 baseline data, and small improvements during the year. The latest available data shows 96.9% of food businesses achieved an FHRS rating of 3 or better, which is unchanged since the 2024 indicators update.

3.6 The FSA directly audits meat and dairy establishments, and the result of these audits show a high percentage of establishments achieve a rating of ‘good’ or ‘generally satisfactory.’ A risk-based approach is used to determine the frequency with which each approved establishment is audited. For meat establishments, the number of approved establishments audited is broadly the same as previous years. Slightly fewer full audits were required to be conducted in financial year 2024/25, and these yielded a small increase in premises with Good and Generally Satisfactory outcomes.

	Meat establishments being rated as good or generally satisfactory for hygiene (2024)	Percentage point improvement from 2023
England	99.2%	+0.1%
Wales	97.6%	+4.2%
Northern Ireland	100.0%	No change

Table 1 meat establishments being rated as “good” or “generally satisfactory”

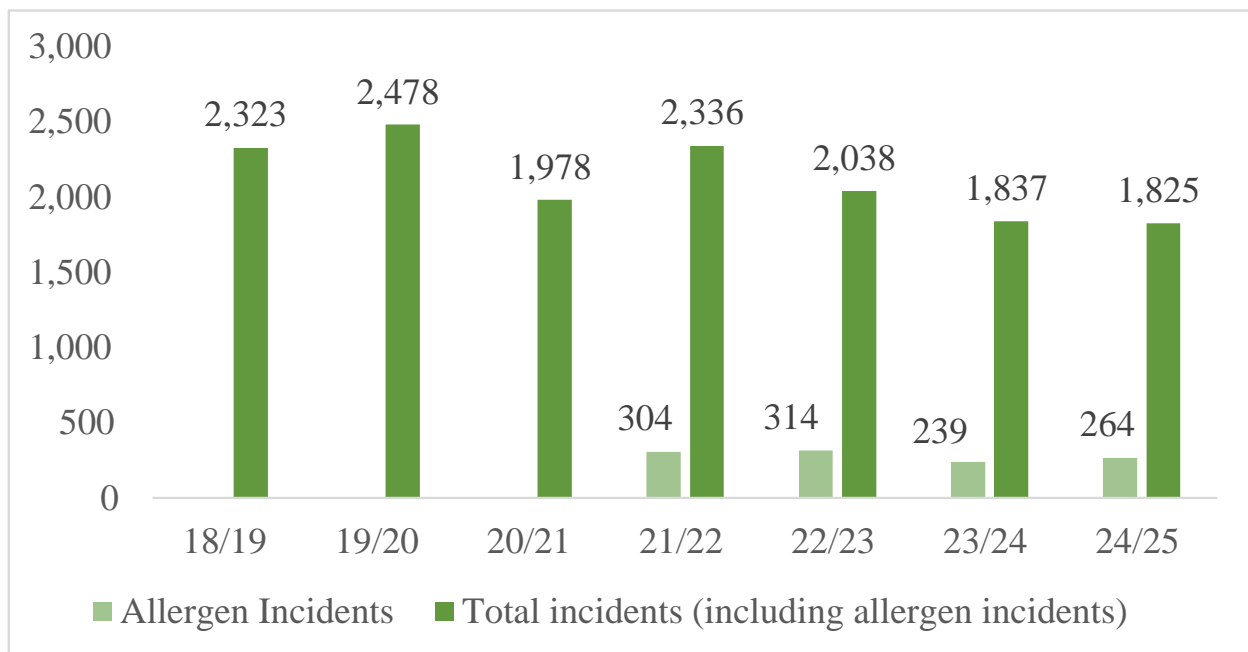
The proportion of dairy establishments being rated Good or Generally Satisfactory rating remains stable.

	Dairy establishments rated as good or generally satisfactory	Percentage point improvement from 2023
England	98.7%	+0.3%
Wales	99.3%	+0.4%
Northern Ireland	99.9%	N/A (due to methodology change)

Table 2 dairy establishments being rated as “good” or “generally satisfactory”

3.7 **Food incidents and allergen incidents:** food incident data provides insight into how safe and authentic food is for consumers. It can be used to identify problems in the food supply chain, and a primary function of the FSA’s incident management role is to ensure that products not compliant with relevant safety legislation are removed promptly from the market to help ensure safety and authenticity of food.

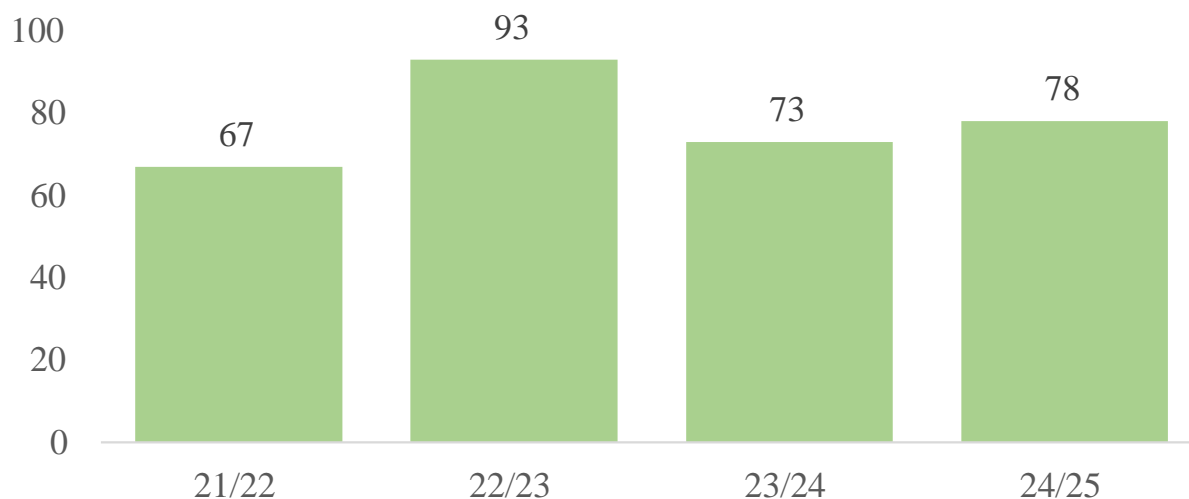
3.8 The overall food incident data (Figure 3) shows the total number of incidents recorded, alongside allergen incident numbers since they began to be recorded separately 21/22.As a proportion of total numbers of incidents, allergen incidents have comprised between 13-15% per year over the past four years.



3.9 The FSA was notified of 1,825 food and feed safety incidents in England, Northern Ireland and Wales during 2024/25. This is a reduction of 0.7% from 1,837 last year. Whilst the volume of incidents this year has remained stable, the proportion classed as medium or high priority is increasing year on year. More detailed reporting and thematic analysis of incidents can be found in FSA 25-06-09 Annual Incident Report.

3.10 **Sampling:** FSA carries out surveillance sampling. This is not one of our agreed indicators for the strategic goal, and this sampling is targeted at areas where we suspect non-compliance is most likely so it cannot be used to give an indication of overall compliance with food standards. However, we have included this data here for completeness. Overall, the targeted surveillance sampling conducted shows that labelling issues are responsible for most non-compliances. As in previous years, we have identified examples of products containing allergens that are not labelled, or which should not be present, and this area remains a persistent concern. In total 445 samples (30-60 samples covering each of the 13 different products) were collected across England, Wales and Northern Ireland from July 2024 to September 2024 and tested for the presence of allergens and contaminants, authenticity, composition, labelling accuracy, and compliance with food information standards. The overall compliance rate for the food products sampled in the 2024/25 programme was 77% (344/445 samples).

3.11 **Food crime:** The indicator linked to food crime is the number of crime disruptions. A disruption is an action which is confirmed to have reduced the risk of harm done by food crime. The most recent disruptions data is shown in Figure 4.



3.12 The National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) observed an increase in the number of disruptions recorded this year [\(footnote 3\)](#), this may be in part due to improvements made by NFCU to its ability to recognise and record the impact of prevention activities. The NFCU continued to observe the sustained potential of disruptions generation from the Prevention Team's Food Fraud Resilience Tool and the new Desktop Exercises with industry. This indicates the impact that activities could have in reducing risks of harm done by food crime.

3.13 **Conclusion for ambition 2:** The data suggests there has been minimal change over the past year in measures relating to whether food is safe and what it says it is. This indicates that our strategic approach is on track to maintain food standards. However, sampling data indicates that there remain areas of non-compliance, and we will continue to monitor this over the next year to ensure this position is robust.

4. Ambition 3: Growing our contribution to and influence on food that is healthier and more sustainable

4.1 We recognise that the FSA's ability to influence whether food is healthier and more sustainable is less direct than for food that is safe and is what it says it is, as we do not hold policy responsibility or regulatory powers in these areas, with the exception of Northern Ireland where our policy remit includes dietary health.

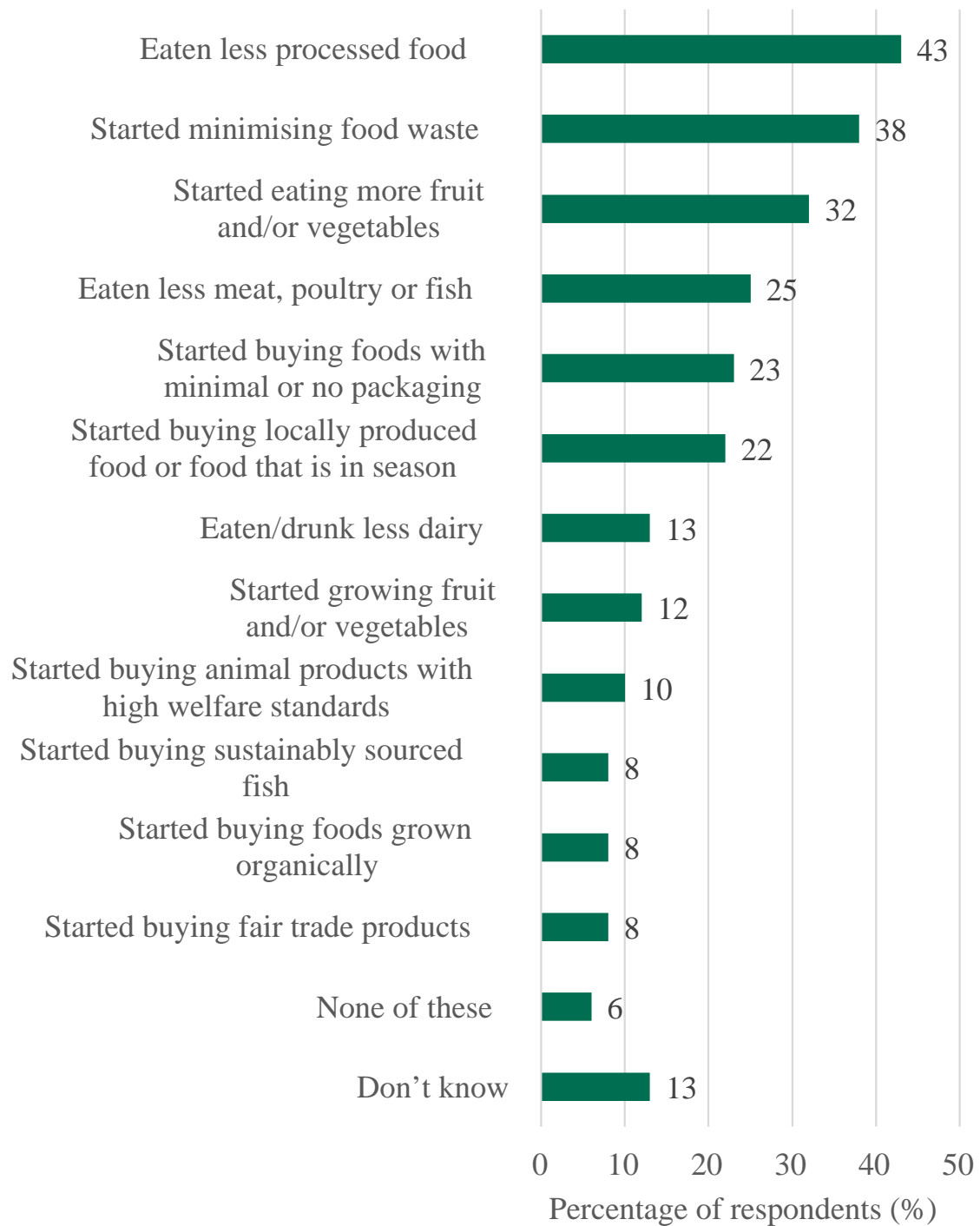
4.2 The FSA has focussed on growing its contribution by making some targeted and impactful interventions in collaboration with devolved governments, and other government departments. This is in line with Board recommendation (October 2023) to prioritise existing commitments over new projects due to wider resource pressures (though we continue to consider them on a case-by-case basis).

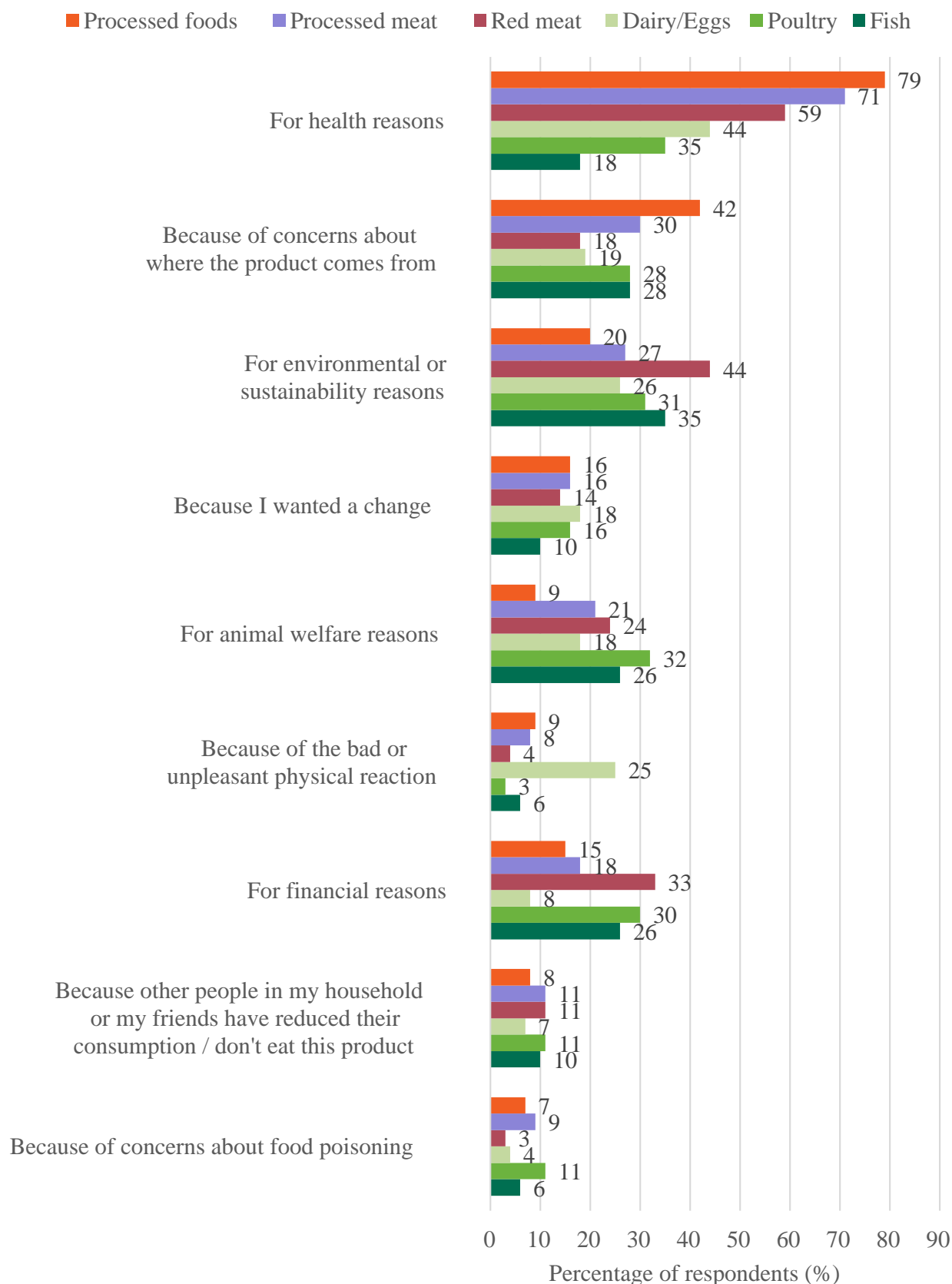
4.3 The agreed indicators for this ambition focus on consumer attitudes about healthier and more sustainable food and on our contributions, rather than food system outcomes. The indicators against this strategic goal are:

- Food and You 2 data on consumer behaviour;
- Northern Ireland – case studies and data, including;

- Making Food Better Programme (previously known as Eating Well Choosing Better) and associated surveys;
 - Calorie Wise;
 - MenuCal; and
- Case studies/ examples of how the FSA has grown our contribution in this area

4.4 Foodand You 2: The most recent data for the two consumer attitude indicators were reported in Wave 8 (data collected October 2023 – January 2024 and published September 2024). Figure 5 shows the types of changes made to respondents' diets over the preceding 12-month period, and Figure 6 captures the reasons that those changes were made.





4.5 When asked to choose from a list of options, the most common reason to have eaten less processed food (79%) and processed meat (71%) was for health reasons. 'Environmental or sustainability reasons' was also a common reason for respondents to have eaten less processed food (20%) and processed meats (27%), with this being the most common reason to have eaten less fish (35%). Concerns around the source of food products also ranked high for some respondents and was the second most common reason for eating less processed foods (42%)

and processed meats (30%). These findings show that the FSA's intention to grow our contribution to achieving food that is healthier and more sustainable remains aligned with consumer concerns.

4.6 Northern Ireland: The FSA's Making Food Better (MFB) programme aims to support Northern Ireland (NI) food businesses to make the food environment healthier. The agency does this by supporting businesses to reduce calories, saturated fat, sugar and salt in the food they produce, sell or serve; reduce portion sizes; provide nutritional information; and deliver responsible promotions.

4.7 In 2024/25 the FSA met with over 80 stakeholders through the MFB programme and published three reports including the Making Food Better Consumer Tracker Survey (2024). The survey showed that in 2024:

- Understanding of the traffic light label remained high with 92% of consumers reporting that they recognised and half (49%) actively using the system when shopping for food (up from 43% in 2023).
- There was low awareness of daily energy requirements among NI consumers. 26% of women and 13% of men correctly identified the recommended daily energy intake for their gender.
- Half (49%) of consumers agreed they are more likely to buy chocolate, crisps and snacks on promotion.
- Awareness of calories on menus has increased over time. 61% of consumers were aware overall in 2024 versus 50% in 2023.

4.8 Use of the FSA's calorie calculator, MenuCal, has returned to levels seen prior to the introduction of mandatory calorie labelling in England in 2022. In 2024/25, 662 new users signed up to use MenuCal (down from 757 in 2023/24). The tool was used 2,593 times over the last year (down from 3,632 in 2023/24) and 7,470 new recipes were added by businesses (down from 10,129 in 2023/24).

4.9 Over the last year the FSA worked closely with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on the development of the [NI Food Strategy Framework](#) which was published in November 2024. The Agency also worked with the Department of Health (DH) on the development of the NI Healthy Futures obesity strategy which is due to be published later this year.

4.10 Between May 2022 and March 2023, the FSA in partnership with the 11 district councils in NI conducted research into the food on offer to children when eating out in local restaurants. This work is discussed further at 4.16 below.

4.11 Growing our contribution: The FSA has contributed to a number of projects and government objectives which aim to make food healthier and more sustainable.

4.12 Reporting: The FSA published the [Climate Adaptation Report](#). The report highlighted the FSA's work in three key areas: supporting the food industry, businesses, and consumers to adapt to climate change; generating and publishing evidence on climate risks to the food system; and reducing our own environmental impact such as through our [Environmental Sustainability Strategy](#). These efforts support a resilient and sustainable food system, inform the Climate Change Committee and the next UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, and promote a coordinated, cross-sector approach to tackling the risks that climate change poses to the food

system.

4.13 The FSA also contributed to the [National Adaptation Programme](#) (NAP) in England and the [Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme](#) (NICCAP). The FSA owns and regularly reports on several actions under NAP and NICCAP, such as identifying and understanding the effects of climate change on UK food safety through horizon scanning activity and expert workshops, and to work with expert advisers, other government departments, and other partners, to examine trends and new risks in relation to food-borne illness.

4.14 Regulatory Sandbox: The FSA and FSS launched a regulatory sandbox to explore cell-cultivated products (CCP), funded through the Department of Science, Innovation & Technology's Engineering Biology Sandbox Fund. The sandbox programme is part of a broader UK Government strategy to tackle future food security and sustainability challenges, keeping the UK at the forefront of both traditional and innovative production methods. Through the sandbox, the FSA and FSS will work closely with industry and academia to gather rigorous scientific evidence about CCPs, and the technologies used to make them. This will enable us to better understand the safety risks posed by CCPs and how to mitigate them and make more timely recommendations about the safety of CCPs before they can be approved to enter the GB market.

4.15 While it is early days for the CCP industry, there are studies that indicate the potential for reduced greenhouse gas, land use, and environmental pollution when compared to traditional meat production.

4.16 Healthier children's menus in Northern Ireland: Between May 2022 and March 2023, the FSA and NI's 11 district councils partnered to assess the nutritional quality of children's meals in 133 local restaurants. The study revealed that children's menus offered limited healthy options, were typically high in energy, saturated fat, and salt, and that only 24% of children's meals included a vegetable side. The most popular children's meals were fried chicken and chips, sausages and chips, a burger and chips and a pasta dish. However, 70% of businesses surveyed agreed restaurants have a role in improving children's diets.

4.17 In May 2024, the FSA and the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) jointly launched the 'Choice for Children' initiative. This campaign encouraged hotel restaurants to create healthier children's meals based on specific nutritional criteria (taken from the FSA's Healthier Catering Tips for Children's Menus guidance). Fourteen hotels participated, and The Merchant Hotel won with a 'Glenarm Organic Salmon, Armagh asparagus and spring greens' dish. The campaign had 8,012 impressions on Instagram, 3005 on Facebook, 1600 on LinkedIn and 512 on X. It was also picked up in six online and print articles and by one radio station.

4.18 Government strategies: Over the last year the FSA worked closely with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on the development of the NI Food Strategy Framework which was published in November 2024. NIFAC members have considered the draft two-year implementation plan, and the [plan was](#) published by DAERA on 14 May. As part of this FSA is focused on dietary health priorities, including implementation of nutrition standards in public sector settings, publication of a literature review on effectiveness of interventions to improve nutritional offering of children's meals in restaurants and development of recommendations and to support business to make the food environment healthier. In Wales, we started work with the Welsh Joint Education Committee to develop a module for students on the practical skills of preparing food and have recently joined the Welsh Government's Cross Government Food Policy Forum to advise where and how the FSA's work contributes to food related policies published in [FoodMatters: Wales and](#) the Wales [Community Food Strategy](#). We have also started working with Defra and other UK government departments on the development of a new food strategy and to support work on the government's health and growth missions.

4.19 Policy implementation: FSA Teams in Wales and Northern Ireland worked with Defra and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) to review Bread and Flour Regulations. The review delivered

mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid to help prevent neural tube defects in fetuses. The FSA in Wales and the FSA in Northern Ireland delivered the legislation activity to support this work in their respective legislatures including associated guidance. The new legislation and guidance will improve public health, support UK industry, assist enforcement authorities and protect consumers

4.20 Conclusion for strategic ambition 3: We continue to grow our contribution in the space of food that is healthier and more sustainable, in line with our ambition. This year, the FSA's focus has primarily been on healthier food due to government priorities, opportunities through FSA's policy remit and resource prioritisation. We will continue to work with Defra and other government departments to deliver and consider new opportunities, including through strategies mentioned above (para 4.18)

5.Overall Conclusions

The overall conclusions from the strategy indicators this year are:

5.1 Our ambitions to maintain food you can trust (ambition 1) and maintain food standards (ambition 2) are being met overall. The stability of percentage of those who are aware of the FSA suggests we could do more to increase awareness. Sampling data also suggests that there do continue to be areas of non-compliance, and we need to continue monitoring carefully to ensure this conclusion is robust.

5.2 This helps to demonstrate the success of the FSA in delivering an effective regulatory regime, which underpins trust and standards.

5.3 The question raised by the board during the 2024 paper about levels of trust has been further investigated this year with new research. This research concluded that the small decline reflected a more general decline in public trust of government and government agencies. We will continue to build awareness of the work of the FSA through communications and engagement activity, including the role we play in protecting consumers through enforcement, inspections and how we uphold high standards as well as developing more effective communications approaches to respond to incidents.

5.4 We continue to make a proportionate contribution to delivering food that is healthier and more sustainable (ambition 3) including through our contributions to government food strategies across the three nations. We recognise that the FSA is well-placed to contribute further to strategies for healthier and more sustainable food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and continue to seek opportunities to do so, where resources allow.

The Board is asked to:

- Note the updated progress indicators and conclusions.
- Agree that Strategy Unit will return to the Board next year with a further update.
- Agree that Strategy Unit will review the list of indicators in advance of next year's annual update.

1. Respondents with little or no knowledge of the FSA are asked about 'the government agency responsible for food safety' whilst those with at least some knowledge of the FSA are asked about the FSA.
2. More detailed analysis on business compliance will be available in the Annual Report on Food Standards
3. Disruption numbers cannot be used to draw cause-effect relationships on levels of food crime as many offences go unreported. Accurate year-on-year comparisons also cannot be drawn as different factors, such as legal proceedings or increased public awareness, can affect recording patterns.