

Report from the Director for FSA in Wales

FSA 25/09/08 - Report by Sian Bowsley

1. Summary

1.1 This paper provides a high-level overview of the work of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Wales over the last year and a forward look at our priorities for the coming months.

1.2 The Board is asked to:

- **assess** the effectiveness of the work in Wales to deliver FSA priorities
- **consider** the alignment of this work with the FSA's strategic direction; and
- **provide feedback** on the identified priorities

2. Introduction

2.1 In Wales, the FSA has policy responsibilities and delivers statutory functions across all aspects of food and feed safety and hygiene and has the additional policy remit of food compositional standards and labelling. This means advising and making recommendations on legislative food and feed policy changes to Welsh Ministers.

2.2 The team of 66.3 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) people deliver functions in accordance with the FSA's organisational priorities for Wales, as agreed with Welsh Ministers in the form of our annual funding letter. Within this context, in Wales the FSA has embedded the principles of the two UK common frameworks – on Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene; and on Food Compositional Standards and Labelling.

2.3 Whilst the Welsh Government has confirmed the funding for FSA's functions in Wales for this Financial Year, the process for setting next year's budget will be concluded later this Autumn.

3. Progress Against Our Priorities in Wales Over the Past 12 Months

3.1 The previous report presented by the Director for Wales highlighted four priority areas of work: a) supporting the work of local authorities in Wales; b) delivering functions relating to our commitments made under a section 83 agreement with respect to market authorisations; c) supporting the delivery of broader Welsh Government priorities in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; and d) continued engagement across Wales with key stakeholders.

3.2 Additionally, the Board approved our plan to move forward on **revising the Concordat** which sets out a framework for co-operation between the FSA and the Welsh Government and to **fully engage with work on a potential sanitary and phytosanitary agreement**.

3.3 This is my first report to the Board as the Director of Wales since joining the FSA in October 2024, and I am pleased to report that over this period there has been progress across all these areas, with an ambitious plan of work ahead. We have continued to strengthen our network, visibility, and influence within the Welsh Government, ensuring the FSA's priorities are well understood and aligned with devolved policy objectives. In addition, we have continued to facilitate and support engagement between the Chair, Welsh Ministers and Members of the Senedd (MSs), including Sarah Murphy MS, the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, and the Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca-Davies.

Supporting the work of local authorities in Wales

3.4 We continue to support the work of local authorities (LAs) in Wales, without which we would not be able to deliver on our remit. Under the auspices of the [2023 Collaborative Agreement](#), of which we are a co-signatory, we continue to work in partnership based on mutual trust and respect, recognising the value and legitimacy of each body's role, which balances co-design, co-production and consultation.

3.5 In addition to our ongoing engagement with the Directors of Public Protection Wales (DPPW) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), we have delivered a series of targeted sessions throughout the year on key priority areas. We collaborated with LAs to pilot the **Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM)** and supported the development and publication of the evaluation report earlier this year. The evaluation confirmed the model's effectiveness, leading to its inclusion in the recent consultation on the **Food Law Code of Practice (Wales)**. We will seek Ministerial approval to progress changes to the Code later this autumn and, subject to approval, we will work closely with LAs to initiate a transition period and begin implementing the changes by the end of the year.

3.6 Within the **LA audit programme**, we have completed nine audits over the last year assessing LAs on their progress against previously identified actions and planning and delivering their services in accordance with the law and Food Law Code of Practice (FLCoP). We have also commenced the 2025/26 audit programme assessing LAs on their progress against previously identified actions and effective implementation of official food controls in relation to allergens.

3.7 We also undertake performance monitoring of Welsh LAs, which is covered separately in the [Local Authority Performance update](#). Findings indicate that Welsh LAs continue to take a risk based, intelligence led approach to the prioritisation of interventions across all categories of establishments for both food hygiene and standards. The team are engaging with LAs who do not currently have the resources to fully align with the requirements of the FLCoP to ensure prioritisation.

3.8 As part of the **LA sampling programme in Wales**, we provided funding for 203 samples across 17 Welsh LAs in the last financial year. Findings of this sampling work uncovered key non-compliance issues – from mislabelled ham sandwiches to milk found in 'milk-free' coffee – which has led to targeted action, updated guidance, and wider industry awareness through channels like the National Food Crime Unit newsletter and Anaphylaxis UK. We are also considering further allergen guidance on hot drinks as a direct result of this work.

3.9 Using the annual ring-fenced budget from the Welsh Government, we have agreed the **Animal Feed Delivery Programme for 2025-26** with the Feed Governance Group and LAs in Wales. This programme of official controls, sampling and LA training will continue until the end of March 2026. At the end of last year, the programme had delivered 97.3% of official controls to higher risk premises in Wales.

3.10 We have launched a new workstream to explore an **enhanced system of registration** as requested by the Welsh Minister in the Collaborative Agreement. Whilst we are leading this work, we are reliant on the support of our key partners in the Welsh Government, the WLGA and DPPW. As a first step, we are working with pilot LAs to collect information that will provide evidence (or not) for the need to strengthen the registration process. We will provide regular updates to the Board ahead of sharing final recommendations to the Welsh Minister in the Spring.

3.11 Ensuring sufficient resourcing at LAs continues to be a key priority for all partners. In addition to the FSA's LA resourcing project, outlined in the [LA update paper](#), in Wales we are working in partnership with DPPW to deliver the recommendations within their [Building the Future](#) report. This includes engaging with wider partners, including Mentera and Food and Drink Skills Wales to promote career opportunities within the food regulatory sector.

3.12 In March and July this year we held **in-person engagement events with Welsh LAs** to shape and inform our policy work. These sessions covered updates on the immediate next steps for National Level Regulation (where Welsh LA representatives have been part of the steering group); the new Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM) and wider changes in the Code of Practice consultation; our initial proposals on LA cost recovery and progress on the LA data project. These events are positively welcomed by LA partners and allow us to sense check our policy thinking early, as well as hear from LAs about what's important for them on the ground.

Market authorisations (delivering our s.83 agreement)

3.13 The team also work on legislation to ensure that **Market Authorisations of regulated products** can be brought into force in Wales. We have taken all 26 GB feed applications through to authorisation in Wales in the last 12 months. As part of wider FSA work to make the authorisation process more efficient, we successfully delivered the first phase of market authorisation reform legislation in Wales, which came into force 31 March 2025. We are currently supporting the development of recommendations for a further nine applications and the recent launch of a consultation on three **Cannabidiol (CBD) applications**.

3.14 We sought agreement from Welsh Ministers to designate the FSA as the Competent Authority for Wales to carry out official controls, including documentary checks and on-site audits, to verify compliance with EU standards for use of **recycled plastic materials** and articles intended to come into contact with foods. This will assist UK businesses wishing to export food-grade recycled plastic to the EU.

3.15 Alongside this we are pushing forward work with Welsh Government officials to secure efficiencies to the authorisation process, whilst respecting the devolution settlement.

Supporting the delivery of broader Welsh Government priorities

3.16 Following the publication of [Food Matters: Wales](#), marking a key milestone in the Welsh Government's commitment to a joined-up, cross-portfolio approach to food policy, we continue to support this strategic agenda by helping shape and deliver policies that promote public health and protect consumers. Our standards team supported Welsh Government's work on the promotion and placement of high fat, salt and sugar foods, and healthy eating in schools, and we are key partners in the new five-nation (including Ireland) health and nutrition group, which aims to ensure commonality in policy across the UK and Ireland.

3.17 In April 2025, the Welsh Government published its [Community Food Strategy](#), which promotes local food production, food security, and healthy eating. By ensuring food safety and hygiene across community-led initiatives and helping small producers meet regulatory standards, the FSA is contributing to a more resilient and sustainable food system in Wales. The FSA is also part of a Welsh Government subgroup feeding into the UK Government Food Strategy, which further strengthens collaboration and ensures Welsh perspectives are considered.

Continued engagement across Wales with key stakeholders

3.18 We have proactively **engaged with key stakeholders and delivery partners** across Wales to strengthen relationships and support collaborative working. This includes participation in major events such as the Wales Food and Drink Awards, Blas Cymru, and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, where we facilitated a full day of engagement for our Chair, Deputy Chair and Chair of WFAC. We also presented at the UK Association for Food Protection Conference, updated stakeholders on our work at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute conference including supporting an award for the student with the best food standards exam results. We also recently presented to Trading Standards Wales providing information on the Food Standards Delivery Model, Feed Delivery, sampling and training to assist with business planning.

3.19 The FSA's work in Wales also aligns closely with the aims of the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and the [latest progress report](#). Through our shared commitment to prevention and public health, we are proud to work alongside the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to support a healthier, more equal, and sustainable Wales – now and for future generations, and we look forward to continuing this important collaboration through supporting the food aims and the Community Food Strategy.

3.20 Alongside working with FSA colleagues on wider work on the classification of **live bivalve molluscs (LBMs) production areas**, this year, we have worked closely with the mussel farmers in the Menai Strait, the Menai Strait Fishery Order Management Association and LAs to review the Sanitary Survey and classification of beds in the Strait. Following this review and feedback from the harvesters, the classified zones were amended to better align with growing and harvesting areas to ensure that the representative monitoring points, and subsequent classification awarded, more accurately reflected the quality of water where the mussels were harvested for human consumption. The team also supported the EU audit of LBM controls in the UK.

3.21 In January this year a **review of the FSA in Wales**, initially [announced](#) in June 2021, was launched by Cardiff Metropolitan University's School of Sport and Health Sciences. It focuses on the FSA's policy remit and governance and accountability and was carried out in two phases – a desktop review and an interview phase – which included speaking to several stakeholders in Wales, in addition to FSA staff, the Chief Executive, the Chair and the Chair of WFAC. The report is due to be published later this Autumn, once approved by the Welsh Minister, and is expected to propose a series of recommendations for ways of working between the FSA and the Welsh Government. Once published, we will work with the Welsh Government and our key stakeholders to take forward any actions.

4. Delivering Wider FSA Corporate Priorities in Wales

4.1 Alongside work on Wales-specific areas, the FSA team in Wales is integrated into wider FSA priorities and programmes and works closely with colleagues in England and Northern Ireland.

4.2 Since July 2024, the UK Government has been working to strengthen cooperation with the EU, including exploring a potential **sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement** aimed at reducing costs and bureaucracy for agri-food movements between Great Britain, the EU, and Northern Ireland. In Wales, we have supported active engagement across Government to assess and advise on the public health implications of any proposed SPS agreement with the EU.

4.3 In the context of a potential SPS agreement, the Welsh Government recently announced their [decision](#) to not progress with the **West Coast Border Control Posts**. We continue to work closely with colleagues in Defra and the Welsh Government to ensure continued coordination around West Coast points of entry, which includes reviewing how UK administrations and other

agencies collaborate and identifying opportunities to strengthen intelligence sharing and joint working.

4.4 With regards to **precision breeding**, in collaboration with colleagues across the FSA and Welsh Government, we have developed nation-specific enforcement guidance for LAs in Wales. We plan to share for feedback and remain on track to publish this Wales-specific guidance four weeks before the Precision Breeding Regulations come into force in England in November.

4.5 We supported the review of the **FSA's discount scheme for meat premises**, hosting a stakeholder session earlier this year to hear directly from the Welsh meat industry. Noting the June Board's decision to continue the scheme, but focus support on smaller to medium sized businesses, we will now re-engage with Welsh Government and industry on this work. Additionally, we will continue to work with the **skin-on sheep meat** industry working group as they progress their evidence-gathering efforts to inform a proposal for the legalisation of skin-on sheep meat in the UK.

4.6 The team in Wales have continued to work collaboratively on food standards policy workstreams. This includes contributing to the development of **best practice guidance on allergen information** for out-of-home food businesses and laying bread and flour regulations in the Senedd, in line with UK-wide changes, delivering on a long-standing public health goal of mandating the addition of folic acid to flour, aimed at reducing neural tube defects in early pregnancy.

4.7 The work of the **consumer protection team** in Wales was summarised in the [Incident and Resilience annual report for 2024/25](#) presented at the June Board meeting. The team were directly involved in 132 incidents reported in Wales during this period (down from 156 the previous year) and were actively involved in 22 outbreaks with 3 being led in Wales. Whilst incident numbers are lower, there has been an increase in the number requiring multi-agency or complex investigations on a national scale, which has led to more collaborative approaches.

4.8 As the lead on supplements across the FSA, the team recently **reviewed and updated the caffeine guidance** for businesses previously published in September 2024. This followed an FSA led sampling survey on caffeine food supplements which highlighted an 83% failure rate, including labelling issues. Our updates aimed to provide greater clarity for businesses to help aid legal compliance, and we notified LAs of failed sample results for follow-up.

Welsh language commitments

4.9 As part of our ongoing commitment and responsibilities under the Welsh Language Scheme, we continue to provide a proactive language choice and **bilingual service to our consumers in Wales**, including across our digital platforms and in sharing information and guidance with stakeholders. Following the submission of our Annual Monitoring Report on the progress of our services, we received highly positive feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding the quality of our practices. We have since taken opportunities to share this best practice with other organisations, including the Regulators Network in Wales.

4.10 A key part of this bilingual service provision is the delivery of a **range of campaigns** to help protect public health and support informed consumer choices. From raising awareness of risky kitchen behaviours to issuing safety advice on glycerol in slushies, we've worked closely with Welsh LAs, the Welsh Government, Welsh media platforms, and key partners to ensure our messages are tailored and widely shared. In addition, targeted media and social content – particularly with Welsh language platforms such as Prynawn Da, Golwg and Bore Cothi – has helped us reach diverse audiences across Wales.

4.11 Most recently, we supported the publication and launch of **Our Food**, the joint Annual Report on Food Standards with Food Standards Scotland. This included laying the bilingual report in the Senedd and sharing it with stakeholders. We marked the launch with a parliamentary reception, celebrating 25 years of the FSA and highlighting the importance of collaboration in protecting public health alongside our Chair, the Deputy First Minister and some of our key stakeholders in Wales.

4.12 Public outreach was further supported at the **National Eisteddfod in Wrexham**, where we promoted food safety and engaged with consumers to share key food safety messages. These activities have reinforced our visibility, strengthened partnerships, and identified opportunities for future collaboration.

5. Forward look

5.1 There are several priorities that the FSA intend to work on in Wales over the next six to twelve months, in addition to continuing to work on those areas identified above. Key to all our work will be strengthening our relationship with our delivery partners, through our engagement with the WLGA, DPPW and individual LAs. In addition, the team will focus on the following areas:

5.2 Once the final recommendations of the **Review of the FSA** are published, we will work with Welsh Government officials and our stakeholders on implementing these.

5.3 The next **Senedd election** in May 2026 will mark a significant shift in Welsh parliamentary representation, with a new system increasing the number of Members of the Senedd (MSs) from 60 to 96. In preparation, we continue to strengthen our proactive engagement with MSs as we approach the election, ensuring that they are fully sighted on consumer interests in relation to food in Wales. We have upcoming engagement sessions planned at [Y Farchnad](#) in the Senedd, with the aim of ensuring that food safety and standards remain a visible and well-understood part of the policy landscape in Wales.

5.4 We will continue to support the Welsh Government and the cross-government food policy group in delivering its **strategic food agenda**, including Food Matters and the Community Food Strategy. We will continue to contribute to the development of policies that promote public health, protect consumers, and strengthen food systems across Wales and the UK. Our work will also align with the recommendations set out in the Future Generations Commissioner's report, helping to drive forward long-term, sustainable improvements in food policy through collaboration, evidence-based decision-making, and joined-up working across governments and sectors.

5.5 Our **bilingual awareness campaigns** will continue throughout the coming year, where we will work with key partners in Wales to amplify our reach and impact. Our consumer food hygiene campaign will offer practical food safety advice to consumers at home whilst the Safer Food Means Better Business campaign will support food businesses in maintaining high standards of hygiene and safety.

5.6 Over the next months we will be working with the **Welsh Joint Education Committee** (WJEC) on developing a Food Planning and Preparation module within a series of new National Qualifications for Wales. This will be included in a Skills Suite for learners aged 14-16 emphasising the importance of practical skills, and we will be inputting on preparing food safely, allergens, food labelling and food waste. In addition, they have since approached us to collaborate on a Vocational Certificate of Secondary Education in Hospitality and Catering which we will also work with them to develop.

5.7 The **2025/26 focused local authority** audit programme is designed to assess the effective implementation of official food controls relating to allergens in Wales.

5.8 Following the **first UK-EU Summit** in May, and the publication of the common understanding document, we have been inputting into the FSA's wider SPS programme including engaging with the Welsh Government to understand potential impacts within a devolved context. Future work will involve reviewing the FSA in Wales structure to align with the wider programme and assess public health implications of an SPS Agreement with the EU.

6. Conclusions

6.1 This paper provides a high-level overview of work that has been undertaken since the last update to the Board in September 2024 as well as current and future priorities for the FSA team in Wales.

6.2 Overall, the Board is asked to:

- **assess** the effectiveness of the work in Wales to deliver FSA priorities;
- **consider** the alignment of this work with the FSA's strategic direction; and
- **provide feedback** on the identified priorities.