

Minutes of 18 June 2025 Meeting

FSA 25/09/01

18 June 2025, Crowne Plaza, Central Square, Holliday Street, Birmingham B1 1HH

Present: Susan Jebb, (Chair); Fiona Gately; Margaret Gilmore; Anthony Harbinson; Rhian Hayward; Timothy Riley; Mark Rolfe.

Officials Attending:

Katie Pettifer- Chief Executive

Andrew Ashworth- Achieving Business Compliance - Head of Project Delivery (for FSA 25/06/04)

Nathan Barnhouse- Head of Regulatory Compliance Division (For FSA 25/06/04)

Beth Chaudhary- Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance

Andy Cole- Director for Northern Ireland (FSA 25/06/11)

James Cooper- Deputy Director of Food Policy (For FSA 25/06/06, FSA 25/06/07 & FSA 25/06/08)

Rachel Cooper- Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance

Claire Forbes- Director of Communications

Kate Hargreaves- Head of Strategy Unit (FSA 25/06/10)

Junior Johnson- Director of Operations

Anjali Juneja- Director of UK & International Affairs

Robin May- Chief Scientific Adviser

Ruth Nolan- Director of People and Resources

Julie Pierce- Director of Information and Science

Peter Quigley- Deputy Director of Regulatory Services (for FSA 25/06/05)

James Robinson- General Counsel

Rebecca Sudworth- Director of Policy

Darren Whitby- Head of Incidents and Resilience (FSA 25/06/07)

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Chair noted there were no apologies from the Board or the Executive. Ten questions had been received from stakeholders prior to the meeting. Some of these would be addressed as the issues arose naturally in discussion. All questions would receive a written response. No new interests were raised by Board Members. No interests were raised that would preclude a Board Member from discussions.

2. Minutes of 26 March 2025 Board Meeting (FSA 25/06/01)

2.1 No comments were raised on the minutes of 26 March 2025 Board Meeting, and they were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Actions Arising (FSA 25/06/02)

3.1 No comments were made on the action log. The Chair noted that all but one of the actions included in the log were now complete.

4. Chair's Report (Oral Report)

4.1 The Chair noted that the full list of her engagements had been published on the FSA's website and updated the Board on some of the activity she had undertaken since the previous Board Meeting including discussions around the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Agreement; the Government's growth agenda and the relevance for FSA's work around Precision Breeding and new funding for Novel Foods; and meetings with Ministers including Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing Sarah Murphy, First Minister of Wales Eluned Morgan, and Environment Minister Daniel Zeichner. She noted the FSA 25th anniversary in April and looked ahead to the publication of the Our Food 2024 report later in the week.

4.2 The Chair also gave an update on new appointments to the Board noting that six new Members were expected to join the Board within the coming weeks. An announcement would be published on the FSA website.

5. Chief Executive's Report to the Board (FSA 25/06/03)

5.1 The Chief Executive (CE) gave an update on issues highlighted in her Report including the settlement from the Spending Review noting a flat cash settlement for the resource budget allowed greater certainty for planning for the coming years. There was no settlement yet for the FSA in Wales or Northern Ireland.

5.2 On the potential SPS agreement, the FSA would be supporting the Government with technical advice during the negotiations. It was noted that two questions to the Board were received on the issue which would both receive written answers in due course. The Chair said that, although there had been divergence since leaving the EU, there had not been an occasion where the Board had raised concern about the EU approach, meaning there should be little cause for alarm from any closer alignment arising from an SPS Agreement. The CE added that there was no agreement yet and it was not possible to know what an agreement would contain but consideration would be given to where alignment could require the FSA to make changes.

5.3 The Board asked how the FSA would communicate with consumers about innovative products. Claire Forbes explained that this was possible but that the FSA's role would be to ensure that the correct advice was issued to ensure that consumer health was protected.

5.4 The CE noted that a question had been received on Market Authorisations (MA) for feed additives. Legislative changes to improve the MA service had been passed and came into force on 1 April creating a public register of products. In the process of moving existing authorisations to the register, inaccuracies were identified with a small number of products blocking their inclusion in first version of the register. She acknowledged the concerns this had caused for the feed industry and apologised for the failure to communicate.

5.5 Questions had also been received about the approval to operate being withdrawn from a slaughterhouse in the West Midlands due to breaches of animal welfare law. This would be covered further during the discussion of INFO 25/06/01 Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. However, Junior Johnson clarified that the FSA had already been taking action at the site prior to video evidence emerging. Since 2011, of the 20 revocations that had been issued only two had been successful at appeal.

5.6 The Board asked a question about funding for innovation. The CE explained that the establishment of Innovation Hubs had enabled the FSA to raise awareness of current areas of innovation. She noted it was not the FSA's role to promote these products, but we could help make people aware of potential risks and benefits. Safety would remain the FSA's focus. Claire added that being able to communicate complexity to the public was a key element to achieving this, noting a recent campaign on good food hygiene practices aimed at consumers who were not their household's primary cook. The Board noted the challenges presented by younger people in flat shares needing to optimise fridge space. Claire confirmed that students represented a key audience for the campaign. In response to a question about the cost of the campaign, Claire said that there was an associated cost, but the FSA was working with partner organisations to help disseminate the messaging as efficiently as possible.

6. Immediate next steps for National Level Regulation (FSA 25/06/04)

6.1 The Chair welcomed Andrew Ashworth and Nathan Barnhouse to the meeting. Beth Chaudhary introduced the paper, recalling the outcomes from the discussion at the Board meeting in September 2024, and updating on the establishment of the Senior Stakeholder Forum (SSF) and the immediate next steps for the National Level Regulation trial resulting from that group. Beth set out the ask of the Board to support research into manufacturing and, referring back to the December 2024 Board meeting, outlined progress with the dialogue with stakeholders on longer term regulatory reform in the food system, including through an event in May to discuss principles and outcomes.

6.2 The Chair invited comments from the Board, focusing on the immediate next steps, before discussing the programme more broadly.

6.3 Anthony Harbinson noted that in their consideration of the paper, Members of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) had asked about metrics for measuring the success of the programme. Beth acknowledged the value of cost benefit analysis of different reform options as part of the next phase of work.

6.4 Rhian Hayward said that the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) had noted that the next steps outlined in the paper appeared quite technical and also noted the role retailers played in auditing manufacturers they worked with, which could be an interesting way to extend the work. The CE said, though some of the next steps were technical and administrative in nature, it would be the impact of those steps on the ground that would demonstrate their validity.

6.5 The Board expressed disappointment with the pace and ambition outlined in the paper. However, this was balanced with an acknowledgement of the quality of the engagement

by officials which was welcomed by all stakeholders. The CE said she shared the frustration about the pace but noted that the work that had been done since the previous update had been necessary and worthwhile.

6.6 The enthusiasm for the wider building blocks remained among Board Members, but it was felt that implementing tangible improvement using retailer data should be prioritised before embarking on work with manufacturers. The Chair suggested that scoping work with out-of-home businesses may be more insightful than manufacturers due to differences in the data collection

6.7 On the broader reform discussion, the Board noted the aims to reduce the burdens on local authorities and tackle duplication, and it was right that these should be pursued. The Chair noted the continued support for the reform vision agreed in September 2024 but questioned whether the pace of progressing wider reform was realistic while FSA bandwidth was focused on other areas.

6.8 The Board noted the profile of members of the SSF and asked for assurances that the next steps were balanced and not being driven by any one particular interest. Junior Johnson explained that whilst the SSF was made up predominantly of people from the Environmental Health Officer community, a number of retailers, and experts from industry had also been involved in wider discussions.

6.9 Board Members noted that concerns from businesses about the use of their data were valid and would need to be addressed. It was also proposed that the immediate next steps could be more powerful with the addition of some wording into the recommendations, spelling out that we want to encourage greater use of inspection plans.

6.10 The Chair summarised that the Board remained committed to advancing the way we use national level data to support regulatory action, with the encouragement to draw on as broad a range of experts as possible, including assurance bodies and other national level businesses. While work on the broader regulatory reform picture would have limited capacity to progress, this was an opportunity to work with a wide range of stakeholders and articulate a clear plan for the future of regulation that identified benefits and when they could be implemented.

6.11 In December, the Board would like to see tangible progress on the immediate next steps, with a clearer assessment of impact and benefits. The Board would also like to see progress on a plan for the future of regulation, including how we engage on its development, although they recognised that capacity would limit how quickly officials could do this.

7. Market Authorisation Modernisation (FSA 25/06/05)

7.1 The Chair said the initial reforms for the programme were now in place. The paper had been drafted ahead of the UK/EU summit and would require careful consideration in the context of ongoing SPS discussions. She welcomed Peter Quigley to the meeting and invited him to introduce the paper. Peter covered the proposed reforms set out in the paper and invited questions from the Board.

7.2 The Chair noted Ministerial engagement on Market Authorisations had demonstrated support for the FSA's reforms. Rhian noted that Ministerial support was welcome but noted upcoming changes in the Senedd and the need to consolidate good will.

7.3 Anthony reported that NIFAC had welcomed the paper and noted that an appeal mechanism could be one missing element. Rhian said that WFAC were similarly supportive of the proposals and had emphasised the importance of transparency, noting that Welsh Ministers had expressed a wish to be kept informed of progress.

7.4 The Board asked about potential benefits from alignment with the EU. The Chair noted that this would depend on the outcomes of the SPS discussions, which were currently unknown. She asked that officials provide a briefing to the Board covering some of the most plausible outcomes of the SPS discussion and what the implications and potential benefits could be for the FSA's work.

Action 1 - Market Authorisation Team to provide a briefing to the Board setting out the most plausible outcomes of the SPS discussions and what the implications and potential benefits could be for the FSA's work.

7.5 The Chair noted that a question had been received ahead of the meeting relating to the mechanism for taking market authorisation decisions in light of changes to the EU food law transparency framework. While it was a separate issue to the reforms set out in the paper, there would be benefits for the FSA from some of the proposals, such as from the use of other regulators' opinions and reviewing the decision-making process.

7.6 The Board noted that there had been a Board subgroup to consider the progression of Market Authorisations which had come to conclusions which were in line with the proposals in the paper.

7.7 The CE noted that the Board were content with the reforms outlined in the paper and noted the need for legislation to progress them, meaning that this would take time.

7.8 The Chair raised the issue of the timing of consultation, suggesting that if we delayed until all the information about an SPS Agreement was known, consultation would then further delay progress. Consulting sooner based on less detail, could give a useful indication of stakeholder feeling about the proposals. The CE said that as Accounting Officer, she would be reluctant to dedicate resource and ask stakeholders to devote time to a consultation that might be unnecessary. Consultation would be important but engagement with businesses would be key until more details were available. Rebecca Sudworth suggested that the autumn would be a good time to consult, when it was hoped more detail would be known about an SPS Agreement by then.

7.9 The Chair noted the risk that the Retained EU Law (REUL) Act could time out before the FSA was ready to bring the legislative changes needed. The CE acknowledged that this was a possibility but there were other legislative vehicles that could be used in that event. The REUL Act would be a more efficient vehicle, were it to be used, but it could also be difficult to secure agreement to use that Act to make changes that could increase divergence.

7.10 The Chair said that the Board were keen to pursue reform of the Market Authorisation service. The low probability of being able to use the REUL Act meant that waiting until after the September Board meeting would help clarify the terms of a formal consultation. This could be later if the details of an SPS Agreement remained unclear by then. In the meantime, engagement with business would be key to help them prepare for potential outcomes. Should the UK align closely with the EU on this issue, the opportunity to contribute ideas to the EU, that had emerged from FSA work around Market Authorisations over the previous years, would be welcome.

8. Evaluation of the Meat Charging Discount Regime (FSA 25/06/06)

8.1 The Chair noted the last Board discussion on this issue in December 2024 and the work of the Economics Team in providing the analysis of the potential burden on smaller abattoirs included in the paper. James Cooper gave an overview of engagement with the sector; the case for some form of economic support for small and some medium-sized abattoirs; and rationale for

support on which criteria to enable moving away from a universal method of support could be based. Agreement to provide initial advice to Ministers was sought and a possible timeline for moving away from a universal system outlined.

8.2 Anthony said NIFAC had discussed the paper and wanted to highlight that Northern Ireland had a different profile, having few small abattoirs and that the implications of a land border with the Republic of Ireland also needs to be considered. There was agreement among NIFAC about the direction of travel outlined in the paper.

8.3 Rhian said WFAC were keen to see support remain for smaller abattoirs, which constitute the majority of the sector in Wales. They suggested any support should encourage compliance to standards and discourage inefficiencies. They had also raised the added complexity in respect of abattoirs that slaughtered multiple species.

8.4 The Chair noted strong agreement from the Board to the proposition that we should substantially reduce and potentially remove support to large abattoirs. Board members urged consideration of how the FSA could ensure innovation that often emerged from larger plants' investment was preserved and would like further information on what cost savings from regulatory innovation efficiencies could be used to mitigate the removal of the discount from large abattoirs.

8.5 The Board indicated they were content to continue support for smaller abattoirs. It was clarified that this should not mean that any support withdrawn from larger abattoirs would be given to smaller ones. The Board also noted that, even if the discount were to continue for smaller abattoirs, the economic environment would remain challenging for that sector.

8.6 The Board noted the benefits small abattoirs can bring in supporting local economies and other public goods but also that the FSA had not been established to provide financial support to any sector of the industry. The discount is not an ideal mechanism to deliver wider outcomes the FSA wants to achieve, but the Board were keen to explore whether any new scheme could take account of factors such as operators' compliance and quality standards.

8.7 On medium-sized abattoirs, the Board said the complexity of the different species they covered would be an important factor to consider. The Chair noted that these abattoirs present a more complex challenge due to the diversity of that sector. In addition, other public goods provided by those businesses would need to be taken into consideration. It would also be important that artificial barriers were not put in place that could prevent a small business expanding to become a medium-sized one, frustrating government ambitions around economic growth.

8.8 The Chair acknowledged the comments from Board members on innovation and the need for efficiencies in the regulatory procedures and suggested that this should be picked up as part of the modernisation programme. She noted that the outcomes of discussions around an SPS agreement would have an impact on what was possible. Meanwhile details of the future discount or other support needed to be resolved.

8.9 It was noted that the ask from the Board was for a steer, rather a decision, at this time and the Board felt there was work to do around the definitions around business size and a greater understanding of the economic arguments, possibly including some external input, but the FSA should seek to reform the discount as soon as it could once that this work is complete. The Board noted that many discussions around the discount have taken place over the years, and the general government policy of full cost-recovery. James said that next steps would be to engage further with stakeholders and formulate proposals for how a future scheme might operate.

8.10 The Board encouraged conversations about the future with other government departments as part of a more holistic approach, noting the opportunity the Food Strategy may provide to do this.

8.11 The Chair noted that the final decision on future support would be for Ministers to make. She noted the Board's agreement that continued financial support for small, and some medium-sized abattoirs was merited, noting the diversity in that sector and the public goods it can provide. The discount had been set for this charging year (2025/26) but for next year planning would need to take account of the Spending Review settlement. It was expected that a clear plan for the long-term could be put to Ministers in time for implementation from 2027/28. A Board paper should be brought to the December meeting with detailed proposals, informed by engagement with industry and further economic analysis.

Action 2 - Policy team to bring a Board paper to the December meeting with detailed proposals, informed by engagement with industry and further economic analysis.

9. Annual Report of Incidents, Resilience and Prevention 2024/25 (FSA 25/06/07)

9.1 The Chair invited Darren Whitby to introduce this item. Darren gave an overview of the paper covering three-nation working and collaboration with Food Standards Scotland (FSS); the stability in the numbers of incidents and the increase in their complexity; the triage system in England; and upcoming challenges including AI and an SPS Agreement and the importance of stakeholder collaboration.

9.2 Rhian noted that WFAC had raised concerns over laboratory capacity and an ongoing concern from local authorities in Wales that they could not sample as much as they would like to due to resource pressures. The Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) said that there were regional variations in the availability of services and that this was driven largely by the availability of public analysts. There had been extensive investment to address this which was working but would take time due to the need for training. The national and international landscape also played a role where testing was often done away from the source. This was not always ideal as, though it did allow for better access to better technology, it could cause delay during an incident. He suggested meeting with Rhian separately to discuss what more could be done in Wales or in other parts of the UK, where there might be a particular gap.

Action 3 - The CSA to meet with Rhian Hayward to discuss potential geographical gaps in laboratory capacity.

9.3 The Board noted that local authorities did not seem to engage with mid and high-risk incidents to the extent that they previously had, which could be explained by resourcing pressures within the local authorities. It was asked whether the FSA were picking up a greater proportion of that work as a result. Darren said that the increased complexity challenge was the main issue and there was little evidence to suggest a systemic issue. As part of the new case management system, the ability to look at the data in a more interrogative manner should help more clearly define where resourcing issues did need to be addressed. Junior added that the FSA was helping authorities with training to help build their own resilience and capability.

9.4 The Chair asked about local authority involvement in dealing with smaller scale incidents. Darren said that there were some legislative requirements where the FSA would need to respond but the triggers for this could be reviewed. As part of the reforms, clarifying accountability would be one of the aspects that would be considered. The CE added that the FSA had instituted an internal change programme called FSA Ready which included a project to look at how available intelligence and data can be used to identify risks and the systems and processes for acting on it. Junior Johnson added there had been successes using low-tech approaches to determine responsibilities and the number of low priority incidents that were pushed back to other partners across the system had risen. This had been effective but labour intensive and automation would help with this.

9.5 On the safety of CBD products, the Board noted that consumers would assume that they were safe or they would have been removed from market. It was noted that these products were unapproved, and the Board sought assurance on their safety. The CSA said that the majority of incidents involving CBD products related to them containing levels different to those specified on the ingredient list. There had been no significantly dangerous incidents involving CBD. He added that consumers could check the FSA website for ongoing incidents and were advised to avoid any products involved until the issue had been resolved.

9.6 The Board asked whether there had been deaths attributable to Food Hypersensitivity within the past year. Darren confirmed that there had been a death in the last year as a result of allergic reactions. Due to ongoing investigations and formal process, it was not possible to give details of the case. This highlighted the importance of this work and the potential for tragic consequences of not getting it right.

9.7 The Chair asked about the impact of an SPS Agreement and the ability to share information through the WHO's INFOSAN system, noting the reduction in the US funding into WHO and concerns about budgetary pressures. Junior said that discussions were ongoing with international partners and the outcome would determine the FSA's approach.

9.8 The Chair said it was important the FSA did what it could, but also important that other parts of the UK Government were aware of the importance of this work for public safety. She noted that the Board looked forward to hearing further detail about how the case management system worked in practice and evidence of the impact it had had in next year's annual report.

10. Glycerol in Slush Ice Drinks (FSA 25/06/08)

10.1 The Chair explained the rationale for the inclusion of this paper on the agenda in order to develop interim guidance ahead of the summer months when consumption peaked; the existing guidance against the consumption by children under four and new data on incidents; and the revised risk assessment requested by the Business Committee. She invited James Cooper to introduce the paper. James explained the recommendations set out in the paper and asked the Board to provide a steer on whether to pursue further long-term risk management activity and which areas to focus on.

10.2 The CSA explained the chemical nature of glycerol, the effects of glycerol intoxication on young children, the associated risk factors and the limitations associated with toxicity data. Given the uncertainties and the fact that slush drinks are not an essential item, he advised taking a precautionary approach.

10.3 The Chair noted the Board's agreement that slush ice drinks containing glycerol should not be sold to children under the age of seven and that the FSA's advice should reflect that. It was noted by the Board that the youngest victim of glycerol intoxication mentioned in the paper was six years and nine months, in line with that recommended threshold. There was a question from the Board about how the age thresholds were calculated. The CSA said that setting reliable age thresholds was difficult but was calculated based on distribution of body weights and the probability of children on the lower end of weight distributions being at risk from the maximum levels of the ingredient. The CSA explained that less than 5% of children over seven would be at risk under the new guidelines.

10.4 The Board cautioned that the messaging that these drinks should not be given to under sevens could be weakened by further advice on the number of servings suggested for under ten-year-olds.

10.5 The Board asked about standard measures that would constitute a single serving. The CSA said the serving size used in the risk assessment was 350ml. The Board asked whether the

serving size took account of the dilution levels for the syrups used to create the slush ice drinks as this would impact the amount of glycerol being consumed within a single serving. James clarified that the serving size related to size of the drink, including the ice content.

10.6 There was support from the Board for a mandatory approach to warning labels though it was suggested by some Members that more information would be needed before this could be implemented. One Member suggested that labelling could include cautions such as 'causes dehydration' to prevent these drinks being provided to children when thirsty. The CSA said that, while that idea was appealing, he would be reluctant to recommend messaging for which the underlying scientific data was not yet available. James said this would be discussed with Department of Health and Social Care colleagues to make sure that any advice was accurate and gave the correct rationale and action for parents to take.

10.7 The Chair noted that further complexity for labelling existed in the out-of-home setting. The Board suggested that a label on the machines stating that the contents contained glycerol, visible to customers, could satisfy requirements. Public awareness for parents, carers and businesses would be key. James agreed, adding that it would be important to encourage parents to ask whether the products contained glycerol.

10.8 The impact of the Windsor Framework was noted meaning that Northern Ireland was in a different position in regard to the widespread use of glycerol, in slush ice drinks.

10.9 The Chair noted the Board were keen to see more actions in the longer term and an enhanced voluntary approach at this stage. In parallel, discussions should be held with industry to obtain more data around the levels of glycerol used in products. The new risk assessment would be out within the next few weeks and engagement with industry, parenting groups, and charities to understand what they expect of the FSA and of businesses in this area should follow.

10.10 The Chair noted that FSS were discussing a similar paper with their Board, and she would discuss the issue with FSS Chair next week to take the insights and steers from both Boards. Feedback on this paper from the public would also be welcomed ahead of officials finalising the risk management advice, noting that the late publication of the paper had limited the public's opportunity to ask questions about it ahead of the meeting.

11. Annual Science Update from FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser (FSA 25/06/09)

11.1 The CSA introduced his report covering resourcing and the outcomes of the government spending review, and the need to consider partnership working in areas where this would have previously been done internally; market authorisations; the international partnership landscape and areas where the UK may need to carry out work that was previous done by international partners, such as Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs).

11.2 The CSA explained that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) had carried out a substantial amount of research around UPFs, including Social Science research. Other work being carried out by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBRSC) would monitor outcomes. He explained that different countries were working at different paces on this topic, as well as on areas such as nutraceuticals and probiotics. The dependence on the outcomes of discussions around SPS for all of these areas, as well as the move toward greater reliance on Other Regulators Opinions (OROs) was also acknowledged.

11.3 The Board asked about addressing misinformation and disinformation, noting the proliferation on social media of misinformation around methane inhibitors in animal feed products. The CSA explained that trials were ongoing on the efficacy of methane inhibitors with

results being monitored around effectiveness, productivity and cost-effectiveness. Any potential for food safety or animal welfare issues arising from these products would be identified immediately. Misinformation and disinformation remained a constant issue within science and research and effective collaboration with teams across the FSA, particularly the Communications team, would be essential for ensuring that consumers had access to factual information. Claire Forbes explained that a project had been started within the Communications team around countering misinformation and disinformation and the team would be working closely with the Science Council on this. The Board noted the importance of public trust in the FSA in addressing this challenge.

11.4 There was a question from the Board about the role of the Science Advisory Committees (SACs). The CSA outlined the value the SACs provided to the FSA, highlighting their contribution to work around Market Authorisations and said that as with any resource, it was important to ensure that the SACs were being used effectively. The Chair asked how the FSA could assure itself that the secretariats' triage of issues for SACs to address was as effective as it could be. The CSA outlined the system that SACs used for highlighting upcoming issues 'below-the-line' at their meetings, giving the Members the opportunity to raise these above the line for discussion.

11.5 There was a question from the Board about how AI could be effectively used within research. Julie Pierce said that the Science Council had begun a piece of work on the use of AI within the food industry, the impacts on food safety, and how that information could be used by the FSA as a regulator.

11.6 The Board asked about functional foods and whether the FSA was able to get ahead of new food trends. The CSA said that there had been discussions with Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) around functional foods such as probiotics and the creation of an online database for where evidence for their efficacy existed or was needed. An orchestrated approach with other regulators would be helpful to both industry and consumers and could help persuade producers to contact regulators to allow them to see what health claims could be substantiated. He agreed with a suggestion from the Board that this should also be applied to producers of food supplements.

11.7 The Board asked about coordination with scientific organisations carrying out non-discovery science work. The CSA explained that valuable work emerged from these organisations such as practical innovations in the practicalities around laboratory testing to deliver better data and the FSA did coordinate with these types of organisation, noting a recent visit to Campden BRI.

11.8 The Board asked about how it could be ensured that data that the FSA was accessing was robust. The CSA said that there was an awareness that local authorities' resources were stretched and there was also pressure on the university sector. It was hoped that new funding would be made available to the public sector following the spending review uplift for research and development. For access to international information, there would be a need for government to consider national interest needs, and the FSA would be vocal in advocating for this.

11.9 The Chair noted two questions, relevant to this paper, which had been received ahead of the meeting. Rebecca Sudworth noted that the first of these was a general question from the British Retail Consortium about the need to continue advising local authorities. On novel foods, and where there were interactions with other authorities and regulators, regular contact was maintained to ensure that the most up to date advice could be provided.

11.10 The second question related to a health claims associated with a plant called ashwagandha. The FSA had now clarified its role in relation to food supplements safety, which included responding to food incidents with risk management advice, to ensure that local authorities had the best information. Attention was being given to this specific case and the FSA

was working closely with local authorities.

11.11 The Chair noted that this was likely to be Robin May's last annual report as the FSA's CSA and paid tribute to the work he had done in the role. She noted that the Board were supportive of the recommendations in the paper.

12. FSA Strategy: Annual Update on Progress Indicators (FSA 25/06/10)

12.1 Rachel Cooper gave an overview of the report covering the key conclusions for each of the ambitions noted in the paper; consumer polling and public awareness of the FSA; work with external stakeholders including parliamentarians; incident handling; and business compliance.

12.2 One Board Member cautioned that there was a risk of creating an impression among local authorities of trying to take credit for work that they were carrying out, especially around the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). It was noted that businesses rated with an FHRS score of three and above were identified in the indicators and there was a suggestion from the Board that a higher rating might be more instructive. The Chair agreed and noted that 97% of businesses were at three or above and it would be helpful to see what proportion were at four or five.

12.3 There was a suggestion from the Board that more indicators around the strategic ambition of maintaining food standards so that food is safe and is what it says it is, would be helpful, noting that there had been incidents involving the sale of counterfeit alcohol products which would not have been caught with the indicators as currently presented. Rachel said that it would be important to maintain the current indicators, but greater granularity on them could be included in future reports. The CE added that the aim of the indicators was to support high-level discussion about whether the system was going in the right direction. It was suggested that the similarities with the discussions around the annual report on food standards warranted consideration of the relationship with that report and how the reports could be streamlined

12.4 In response to a question from the Board about illegal imports, the CE said that she noted the concern about authenticity and potential link to illegal imports and this would be something that would require increased attention in the indicators. The Chair agreed and added that on the food is safe indicator there was nothing in the report to cause any concern, but there were gaps with regard to authenticity that did raise concerns.

12.5 The Chair noted that in the previous annual report, the Board had identified sampling levels as one area of concern. Rachel explained that the team were aware of this issue and were considering what more could be brought out within the report.

12.6 Rhian Hayward said that in WFAC's consideration of the report, it had been questioned whether there was any demographic information available around the statistics for awareness of, and trust in, the FSA. Rachel noted research, which had been carried out with IPSOS on the levels of trust in government demonstrating that it was currently particularly low. This was likely to affect how departments, including the FSA as a regulator, were perceived.

12.7 There was a question from the Board about data from the Food & You 2 survey showing a gap between people's perceptions and actual data about consumption. Rachel explained that reporting of sales from retailers demonstrated what was actually being sold and this could help to supplement this data.

12.8 The Chair noted that there were no indicators included on the ambition for healthy and sustainable food and said that this data would come from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS), accepting that the FSA had a very small role in the wider system for healthier and more

sustainable food. There had been a lack of progress in that area but there were opportunities over the next year as part of the NHS ten-year plan and the food strategy, to make progress. This would need consideration of where resource might be required. The Chair noted that as further clarity on the SPS discussions emerged, this would also influence the FSA's strategy and the approach to healthy and sustainable food.

13. Report from the Director of FSA in Northern Ireland (FSA 25/06/1)

13.1 Andy Cole gave an overview of issues from the report including the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government; the health and obesity strategy; the DAERA led food strategy and action plan; the Northern Ireland contribution to the bread and flour review; the Windsor Framework and its significance in light of a potential SPS agreement; the FSA's relationships with ministers and wider stakeholders in Northern Ireland; and the upcoming launch of the FSA's annual report.

13.2 Anthony Harbinson added that the effectiveness of the relationship of the FSA's team in Northern Ireland had with key stakeholders in Northern Ireland allowed the FSA to have an influence exceeding what would be expected from such a small team.

13.3 The Chair asked about the general mood in Northern Ireland towards an SPS agreement. Andy said that the mood was generally positive and anything that reduced friction for businesses and protected public health was welcomed. Industry in Northern Ireland were agile in adapting to the new arrangements under the Windsor Framework and would welcome any future arrangements to further reduce barriers to trade. Any future arrangements would also be welcomed in reducing divergence with the rest of the UK.

13.4 The Board noted that the team in Northern Ireland had secured a route for mandating the display of FHRS scores by food businesses and asked if there were lessons for how this could be achieved in England. Andy explained there had been an ask from the Health Scrutiny Committee to consider how mandation could be implemented and early preparatory work had been carried out in relation to that request.

13.5 The Chair noted that the Board were looking forward to coming to Northern Ireland in September which would present an opportunity to meet staff and stakeholders in Northern Ireland. She added that she would be visiting before then for the launch of the annual report.

14. Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (INFO 25/06/01)

14.1 Anthony Harbinson noted the readout of the recent Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting included in the papers; audit plans and correspondence with the National Audit Office (NAO); cyber security training; a deep dive into the incident at the Old Arley abattoir; a litigation update featuring lessons learned from the Post Office scandal.

14.2 The Chair noted the review on the processes surrounding the FSA's oversight of abattoirs and asked about lessons emerging from that deep-dive. Anthony explained that ARAC were reassured that procedures were being followed. He said that he would meet with the Chair, Deputy Chair, and CE to discuss next steps to consider if all necessary processes were in place. The Chair noted the Annual Review on Animal Welfare scheduled for discussion at the September Board meeting and suggested conclusions from that meeting should be considered as a part of that paper.

Action 4 - Animal Welfare paper at September 2025 Board Meeting to contain outcomes of the review on the processes surrounding oversight of abattoirs.

14.3 The Chair said that the Board carried out cyber security training every year, but it was clear that the level of threat had increased, highlighting the importance of ensuring this training was comprehensive. Junior Johnson said the FSA had been liaising closely with Cabinet Office on the response to recent cyber-attacks on retail and the food industry and there had been useful information that had been provided to the FSA that could help inform the training. The Chair requested a short private briefing for the Board on lessons learned from those incidents.

Action 5 - Junior Johnson to provide a short private briefing on learning from recent cyber-attacks on the retail sector and food businesses.

15. Report from the Chair of the Business Committee (INFO 25/06/02)

15.1 Timothy Riley gave an overview from the recent meeting of the Business Committee covering discussions of the Performance Report; the Regulation Action Plan Commitments; market authorisations; and local authority performance and the food standards delivery model. The Committee were comfortable with what had been presented in terms of the performance report.

15.2 At a previous Business Committee meeting, the issue of glycerol in slush ice drinks had been raised and Timothy welcomed the discussion on the subject at this meeting.

15.3 The Chair noted that she was pleased the system to use the Board subcommittees effectively as working better than in the past with good communication and coordination between them

16. Reports from the Chairs of the Food Advisory Committees (Oral Reports)

16.1 Rhian Hayward noted that WFAC and NIFAC had recently held a joint meeting to discuss the Board papers for this meeting and that the comments from WFAC had informed her contributions to the Board's discussions of them. WFAC had been particularly interested in the nutrition remit in Northern Ireland.

16.2 WFAC had recently undergone a successful recruitment process and had made a recommendation to the Welsh Government Minister on the appointment of two new Members.

16.3 It was noted that WFAC Members had been interviewed as part of the Welsh Government review of the FSA in Wales. The outcomes of the review were being awaited.

16.4 The Welsh Government had renewed the contracts for the three food centres within Wales which helped to boost innovation, particularly amongst small businesses, demonstrating Welsh Government support for innovation in the food and drink sector in Wales.

16.5 Rhian had recently attended the Food and Drink Awards in Wales, with FSA colleagues, in Llandudno with FSA Director for Wales Sian Bowsley presenting an award. Rhian also expressed thanks to Richard Wynn-Davis who had arranged for her to shadow an Environmental Health visit in Ceredigion recently.

16.6 Anthony Harbinson said that the joint WFAC and NIFAC meeting had been successful, allowing different perspectives to come across. There was also an economy of scale in getting

FSA staff to present to both committees at once. The two Committee Chairs would continue to attend each other's themed meetings.

16.7 Anthony had recently attended the Northern Ireland Leadership and Governance Conference along with Andy Cole and had met with the new Permanent Secretary. He had hosted an introduction to him for the audience and had also met with Minister Nesbitt.

16.8 The Balmoral Show had taken place in May with Andy Cole hosting the Deputy First Minister at a breakfast event. Ministers from Health and Agriculture had visited the FSA stand at the show.

16.9 NIFAC had three themed meetings planned including a themed event with in July looking at SPS and its overlap with the Windsor framework.

17. Any Other Business

17.1 No additional business was raised.

18. Questions

18.1 Marika Graham-Woods, from the Hemp Trades Association asked a question about the timescales for authorisations of synthetic CBD products and how the variability in full spectrum, biological CBD could be accounted for.

18.2 Rebecca Sudworth noted that the timescales were indicative and that the first approvals had been expected in the Spring. This had slipped but it was hoped they would be completed soon.

18.3 On full spectrum, biological CBD variation, this was still in the risk assessment phase, and it was not possible to set an indicative timescale for that at present.

18.4 No further questions were raised, and the Chair closed the meeting.

18.5 The next meeting was planned for 17 September in Belfast.