

Business Committee performance report for Q2 2025/26

FSA BC 25/12/04 - Report by Planning, Performance & Risk team

1. Summary

1.1 Q2 performance shows steady progress across the FSA, with strategic priorities advancing despite operational pressures.

1.2 Key ongoing issues which have received sustained executive attention include:

- Incident management
- Local authority delivery

1.3 The implementation of the April 2025 reforms to regulated product authorisations is largely complete, but there is continuing work in this area.

1.4 There is strong public engagement generated by recent communications activity, including enforcement messaging and consumer safety campaigns.

2. Introduction

2.1 The performance dashboard enables the Committee to fulfil its duties, as delegated by the FSA Board, by scrutinising quarterly performance information and identifying and monitoring operational and delivery risks. Where appropriate, risks are escalated to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

2.2 The Business Committee is invited to discuss the performance update, with particular attention to the key operational and strategic developments outlined in this report.

2.3 The report format has evolved following the move to Power BI, the underlying content remains consistent, with further functionality planned to enhance insight and usability for the Business Committee.

3. Evidence and Discussion – Key themes and insights:

3.1 Operational Delivery

a. We are continuing to manage high incident case volumes alongside increasing complexity. To support the response effort, surge capacity was activated operationally for the first time. Existing tolerance thresholds, originally set under legacy systems are being reviewed to better reflect the demands of the current operating environment. While there has been an increase in signals, the

correlation with incident volumes remains unclear. A dedicated data-focused hackathon next month will explore incident trends in depth, assess operational capacity, and ensure risk tolerances remain fit for purpose. This work is particularly timely given the enhanced national surveillance of foodborne disease by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

b. Performance against Strategic Intelligence Requirements (SIRs) by the National Food Crime Unit improved in Q2, supported by operational learning in high-risk supply chains such as herbs, spices, and rice. Half of the annual targets have already been met, with further outcomes expected as reporting lags resolve. Business Committee should note that disruption and outcome targets are under review, with increased stretch planned for Q3.

c. There is further consideration planned on the performance of Official Veterinarians (OVs) enforcement actions subsequently supported by the FSA veterinary enforcement team. While recent improvements were noted against the ambitious 90% accuracy target, a slight dip this quarter has prompted a further review.

3.2 Local Authority Delivery

a. From the October 2025 data collection onwards, tolerance thresholds for food hygiene interventions have been raised to reflect higher expectations of local authorities post the Covid-recovery plan. These changes signal the ambition for improved delivery and acknowledge the expected trajectory for local authorities to realign with the Food Law Code of Practice.

b. There is a question about whether other tolerance thresholds for performance ratings should be reviewed. The aim is to better differentiate between areas that are persistently underperforming ('Red' long-term) and those where meaningful progress is being made. This would support more targeted management focus and ensure that improvement efforts are appropriately prioritised.

c. To focus on the most valuable and actionable insights, the dashboard now reports the number of LAs in escalation, by country and escalation level, rather than tracking open, monitored, and closed cases. As of Q2, ten LAs in England remain in escalation, including one at Level 3, while Wales has de-escalated its only case, indicating positive progress.

3.3 Market Authorisations of Regulated Products

a. FSA has largely completed implementation of the April 2025 reforms, with caseload reducing from 494 to 423 following the removal of renewals and eight authorisations completed in October. This completes delivery of the Board sub-group plan, which projected a caseload of 440 by autumn 2025.

b. We are reviewing future plans for service delivery in the light of the planned SPS agreement. Because of the intensive work required to support cross-government planning and preparation for SPS, resources available for market authorisation processing are greatly reduced, and work on routine processing has slowed. We will return to the Board in early 2026 with a revised delivery plan that takes into account SPS impacts.

c. SPS work is also expected to have an impact on other issues in the Risk Analysis Process. In SERD and Policy, we have capacity to work on around 15 non-routine Risk Analysis issues each year, in addition to planned market authorisations, and this will continue. We are undertaking a thorough review of the queue of routine issues and will report to the Chair and Chief Executive at the next oversight meeting in February 2026.

3.4 Communications and Reputation

a. The recent communications activity continues to generate strong public engagement, with enforcement action and consumer safety messaging playing a key role in amplifying reach and

impact.

b. For example, the glycerol campaign resulted in peak coverage of 33 media articles in one day reaching an estimated 63.6 million people, including a BBC News feature viewed by 19 million. The updated food additives webpage attracted 12,000 visits. In parallel, investigations by the National Food Crime Unit into illegal meat and counterfeit rice secured significant media coverage, with 29 articles reaching 24 million people. These stories were among the most-visited news items on the FSA website.

c. Public trust in the FSA rose from 69% to 78%, returning to 2022 levels. The Agency's reputation also improved in the June 2025 RepTrak survey. The executive team will look to build on this positive shift – it remains vital to maintaining a high trust rating. We will also continue to benchmark the rating against that of other public agencies.

4. Other areas of interest

4.1 Work across Science, Trade and International, and Resources is largely on track. Highlights include:

a. Science delivery has progressed, with targeted risk assessments and sampling projects underway. Two sampling projects were slightly delayed due to budget and equipment issues, both now addressed.

b. Trade and international. Section 42 advice on the UK India Free Trade Agreement was submitted on time, supporting the FSA's statutory role in safeguarding public health in trade negotiations.

c. Border notifications have increased due to failed documentary checks, likely reflecting improved reporting practices. Ports identified non-compliant additives in beverages from Thailand and Nigeria, reinforcing the importance of robust border controls.

d. Financial performance remains well-controlled, with a modest underspend reported although the financial position remains tight. Diversity benchmarks have been updated, and targeted programmes are in place to support underrepresented groups and improve declaration rates.

e. Matters relating to both regulatory and internal audits were acknowledged and will be considered in full at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting on 25 November 2025.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Q2 performance shows solid progress across core delivery areas, including the successful implementation of regulated product authorisation reforms. However, operational pressures, particularly those linked to SPS work, are continuing. The Business Committee is invited to assess the effectiveness of current mitigation actions, especially in incident management and local authority delivery, where targeted interventions are underway.

5.2 Positive developments in strategic intelligence, public engagement, and trust levels support the Agency's direction of travel. Further review of tolerance thresholds and escalation metrics will strengthen oversight and prioritisation. Officials will continue to monitor performance and report quarterly, escalating risks to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as needed.

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