

FSA Board backs consultation on proposals for a revised financial support system for abattoirs

Official Vets and Meat Hygiene Inspectors check that food safety and animal welfare standards in abattoirs are met. This essential work keeps consumers safe, upholds public trust in the meat industry and enables businesses to export, supporting the UK's £10 billion meat sector.

The FSA recovers costs of this regulation from operators. Currently all abattoirs, including the largest, receive some discount on these charges.

The system has not been reviewed since 2015. Following a Call for Evidence last year and extensive stakeholder engagement, the FSA Board considered proposals to ensure the scheme remains value for money and is targeted where it will bring most benefit.

The Board has today agreed to a public consultation on proposals for a more targeted system of support, focused on smaller abattoirs. An important objective of the revised system is to even out regulatory costs for abattoirs of different sizes, while also avoiding creating barriers to growth. The proposed changes aim to deliver better value to the taxpayer and provide eligible businesses with more certainty around the support they can expect.

Insights from the FSA's Call for Evidence from farming and sustainability groups and engagement with industry show how important smaller abattoirs are for some communities and consumer choice. They can support farmers who specialise in rarer breeds and give the public the option to buy local. The revised model has been developed with this in mind.

The smallest abattoirs – those processing up to 1,000 LSU (Livestock Units) per year for red meat, or 150,000 birds annually for poultry – would receive maximum support, with a 90% discount on charges.

Some medium-sized abattoirs would receive support determined according to a decreasing taper to help minimise barriers to growth and equalise regulatory burdens. In a move away from the current system, the largest businesses would not receive support under the proposals. This revised model is designed to provide support where it can have the most impact, targeting support for smaller abattoirs while delivering value for money for taxpayers. More smaller abattoirs would benefit from the maximum support levels under the revised system.

At their meeting on Wednesday 10 December, the FSA Board agreed to move forward to a public consultation on the proposed approach.

The consultation is expected to be launched in Spring 2026, with the FSA Board considering final proposals later in the year. The final decision rests with Ministers, advised by the FSA.

As a public body, the FSA must ensure that any financial support to industry is kept under review and remains value for money.??

We've listened carefully to feedback from interested parties and recognise the important role that smaller abattoirs can play in supporting local farming, the rural economy, and giving people greater choice when purchasing meat.

Today's Board decision means we will now move forward with a formal public consultation on how the proposed future support model would work. This will give businesses and the public the opportunity to help shape the final proposals we will put to Ministers that aim to uphold essential food safety regulation while supporting the sustainability and growth of smaller abattoirs.?

We're working closely with Defra, Welsh Government and DAERA to ensure any future support helps deliver real public benefits while maintaining the rigorous safety and animal welfare standards the public expects.

FSA Chair, Professor Susan Jebb