

Performance Report Q3 2025-26

FSA BC 26/03/04 - Report by: Planning, Performance & Risk Team

1 Summary

1.1 Q3 performance across the Food Standards Agency remained broadly strong, despite significant work pressures. Colleagues effectively managed high volumes of food/feed safety incidents, utilising the improvements delivered by the new platform. Local authority performance shows to be following expected seasonal patterns despite their ongoing resourcing challenges. Market authorisation caseloads reduced slightly with preparations underway for upcoming Precision Breeding applications. Public engagement remained strong, supported by well-timed consumer safety campaigns.

2 Introduction

2.1 The performance dashboard supports the Committee in scrutinising quarterly performance and monitoring key risks, escalating issues where needed. The Committee is invited to review this update, which should be read in conjunction with the slides.

2.2 EMT continued to vary their approach to their reviews across the year, focusing on sections of the dashboard that are not always prioritised, helping to ensure balanced scrutiny across all metrics.

3 Evidence and Discussion – Key themes and insights:

3.1 Food / Feed safety Incidents

1. There was a record number of incident numbers in Q3 driven primarily by three areas: positive surveillance sampling, a high volume of cross contamination and an unusually high number of allergy alerts. The team was able to manage these volumes without relying on surge capacity in part due to the improvements arising from the new Proactive Resource for Incidents and Signal Management (PRISM) platform.

3.2 Local Authority Delivery

1. Overall, local authority performance continues to follow expected seasonal patterns but with several areas remaining 'Red' rated due to persistent pressures, including staffing constraints, rising numbers of unrated premises, and delays in Food Standards Delivery Model readiness. There are some variations across the nations. Further detail on this is provided in the separate local authority paper.

3.3 Market Authorisations of Regulated Products

1. The caseload has continued to decrease slightly from 423 to 417. We authorised eight applications and a further 11 applications exited the service via invalidation and withdrawal routes.
2. We continue to review and monitor delivery plans in light of the planned Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement. Market authorisation resource and delivery have been significantly impacted as we work cross-government to plan and prepare for SPS.
3. DEFRA has started receiving Precision Bred Organism notifications; the applications may make their way into the service shortly, with the aim to process Tier 1 applications in two months and Tier 2 applications in 12-24 months, pending complexity, once the system is fully established.

3.4 Communications and Reputation

1. The Q3 communications activity undertaken continues to generate strong public engagement, with consumer safety messaging, particularly in the run up to Christmas, playing a key role in amplifying reach and impact.
2. Our Festive Food Safety campaign during December, which featured a mix of social posts and news stories, is a good example of the potential for pro-active messaging, timed to coincide with cultural food events. This combined with a timely reminder of food safety risks of Dubai-style chocolate, helped to generate widespread media coverage, which is the most effective means of reaching large numbers of people.

4 Other areas of interest

4.1 Broader activity across Operational delivery, Science, Trade and International, and Resources continued largely as planned, with good progress in most areas and a few operational issues still being managed, for example:

1. National Food Crime Unit have set new stretch targets for all four measures: percentage of closed operations leading to an outcome, percentage of SIRs improving rating, number of disruptions overall, and number of outcomes overall. These are forecast to be met by the end of Q4, although a slight dip in disruptions occurred due to resources being redirected toward three appeals.
2. Overdue Dairy Hygiene inspections remain 'Red', consistent with the trajectory set out in Q1 following earlier changes to official controls that created a backlog; recovery to 'Green' is still expected by the end of Q4. Raw Cows Drinking Milk (RCDM) oversight identified six pathogen failures across four farms in Q3, and all affected farms paused sales until corrective actions were verified.

3. Our science work continues to progress well. We are reviewing our metrics to assess whether more use of a focused annual impact report, as part of the Annual Science Report, would be a more useful approach and would better demonstrate the real-world impact of our science and reflect the actual natural run rate of our work. The quarterly updates would be provided only where they add meaningful insight but still allowing us to take more urgent remedial action if required.
4. Trade and International activity stayed broadly on track in Q3, with imported food trends showing a rise in consignments failing chemical checks, particularly herbs and spices from India, and market access work progressing as planned. Required World Trade Organisation notifications were published, and all planned international engagements were delivered, strengthening key global relationships.
5. Underlying financial processes continue to be satisfactory. The in-year financial position remains tight and requires careful ongoing management.
6. Matters relating to both post implementation reviews regulatory and internal audits were acknowledged and will be considered at the relevant Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Q3 delivery was broadly strong, with PRISM supporting effective incident management, regulated products and public engagement progressing well. Local authority pressures, SPS related resource impacts and dairy hygiene backlogs remain the key risks to track into Q4. Officials will continue to monitor performance closely and escalate risks to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as required.

5.2 The Business Committee is invited to consider whether current mitigation measures remain sufficient in these areas.

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