

# Report from the Chair of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee

FSA 26/03/09 - Report by Dr Rhian Hayward MBE

## 1. Summary

1.1 This report from the Chair of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) reports on the activity of the Committee for the period from April 2025 to March 2026.

1.2 The paper provides an overview of WFAC's work to date, with a particular focus on the themes explored through its recent thematic meetings. It also sets out the Committee's anticipated areas of focus for the next 12 months.

1.3 The Board is asked to **note** the activities of WFAC and **comment** on the current forward look plans.

## 2. Role and Membership

2.1 The role of WFAC is defined in the Food Standards Act 1999, specifically to advise the FSA on any specific Wales elements linked to the remit of the FSA. It acts as an advisory body to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and is chaired by me as the FSA Board Member for Wales.

2.2 The Committee works closely with the FSA both in Wales and beyond as it seeks to support the FSA's strategic objectives. It has a complement of eight members, one of whom is also the FSA Board Member for Wales and WFAC Chair. All members are recruited through an open public appointment competition and are appointed by the Minister of Mental Health and Wellbeing in Wales.

2.3 [WFAC Members](#) bring a broad range of expertise, experience, and practical insight to the FSA. This diversity of knowledge – along with the valuable networks that members contribute – continues to enrich WFAC discussions and strengthen the quality of input provided.

2.4 During the reporting period, Jessica Williams completed her second term of appointment. The Committee wishes to formally record its thanks for the insight and experience she contributed to WFAC's discussions. John Richards and Dr Ifan Lloyd began their first term of appointment on 1 July 2025, with Lindsay Horth joining on 1 December 2025.

## 3. Committee Meetings and Engagement

3.1 Since my last report to the Board as Chair of WFAC, four themed meetings have taken place. These meetings focus on a specific area or theme and provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider topics from a country-specific perspective. Themed meetings allow WFAC to gain a fuller understanding of pertinent issues, enabling the Committee and Chair to more actively feed into FSA priorities.

3.2 Wherever possible, themes for WFAC meetings are aligned with the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC). However, there are occasions, as shown from some of the themes WFAC has explored this year, where they may be nation specific. I continue to work closely with the Board member for Northern Ireland and Chair of NIFAC, Anthony Harbinson, to ensure that the Committees are operating in the most efficient and effective way and are best placed to provide country specific advice. This year we have also trialled some joint FAC meetings that have worked well. Both Chairs and Committee teams also work closely together to develop forward plans and horizon scan.

3.3 Over the past year, WFAC has explored the following themes and issues:

3.4 **[April 2025: Cell Cultivated Products \(CCPs\)](#)** – With the launch of the [sandbox](#) in March 2025, it was timely that WFAC undertook a deep dive into the rapidly developing field of cell? cultivated products (CCPs). The Committee benefitted from expert presentations from the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser and members of the CCP sandbox team. The meeting explored several key aspects of CCPs, including: the scientific foundations of cell cultivation technology; the vision, scope and deliverables of the sandbox initiatives; workshop findings and collaborative networks; the four-nation regulatory framework approach and Welsh specific considerations. The sandbox team emphasised that safety remains the paramount priority throughout this work, a principle that featured prominently in Committee deliberations. Other key discussion areas included the importance of building and maintaining consumer confidence, and the need for clear, informative labelling.

3.5 In relation to Wales specifically, members raised the nature of Wales's agricultural sector and welcomed the inclusion of Welsh Government in the cross-government network that has been set up. The discussion reflected strong interest in labelling, the role of local authorities, trade considerations, and the broader societal debate between natural and engineered foods. Members noted their interest in this work and requested updates as the sandbox work progresses.

3.6 **[July 2025: Future of Food](#)** – In July, we brought together key voices from across Wales working in the food policy space, with the meeting focused on national evidence, strategic insights, and government policy direction. Following the launch of the FSA's annual report, *Our Food 2024*, the Committee received a detailed presentation on its findings, with particular attention to the Wales specific content. This included consumer concerns – especially around packaging, affordability, quality, and sugar – as well as data on hygiene ratings, feed compliance, sampling activity, and local authority resources.

3.7 Following the launch of the [Future Generations Commissioner's \(FGC\) report](#) which included a series of recommendations on food, we invited a representative from the FGC's office to brief the Committee. They highlighted the urgency of systemic food system reform, including the need to address food insecurity, strengthen school meal provision, and invest in local infrastructure. Welsh Government officials also outlined the aims of the new Community Food Strategy, emphasising approaches, supply chain sustainability, support for horticulture, and opportunities to connect food policy with planning, health, and education. Members reflected on disparities between UK nations, raised questions about the pace of implementation and rural equity, and expressed strong interest in revisiting progress at a later stage.

3.8 **[November 2025: Animal Feed](#)** – Recognising the importance of the agricultural sector in Wales, the November meeting was held at an animal feed mill, where we undertook a comprehensive discussion on the state of the animal feed sector. Our thanks go to ForFarmers for hosting us. Joined by the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) and regional feed leads from Monmouthshire and Powys local authorities, we explored the regulatory framework for feed hygiene and standards, identified challenges in inspection delivery, and highlighted the vital role of feed assurance schemes in supporting safety and compliance.

3.9 Members gained valuable insight into workforce pressures, regional delivery models, and the operational realities of coordinating inspections across Wales, as well as the wider impact of global instability on feed materials and supply chains. The discussion also looked ahead to the potential implications of a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement and considered the breadth of innovation underway in the sector, including the development of insect protein, biotechnology, and more sustainable feed ingredients. The meeting allowed the team to make new contacts within the sector that will allow us to move forward with our work in this area more constructively.

3.10 [February 2026: Supplements](#) – A policy themed meeting on food supplements examined the rapid growth of the UK supplements market, emerging consumer risks, and the challenges facing regulators. Presentations highlighted widespread supplement use and the growing reliance on online marketplaces, where investigations by *Which?* found products with excessive nutrient levels, misleading claims, and, in some cases, unlicensed medicines being sold to consumers. Contributors emphasised that confusing labelling, social media driven demand, and gaps in public understanding are contributing to potentially harmful consumption patterns.

3.11 Regulators including the FSA, Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Welsh Government outlined the fragmented landscape of responsibilities and the resource pressures affecting effective enforcement, particularly in relation to imported and online products. Discussions underscored the need for clearer guidance for businesses and consumers, stronger cross agency collaboration, and greater accountability for online sellers. The meeting concluded with agreement that these insights should feed into wider FSA policy work, including how to improve consumer protection in a rapidly evolving market.

3.12 Throughout the year, the Committee also met to consider the papers ahead of each Board meeting. These Board preparation meetings enable WFAC to consider the published Board papers and provide a devolved perspective, enabling me, as WFAC Chair and Board Member for Wales, to feedback nation specific considerations during Board discussions.

3.13 In June, we held a joint online Board preparation meeting with NIFAC. This provided WFAC and NIFAC members an opportunity to hear and understand more about the country specific perspectives and to share feedback on the committee papers. Members provided positive feedback on the initiative, and we will trial this approach on an annual basis, with the preparation for this meeting being done in the same way.

3.14 In addition to formal meetings, the Committee and I have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the year. This has included participation in events such as the annual Food and Drink Wales Awards in May, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and the launch of the Annual Report on Food Standards in the Senedd in July, and the National Eisteddfod of Wales in August. These engagements have strengthened relationships across the food and public protection sectors and provided valuable insight into priorities and emerging issues for Wales. I have also established bi-annual meetings with representatives from Directors for Public Protection Wales (DPPW) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), which have helped improve mutual understanding of operational challenges and ensure closer alignment between WFAC and local authority partners.

3.15 Alongside the Board Chair, I have also attended meetings with the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, whose portfolio includes the FSA in Wales. These meetings have provided an opportunity to discuss key priorities and developments for Wales, and to ensure that the Committee's work aligns with the Minister's expectations and the wider objectives of the Welsh Government.

## 4. Forward look

4.1 Members are keen to ensure that they are considering areas which are prevalent or an emerging issue for the FSA at that time. I will continue to engage with the FSA Chair, NIFAC Chair and FSA Executive Management team to help identify issues and areas where the Committees can add value.

4.2 Whilst we will flex the forward work plan as required, the Committee plans to explore the following areas over the next 12 months. Where possible, each these will be linked to a relevant visit. The team and I are currently exploring possible visit venues.

4.3 **Future of Food Regulation:** Following the allocation of funding by HMT in the Autumn budget for the FSA to explore a new way of regulating food businesses in England, and the initial paper that will be considered at this Board meeting, the April WFAC themed meeting will consider what this work could mean in Wales. With a Senedd election in May, we will look to engage with the new Senedd on any proposals once we have engaged with the wider stakeholder landscape in Wales.

4.4 **Food Crime and the role of the National Food Crime Agency:** To gain a deeper understanding of Smokies activity in Wales, examining not only the nature and scale of this illegal trade but also its wider impact on the Welsh economy. Opportunity to discuss how illicit food practices can undermine legitimate businesses and highlight the importance of safe food and consumer trust.

4.5 **SPS Agreement:** Enabling the Committee to develop a clear understanding of the key principles of the agreement and the implications it will have for the FSA's work. Gaining early insight into how the agreement will shape regulatory responsibilities, trade flows, and operational priorities is essential to ensuring that the FSA remains prepared and responsive.

4.6 Other themes the Committee have considered include FSA Strategic Communications, Food Labelling, Allergens and Food Hypersensitivity, Alternative Proteins and Antimicrobial Resistance. These might yet be revisited for future meetings, depending on priority.

4.7 We will assess when it might be most useful for WFAC and NIFAC to meet jointly, whether for Board preparation sessions or a themed meeting. Anthony and I are keen to build on this approach to ensure the Committee and its members are used to best effect.

4.8 Meanwhile, WFAC Board preparation meetings will continue to focus on papers being discussed by the Board, with particular attention placed on areas of relevance to Wales.

4.9 The Committee will continue to engage with stakeholders at key events across Wales, including the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, key conferences and events and the National Eisteddfod of Wales. As WFAC Chair, I will also continue to meet with key stakeholders such as the Welsh Ministers (alongside the FSA Chair), DPPW and WLGA.

4.10 I, the Committee and the Executive team also look forward to welcoming the Board to Wales in September and we are exploring Swansea as a potential location.

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 WFAC has considered a range of themes over the last 12 months and has appreciated the input from colleagues both within the FSA and externally.

5.2 WFAC will take every opportunity to support the work of the FSA in delivering for Welsh consumers, businesses and other key stakeholders. We remain committed to strengthening our collaborative relationship with the Chair, the FSA Board and NIFAC.

5.3 The Board is asked to **note** the activities of WFAC and **comment** on the current forward look plans.