

# Minutes of the Food Standards Agency Closed Board Meeting – Wednesday 10 December 2025

Victoria Hall, Town Hall, Reading

**Present:** Susan Jebb (Chair); Frank Atherton; Alison Austin; Clare Evans; Fiona Gately; Anthony Harbinson; Rhian Hayward; Louise Hoste; Timothy Riley; Steve Ruddy; Sue Paterson.

**Officials attending:**

Katie Pettifer - Chief Executive

Beth Chaudhary - Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance

Rachel Cooper - Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance

Claire Forbes - Director of Communications

Ian Gibson - Director of Corporate Resources

Junior Johnson - Director of Operations

Anjali Juneja - Director of UK & International Affairs

Rick Mumford - Head of Science Evidence and Research

Julie Pierce - Director of Information and Science

Peter Quigley - Deputy Director of Regulatory Services

James Robinson - General Counsel

Rebecca Sudworth - Director of Policy

## **1 Market Authorisations (CLO 25/12/01)**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Peter Quigley and invited him to introduce the paper. Peter outlined proposed principles for prioritising market authorisations, focusing on food safety; key sectors aligned with government innovation and growth priorities; and continuing authorisations for applications already close to completion. He confirmed that all decisions would be taken within the Board's stated risk appetite.

1.2 The Board asked whether prioritising applications that aligned with growth priorities could disadvantage those earlier in the queue, particularly if businesses felt that greater resourcing from the FSA might have moved them further forward.

1.3 The Chief Executive (CE) acknowledged that this was a potential risk but confirmed that it had been taken into consideration.

1.4 Board members queried whether deprioritising cases not near completion could amount to creating a “frozen market” that stifled competition, with specific reference to CBD.

1.5 The Chair noted that, in practice, CBD authorisations were unlikely before summer 2026 due to Food Standards Scotland consultation requirements, parliamentary timetables and election periods in devolved nations. By the time authorisations might be possible, the Board was likely to have revisited the prioritisation framework in light of expected progress in SPS discussions.

1.6 The CE reminded the Board that a standing action required an update on CBD at the January retreat, including a discussion on CBD and the implications of any SPS agreement.

1.7 The Board sought clarification on whether paragraph 3.12 of the paper implied that all other work not identified as a priority would cease. James Robinson explained that anticipated rapid progress towards an SPS agreement would create a short window that would not permit clearing the full queue. The focus would be on completing as much as possible within the available timeframe.

1.8 The Chair added that while the UK Government was seeking to make rapid progress and their House of Commons majority meant it should be able to legislate for outcomes of the SPS agreement, the timing of agreement across all EU Member States would be less predictable.

1.9 A question was raised about the future role of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA); Rebecca Sudworth confirmed that medicines were not included within the scope of the SPS agreement.

1.10 The Board highlighted the importance of continuing assessments and publishing advice documents. The Chair agreed but noted that capacity within the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) may be heavily absorbed by work on Cell Cultivated Products (CCP) and precision fermentation, where the FSA had made specific commitments to government, constraining what could realistically be achieved in other areas.

1.11 Rebecca Sudworth explained that in order to prepare for a smooth transition to a proposed new system under an SPS agreement most effectively, the proposed prioritisation approach had been proposed. The CE added that the proposals also reflected a changed external context, including the likelihood that businesses may defer new applications pending clarity on dynamic alignment with EU rules. The Board stressed the need to be visibly fulfilling statutory responsibilities.

1.12 The Chair observed that, to an objective observer, she hoped the FSA’s approach would appear reasonable and an appropriate use of resources in seeking to avoid nugatory work for both businesses and the FSA. However, without wider contextual information, the rationale for prioritising some products might appear less clear. The Chair emphasised the importance of bringing SPS-related information into the public domain as soon as possible to support transparency. The CE added that communication on prioritisations should form part of wider Government SPS business readiness communications and engagement plans, with clear guidance for businesses being more important than explaining the detailed rationale for the approach.

## **2 Conclusions and Next Steps**

2.1 The Board agreed the principles set out in the paper and endorsed the proposed external communications approach. Members expressed a desire to maintain maximum internal flexibility

and asked for clarity on what could be achieved over the next three months.

2.2 The CE noted that the Business Committee had tasked the executive with developing a plan. Meetings were already scheduled to produce this plan.

2.3 There was ongoing correspondence with Food Standards Scotland on which applications could be approved and when; this would inform a forward plan for the year, to be shared with the Board.

**Action 1 - CE to share the delivery plan for authorisations for the coming year with the Business Committee, once agreed.**

2.4 The Chair would write to Ministers to seek their agreement to the proposed approach in the context of the planned SPS agreement.