

FSA Social Science Symposium centres on food, innovation and the future consumer

This open event, held in Cardiff on 4 November, was part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science. Stakeholders from academia, other Government departments, business and NGOs heard about how social science informs real-life policy making in a government context.

Social science is a key pillar of our analytics work, helping us to deliver our strategic objectives by ensuring that insight into what people throughout the food chain think, feel and do informs our risk assessment, risk management and communication. The focus of this year's event was on food, innovation and the future consumer, and explored some of the themes that are feeding into horizon scanning across a variety of disciplines.

The event began with a presentation from FSA Director of Science, Professor Rick Mumford on the future direction of science in the FSA, followed by presentations from FSA social scientists, economists, operational researchers and research fellows. These ranged from the food concerns of a rising generation, consumer perspectives on new food technology such as lab grown meat, new ways of measuring consumer wellbeing and ways of using social media to understand what people talk about when they talk about food.

The afternoon saw fascinating talks from Professor Lorraine Whitmarsh of Cardiff University's UK Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST) on the kinds of changes that will drive a sustainable food future. Dr Rhian Hayward of Aberystwyth University spoke about the cutting-edge science that is driving innovation in food and Professor David Lloyd of Cardiff Metropolitan University spoke about the innovations food businesses are undertaking now to be fit for the future food system.

A workshop was held to close the event where experts and practitioners discussed the areas of research interest, evidence gaps, and how this might inform our future research agenda.

Michelle Patel, Head of Social Science at the FSA, said:

'Events like this are a great opportunity to bring together a wide range of disciplines, outlooks and perspectives to understand what the future holds for consumers and the food system. We're keen to share our work, stay up to speed with innovation in the academic and business community, understand the implications for a regulator of a dynamic and changing industry, and what this means for consumers, and to feed what we learn into our research agenda for the coming years.'

The presentations are [now available online](#) and a short report of the afternoon workshop will be published in due course.