

Food hypersensitivity takes centre stage at FSA Board meeting

The FSA Board reiterated its commitment to working with a range of other government agencies and increasing its science and research capability to become a “champion of the food hypersensitivity cause” as members responded to two reports on the issue.

Members first heard from Sushma Acharya, FSA head of policy and strategy for food hypersensitivity (FHS), who updated colleagues on the Agency’s own work in this area, including the success of March’s Allergy Symposium, progress in Precautionary Allergen Labelling and the upcoming Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) regulations, which led to discussions on plans for the Food Allergy Safety Scheme.

Chair Ruth Hussey then thanked Professor Sandy Thomas and the Science Council for their final review of the FSA’s existing food hypersensitivity programme alongside the identification of current and future priorities. The Board noted the Science Council’s approach underlined the importance of working with other government agencies, not just in public health but also in related areas such as education, while the Chair reiterated a commitment for the FSA to be a “champion of the food hypersensitivity cause” and invited the FSA to finalise an implementation plan to implement the Council’s recommendations.

Lastly, FSA Head of Science, Evidence and Research, Professor Rick Mumford emphasised the Agency’s increased science and research capability in this area, and how the science directorate is already using the Science Council’s recommendations to shape their thinking in other areas.

Elsewhere on the agenda, the Board noted Chief Scientific Adviser Professor Robin May’s first annual report, which took members through the key points of the past 12 months, including the FSA’s COVID-19 response and work with partners in the research community to ensure we can continue to access the best science available. The Board also received an update on the FSA’s horizon scanning capability, which has been expanded during the pandemic to consider a wider range of potential risks and opportunities within the food system in the short, medium and long term. In particular, members expressed their support for further work in emerging technologies, such as GM food and lab-grown meat.

Meanwhile, further updates were provided on the FSA’s new risk assessment process, and upcoming annual report on food standards, both undertaken in the wake of the UK leaving the EU at the start of the year. Finally, in a discussion of the FSA’s strategic priorities for policy and regulation, members considered different directions the FSA could move into in the future.

A recording of the meeting, along with the full agenda and papers, are available on [the Board pages of our website](#).

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the FSA Board will be on 15 September 2021.