

FSA launches consultation on additional NFCU investigatory powers

Have your say by 18 August 2022

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has today launched a consultation seeking views from the public, public health professionals and food sector partners on the proposed enhancement of the investigatory powers of the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU).

The NFCU is a law enforcement unit of the FSA and it tackles serious, organised, or complex cases of crime in relation to food. Its role is to detect, investigate and disrupt serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022* which received Royal Assent on 28 April includes a regulation-making power for the Secretary of State to confer additional investigatory powers upon food crime officers of the FSA in England and Wales. The Act also brings the NFCU under the remit of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

Stakeholders in England and Wales are invited to respond to the twelve-week consultation. Separate legislation governing investigatory powers applies in Northern Ireland. The FSA intends to hold a consultation for Northern Ireland in due course.

This consultation does not apply to Scotland, where Food Standards Scotland's dedicated Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit is responsible for delivering the food crime response.

Food Standards Agency Chief Executive, Emily Miles said:

“The NFCU needs to be able to do its work effectively and efficiently to protect consumers and businesses from food fraud. To do this the proposed changes are a vital tool to make sure that investigations can happen more quickly, while also freeing up local police services so their vital resources can be diverted to other priorities.

“At the same time any use of these investigatory techniques will be restrained, focussing on effective regulation to prevent and detect food crime, and subject to robust controls and external scrutiny. We remain committed to using any enhanced powers in a proportionate way that keeps the public safe, with strengthened safeguards and oversight arrangements to guard against their abuse. We encourage everyone who wants to have their say to respond so that they can inform our work in the future.”

The consultation is available on the [FSA website](#), where you can also find out about the work of the [NFCU](#).