

Minutes of the themed meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on 8 July 2025

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

- Dr Rhian Hayward, MBE, Chair
- Dr John Williams
- Dave Holland
- Georgia Taylor
- Jessica Williams
- Dr Ifan Lloyd
- John Richards

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

- Anjali Juneja - Director for UK & International Affairs
- Sioned Fidler - Head of Communications, Welsh Language and Business Support
- Lucy Edwards - Senior Business Manager
- Christie O'Keefe - Business Manager
- Owen Lewis - Head of Policy
- Jonathan Davies - Head of Strategy
- Sarah Aza - Head of Delivery

Presenters:

- David Holmes, Deputy Director of Strategy, FSA
- Jonathan Tench, Director of Well-being Economy and Food Policy, Wellbeing of Future Generations
- Tim McHugh, Sustainable Futures, Welsh Government

1.Introductions, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Helen Taylor. The minutes of the April 2025 meeting were agreed.

2.Declaration of interests

2.1 No new interests declared.

3. Future of Food

3.1 **David Holmes, Deputy Director of Strategy** – David presented the “Our Food 2024” report, the fourth annual joint publication by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS). The report provided an evidence-based review of food standards across the UK, with a focus on consumer concerns, food business compliance, import patterns, and food safety/authenticity. David highlighted key findings, notable trends and deviations specific to Wales from the 2024 report demonstrating that top concerns for consumers in Wales are: food prices, packaging, quality, waste, and sugar content. David highlighted the following statistics as well as highlighting:

Consumer concerns

- Welsh respondents showed greater concern about food packaging than those in England and Northern Ireland.
- Food insecurity affected 25% of households, down from 30% the previous year, but still higher than other UK nations.

Food Hygiene Ratings

- 96.9% of Welsh food businesses rated 3 or better.
- 73.2% rated 5, slightly lower than England and Northern Ireland.

Animal Feed Compliance

- Compliance rates in Wales fluctuated: peaked at 89% in 2022, dropped in 2023, recovered to 88.7% in 2024.

Dairy Hygiene

- Wales had a 99.3% compliance rate – among the highest in the UK.

Food Sampling

- Local authority food sampling in Wales increased by 13%, the largest rise among UK nations.
- Contrasts with declines in England and Northern Ireland.

Local Authority Resource

- Wales showed stable or improving resources year-on-year.

There were questions raised by the committee on the lower proportion of 5-rated businesses despite the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme being compulsory in Wales. There was also discussion around the sampling disparities between nations and Northern Ireland's higher rate prompted questions about the underlying causes and impacts of this. WFAC will be exploring Animal Feed at the next themed meeting to further explore this area.

- 3.2 **Report from the Future Generations Commissioner – Jonathan Tench Director of Well-being Economy and Food Policy at the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales**, presented on Future Generations Commissioner for Wales' Future Generations Report 2025 which challenges leaders and politicians across Wales on what needs to happen next to deliver on the Well-being of Future Generations Act and protect our future. The report provides a strategic overview of food system challenges and opportunities in Wales. Framed by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the presentation emphasised the urgent need for a coordinated, long-term food strategy to address rising food insecurity, poor child nutrition, and environmental pressures. Key recommendations included expanding universal free school meals up to the age of 16, promoting local food production through initiatives like Welsh Veg in Schools, and leveraging public procurement to support healthy, sustainable diets. Jonathan highlighted the importance of cross-government collaboration, local authority empowerment, and infrastructure investment to

build a resilient food system. The presentation underscored food's central role in achieving Wales' well-being goals and called for stronger policy alignment across food sectors.

The committee commended the report and recognised that there is a lot of work to do for government which will be challenging given the volatility of the global food system. There was discussion around sustainability of food, shorter supply chains and healthier diets for children and adults whilst still offering consumer choice. The committee were keen to explore how the FSA can assist in supporting a systems wide approach.

- 3.3 Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy - Tim McHugh, Sustainable Futures, Welsh Government** – Tim presented the Welsh Government's newly published Community Food Strategy (CFS), outlining its vision to strengthen local food systems and increase the availability and consumption of locally sourced food to improve well-being across Wales, a key Programme for Government commitment aimed at strengthening local food systems across Wales. The strategy marks a significant shift in Welsh food policy - moving beyond economic growth to embrace food's role in social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being. Tim explained the strategy has been developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and cross-government collaboration, focussing on enabling community-led action rather than imposing a top-down model. It is structured around six objectives, including support for local food partnerships, tackling food poverty, promoting healthy diets, and expanding horticulture. Key delivery mechanisms include long-term funding for Local Food Partnerships in all 22 local authority areas, support for small-scale horticulture, and the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Group to guide implementation and develop performance metrics as well as partnerships with the Future Generations Commissioner to drive delivery. Tim highlighted the strategy's alignment with broader Welsh Government priorities, including universal free school meals, healthy weight initiatives, mental health and well-being, and the foundational economy. He emphasised the potential of public procurement to drive demand for Welsh produce and the importance of integrating food policy with planning, education, and health.

There were questions from the committee on the Community Food Strategy projects and schemes and how these can be spread evenly across Wales rather than concentrated in certain areas. There was also a suggestion that these schemes need to include local meat producers to include this area of food production and not just fruit and vegetables and a query as to whether there is opportunity for the scheme to integrate with the sustainable farming scheme to encompass the whole food production sector. WFAC was interested to know how much of this work would be delivered before the Senedd election next year. The committee would welcome revisiting this work in the future to see how things have progressed.

4. Chair's update

4.1 The Chair gave an oral update on the June Board meeting in Birmingham and welcomed two new members John Richards and Dr Ifan Lloyd to the committee. The Chair also informed that Lindsey Horth will be joining the committee from the 1 December 2025.

5. Directors report (Paper 25/07/02)

5.1 The UKIA Director gave an oral update on the report which included recent engagement events such as the WLGA conference, CTSI conference, NFU Cymru manifesto launch and Wales Food and Drink awards. The update also included a progress report on the review of the FSA in Wales.

6. Any other business

6.1 Members noted that the next themed meeting would be on 4 November 2025.

The Chair closed the meeting.