Food Standards Agency
Board Meeting – 8 December 2021 **FSA 21-12-08**

CONSUMER INSIGHTS UPDATE 2021

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Summary

This paper offers:

- An outline of the methods used to gather consumer insights (see Annex A)
- A summary of trends in consumers' concerns and interests (see Annex B)
- Key learnings from our consumer insight programme (see Annex C)
- An outline of the priorities for our consumer insight programme for the coming year.

The Board are invited to:

- Comment on the future priorities for our consumer insight programme, including on any areas that the Board would like to highlight to the Executive team for consideration in next year's business planning.

Introduction

1. The FSA's founding principles to put consumers at the heart of everything we do is in line with the guiding principle to 'be the trusted voice on food standards in the consumer interest so that the FSA is bringing science, evidence and an in depth understanding of the consumer interest to the debate and decisions about high food standards in the UK.' In our role to protect consumers' wider interests in relation to food we remain committed to ensuring that the consumer perspective is understood and taken fully into account as we develop and evaluate policy.

2. Consumers tend not to distinguish between different parts of the machinery of Government: they see the world of food more holistically. We in the FSA have always actively considered consumer interests when developing policy and strived to understand wider interests. The value of our evidence base and role in protecting consumers' interests is also realised when we provide evidenced insight when working collaboratively with other government departments and contributing to wider conversations in areas such as labelling, food insecurity, animal welfare, and sustainability.

3. Our Science, Evidence and Research teams use a variety of methodologies to gather consumer insights to meet the needs of the organisation (see Annex A). A skilled team of analysts work with colleagues and research partners to design studies which balance the quality of evidence against proportionality and the time in which decisions must be taken. We look at both reported and, increasingly, observed data to both hear what consumers say and see what they do.

4. We are drawing more than ever on wider data sources: through our academic networks and reviews of academic literature and through increased access to data.

5. We are employing the latest technology to get both quicker and closer to real lives in real time. Using digital tools, we can now get statistically representative survey data on simple questions in under a week. Through our Kitchen Life 2 project (and with their individual consent) we are using cameras, sensors and other means to get closer to what people are actually doing as well as what they say when asked, helping us to understand the 'say-do' gap. We are using social media listening to hear what people are talking about across a broad range of food and food system topics, and this helps us to inform urgent decision making as well as gain a more holistic understanding of consumers' interests when it comes to food.

6. This evidence is used:

   - to inform and support our main programmes: particularly on hypersensitivities and risk analysis. Science, Evidence and Research Directorate (SERD) work closely with Policy and Communications to integrate good evidence on consumers' perspectives into decisions

   - to strengthen our response to incidents: giving us the ability to track and respond to consumer perceptions of real time issues or incidents. A summary of our current data appears below at Annex B

   - to protect the wider interests of consumers in relation to food: although consumers tell us that most important thing the food regulator can do is protect public health through interventions at all points in the food chain, the interests of consumers when it comes to food are broad and include affordability, longer-term health considerations, sustainability and animal welfare.

7. The latest tracking data from our regular consumer tracking (see Annex B) shows that confidence in food and its regulator remains high. However, we note two areas of increasing concern: reported levels of household food insecurity have returned to the high level recorded during lockdown and worries about food availability have increased in recent months. We will be monitoring these issues over the winter.

8. During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic our insights informed the immediate priorities for policy, operational and regulatory responses (e.g., messages got consumers around use by dates, targeted guidance for community food providers) as well as influencing wider policy around food insecurity.

9. Over the past year, what we have learnt through our consumer insight programmes has supported our major programmes as well as informed our strategic development (see Annex C). For example:

- We have found that a high proportion of people report non-compliance with use-by-dates and are working with Policy colleagues to develop further insights as well as communications interventions to address this

- We have learned much about the factors that impact on quality of life for food hypersensitive consumers. We will track those factors among people with hypersensitivities through Food and You 2

- We have explored consumers' expectations when it comes to the development of our Future Delivery Model (FDM) for Official Controls. Consumers were found to be reassured by the nature, extent and thoroughness of the current Official Controls processes, although they were also surprised by the level of FSA presence required to deliver them. As such they understood the need for modernisation. Findings will be used to shape the ongoing development of the FDM and ensure that it meets consumer expectations[1]

- We have explored consumer views and understanding of genome editing and food. Consumers tend to have low awareness and knowledge of GE and tend to become more accepting as they became more informed. This insight informed the Defra consultation and will inform our second phase of consumer engagement on GE foods planned for next year

- We explored consumers views on healthy sustainable diets, which helped us contribute to the dialogue around COP26 through a timely published report[2].

Summary of the proposed priorities for the coming year:

10. To support strategy development, we are conducting a multi-method research project with consumers to explore and articulate their concerns, needs and wider interests, in the food system, including around safety, health, sustainability, including food waste, and welfare. This will help us evidence the values and concerns of the people and communities that we serve. One output of this work will be a more holistic segmentation of consumer attitudes and values to inform policy and communications. In parallel, we will explore the feasibility of a consumer panel to allow more routine deliberative and participative engagement to provide insight on consumer views on policy developments and decisions.

11. We will continue to ensure that evidenced insights on consumer's values and concerns informs our major programmes.

    - To support our work on operational transformation we will further explore consumer acceptability of potential changes brought by the Operations

[1] https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-21-09-05-otp-public-consultation-on-the-future-delivery-model.pdf

[2] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021

Transformation Programme: Future Delivery Model (initial consumer evidence was reported to the Board in September 2021)

- To support our work on assuring business compliance we are commencing work on what consumers value about FHRS, so any changes made by the Achieving Business Compliance programme do not compromise consumer trust in the Scheme

- On inform our policy work on food hypersensitivity (FHS), we will explore what information consumers with FHS would like when eating out, and their views on what is currently provided by businesses. We will also explore consumer views of options for a potential food allergy safety scheme which would help them to make safer choices when dining out (in a similar way to the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme), and we will evaluate the impact of the new full ingredient labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (also known as Natasha's Law).

- To support better risk analysis, we will be providing insights on consumer attitudes and awareness as part of evidence packages for regulated products, further exploring what consumers need to make informed choices around genome editing and designing a new, efficient, and usable approach for developing and testing our risk communications.

12. We will continue to monitor food safety behaviours and household food insecurity, as well as report new data through our flagship Official Statistic survey Food and You 2. We have added a module on consumers' use of online platforms and are adding further modules on their views on alternative proteins, as well as on health literacy which will allow us to target information for consumers more effectively. We will continue to monitor consumer perceptions more regularly to support crisis planning over the Winter. Through our Kitchen Life 2 project we will understand more about the say-do gap between reported data and actual behaviour by observing what people do in over 100 commercial and domestic kitchens, and we will report on behavioural trials to test effective interventions around hypersensitivities and food hygiene behaviours.

The Board are invited to:

- Comment on the future priorities for our consumer insight programme, including on any areas that the Board would like to highlight to the Executive team for consideration in next year's business planning.

Annex A: Overview of insight methods

Science, Evidence and Research Directorate (SERD) uses a range of core insight methods. These allow the FSA to generate different types of data (quantitative and qualitative) and derive insights on consumers, FBOs and expert stakeholders' experiences of the UK's food system in varying degrees of depth.

Which method to use depends on the research objectives, audience, and the time and resources available. Each method described below has benefits and limitations and can be used in isolation or combination within a single research project.

Tool	Description
Snapshot poll/Rapid survey platform (RSP)	Online survey tool offering quick turn-around insights on consumer samples (c.2,000). Suitable for urgent projects where quick insight is needed. Survey can be appended with core demographics but is not suitable for understanding needs/experiences/views of niche populations (e.g., consumers with FHS).
'Push-to-web' surveys	Mixed mode survey approach where participants are sent an invitation to participate in the post and asked to complete the survey online; a paper survey is then sent to those who do not want/are not able to complete the survey online. The approach is more robust than RSP as it engages a more representative sample of consumers and allows a more complex analysis.
Social Media Listening	The FSA can monitor social media conversations by sampling organic content generated with a certain timeframe. As data is user generated and unstructured, it is primarily a tool for building situational awareness and spotting emerging public concerns, rather than developing a deep understanding of key issues or profiling who is experiencing issues.
Polis	Polis facilitates a kind of conversation between participants, it allows participants to respond to a series of pre-submitted statements - saying 'agree', 'disagree' or 'pass' - before submitting comments of their own, which their fellow users can then respond to. Analysis of Polis data allows participants to be grouped based on shared attitudes and common perspectives.
Online ethnography	Our online ethnography tool provides an in-depth picture of consumers' actual, rather than recalled, behaviour. Consumers complete tasks (e.g., shopping missions, cooking activities) via an app. This generates rich text-based and visual (e.g., photos, videos etc.) data on how participants complete activities.
In-situ video and sensor monitoring	This approach captures real-life behaviours by remotely filming consenting participants completing activities. This type of research generates a large amount of qualitative data, is resource intensive and typically conducted on small samples but generates insights with a high level of fidelity.

Deliberative dialogues	Deliberative methods involve participants reflecting on information about a topic and engaging in discussion and debate. Views are based on deliberation, rather than consumers' topic of mind reactions. As such, this approach is most appropriate for complex or sensitive issues. These projects are resource and time consuming but deliver detailed, robust insight.
Rapid evidence reviews	Typically commissioned through academic partners, rapid evidence reviews synthesise the latest academic and market thinking on a particular topic. This helps ensure FSA research is building on what is already know and supports the identification of evidence gaps.

Annex B – latest consumer tracking results

How confident are people in the food system and its regulator?

1. There are high levels of public confidence in food safety and food authenticity, with 93% of respondents confident that the food they buy is safe to eat and 89% confident that the information on food labels is accurate. Over three quarters (77%) reported confidence in the food supply chain overall. When asked about key actors involved in the food supply chain, respondents were more likely to report having confidence in farmers (88%) and shops and supermarkets (87%) compared to takeaways (70%) and food delivery services (52%) when it came to ensuring food was safe to eat[3].

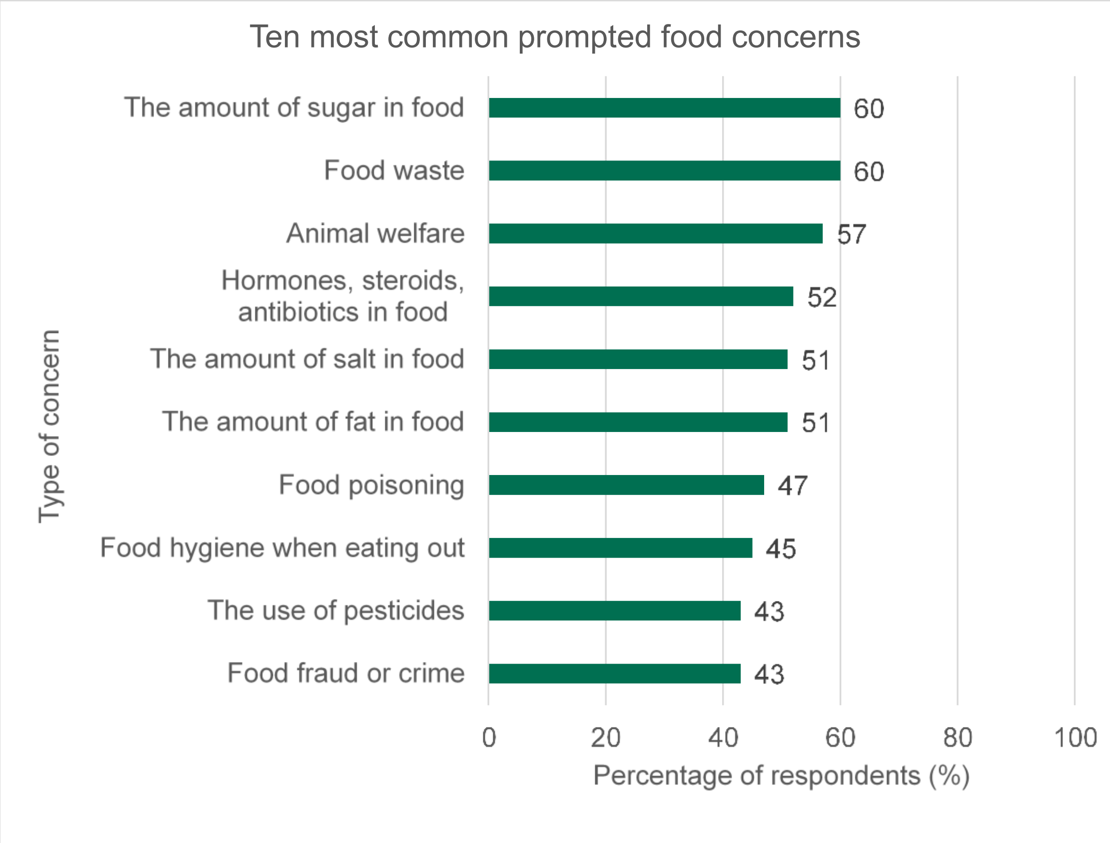
2. Our latest data (November 2021) shows that 70% of consumers are confident that the food supply chain in the UK provides enough food for people to eat, and 74% are confident that the food supply chain provides food that is of a high quality. An even higher proportion: 4 in 5 consumers (80%) are confident that the food supply chain in the UK ensures that food is safe to eat. However, a smaller proportion of consumers (57%) are confident that the food supply chain in the UK provides affordable food options for everyone, which aligns with increasing consumer concerns about the affordability of food (see paragraph 6-9)[4].

3. Respondents also display a high level of confidence and trust in the FSA. Over 9 in 10 (92%) had heard of the FSA and three quarters (78%) of those with at least some knowledge of the FSA trusted the organisation to make sure food is safe and what it says it is. Respondents were confident that the FSA can be relied on to protect the public from food-related risks (e.g., food poisoning or allergic reactions from food) (84%) and that the FSA would take appropriate action if a food related-risk were identified (84%). Nearly four in five (79%) were confident that the FSA is committed to communicating openly with the public about food-related risks[5].

What are consumers' general areas of concern when it comes to food?

4. Most consumers (88%) tell us when asked that they have no concerns about the food they eat. However, when prompted with a list of food-related issues, the most common areas of concern are the amount of sugar in food, food waste and animal welfare[6].

[3] Food and You 2 (Wave 2: 20th November 2020-21st January 2021)
[4] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[5] Food and You 2 (Wave 2: 20th November 2020-21st January 2021)
[6] Food and You 2 (Wave 2: 20th November 2020-21st January 2021)



Source: Food and You 2: Wave 2

5. Similar findings were also evident in our latest consumer tracker survey (November 2021), where 62% reported being ‘highly’ or ‘somewhat’ concerned about animal welfare in the food industry. The same proportion (62%) were concerned about the impact of food production on the environment (sustainability). The highest level of concern was in relation to food prices (71%), although over half (53%) also reported concern about the healthiness of food in their diet[7].

What is the trend in reported household food insecurity over the year?

6. Since January 2021 at least 17% of respondents have reported skipping meals or cutting down the size of their meals because they did not have enough money to buy food. In May 2021, this figure reached 22%; the highest reported figure since our data collection began in April 2020, and currently stands at 21% in November 2021 (approximately 1 in 5 people)[8].

7. The proportion of consumers who report feeling worried about food affordability is high; in November 2021 1 in 4 consumers (25%) reported feeling worried about being able to afford food in the next month. This is almost as high as the reported figure at the start of the pandemic (28%, April 2020). In

[7] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[8] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker

November 2021, 1 in 10 participants (11%) reported using a food charity or food bank to access food, compared to just 8% since data collection began in April 2020 (a statistically significant increase).

8. Although there are fluctuations across the year (all measures of food insecurity show a significant decline in August 2020 and June 2021), all measures indicate that the issue of household food insecurity remains a persistent issue for about one in five UK consumers. As we come towards the end of 2021, the issue of food insecurity is as significant now, as it was at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Younger age groups, households with children, and larger households are consistently more likely to report food insecurity[9].

9. We recently conducted in depth research with consumers in household food insecurity to understand the impact on their lives. This told us that any sudden income loss rapidly exacerbates existing insecurity and vulnerabilities. Covid-19 rapidly worsened insecurity for those who were already missing meals and rapidly tipped those 'just managing' into insecurity. Many have no financial safety nets and are facing rising basic costs, utility bills; rising electricity spend as well as rising food prices. Many subsist on less than nutritious, but cheap staple food. Many with hypersensitivities are unable to afford foods used to manage their health (e.g., gluten free), with negative physical and emotional impact. Some were compromising on food safety - e.g., 'stretching' labelling advice around use-by dates, raising risks of food poisoning[10].

How are consumer perceptions of food industry/supply playing out?

10. The proportion of consumers who report concern about the quality of food produced in the UK is also increasing. 35% reported concern about quality of food produced in the UK in November 2021 (was 26% in December 2020 when tracking began). Over half (51%) of consumers reported concern about the quality of food imported from outside the UK in November 2021. This figure was lowest in January 2021 (46%), but highest in August 2021 (56%)[11].

11. In terms of food safety, latest data shows that 51% of consumers are concerned about the safety of food imported from outside the UK, whilst only 33% are concerned about the safety of food produced in the UK. The findings are very similar to the level of concern expressed about food quality[12].

12. Latest data shows that 28% of consumers reported feeling worried about food availability in November 2021. This was even higher in October 2021 (32%); a similar proportion to April 2020, during the first UK national lockdown (31%). In the most recent survey 53% of consumers reported at least one item of food to be unavailable[13] when doing their usual food shopping (the most common items reported as 'unavailable' in November 2021 were fresh vegetables and

[9] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[10] https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-food-insecurity-2020_-report-v5.pdf
[11] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[12] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[13] Participants are asked about their 'preferred food products' when asked about food availability

fresh milk). However the majority of participants who reported an item unavailable were able to find a suitable substitute; 87% were able to find a suitable substitute for fresh vegetables, whilst 82% found a suitable substitute for fresh milk).[14]

13. With regards to Christmas and New Year, our latest data (November 2021) shows that consumers' biggest concerns relate to the price (62%) and availability (48%) of food. Fewer respondents reported concern about the quality of food (37%) and the safety of food (31%) although these proportions are still noteworthy. Concerns about the safety, availability, and quality of food at Christmas/New Year are generally higher in younger age groups[15].

14. Despite reported worry around food availability, reports of stockpiling/over-purchasing are relatively stable; just 17% reported purchasing more non-perishable food than they usually would, and only 10% reported purchasing more fuel than they usually would. 23% of consumers reported purchasing additional food in preparation for Christmas, a trend that is gradually increasing (data from November 2021)[16].

15. Consumers are noticing an increase in the cost of their food shopping. Our latest figures show that 60% of respondents thought their food shopping had 'got more expensive' in the past week (data from November 2021); and this proportion is gradually increasing over time (was 49% at the end of September 2021)[17].

16. Most food-related conversation on Twitter revolved around global and political events that have disrupted food supply throughout 2021. For example, the number of tweets in this category increased 46% between June and July in response to news coverage of the 'pingdemic' and its impact on retail supply chains as workers were required to isolate. Conversations about the affordability of food were up 182% between August and September. News of energy price increases engendered frustration online, compounded by food price inflation, national insurance increases, and universal credit cuts. Consumers took to Twitter to air frustrations and urge others not to panic buy extra food whilst supermarkets were suggesting people "stock up" on Christmas food items[18].

How has the pandemic affected consumers and their food?

17. The food system experienced immediate shocks in the first lockdown, resulting from a mixture of stockpiling and the overnight closure of the 'out of home' food sector. While our supply chains bounced back - and proved relatively resilient - the resilience of individuals to food insecurity and diet-related vulnerability to

[14] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[15] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[16] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[17] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker
[18] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/consumer-insights-tracker

the virus has been weaker. Like the health impact of the virus, experiences of food have diverged widely during the pandemic. While some have seen their eating habits improve, and potentially made lifelong improvements to their diets, others have faced acute levels of food insecurity during the pandemic[19]. In addition, some people's poor diets before the pandemic have made them less resilient to the virus itself - obesity is one of the top three risk factors for experiencing severe health consequences from COVID-19.

18. Over half of respondents (55%) reported that they had made, or attempted to make, a change to their diet for health reasons (to improve the healthiness of their diet) since the start of the pandemic. This figure is significantly higher amongst women (61%) than men (49%). The total proportion who reported a change to their diet increases to 80% when prompted; the most common changes made to personal diets were eating more fruit and vegetables (40%), eating less processed foods (33%) and eating fewer takeaways (29%)[20].

19. Two in five (40%) of participants reported that they had made, or attempted to make, a change to their diet for environmental reasons since the start of the pandemic. The most common changes made to personal diets for environmental reasons were reducing food waste (34%), eating more fruit and vegetables (27%) and eating less meat (23%)[21]. However, overall diets have showed little change. Diets are still failing to meet most dietary guidelines and little change over time - except sugar which is reducing and red/processed meat which is declining modestly[22]:

[19] Food in a Pandemic, FSA, 2021
[20] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[21] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[22] A National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Diet, nutrition and physical activity in 2020 follow up study during COVID-19

ANNEX C – insights from our consumer insights on key programmes

How well do people comply with food hygiene practices and where are the main areas of risky practice?

1. We have found that reported compliance with recommended food hygiene practices varies by behaviour, between demographic groups[23], and that food hygiene knowledge does not necessarily lead to related behaviours. Although most respondents understand use-by dates (67%), and always check them before they cook or prepare food (62%), many people still eat expired food[24].

2. In line with advice, most respondents say they always cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through (80%), reheat food once at most (85%), and eat leftovers within two days (64%), however, almost a third (29%) of respondents would eat leftovers after three days or more. Over 9 in 10 (91%) respondents never eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or it has red juices, and most respondents never wash raw chicken (60%)[25].

3. However, contrary to advice, over a third (36%) still wash raw chicken at least occasionally; 20% of whom always do this[26]. Compliance with hand washing advice is generally high, with most respondents reporting that they always wash their hands before they start to prepare of cook food (77%) or after handling raw meat or fish (93%)[27]. Our research shows that many participants wash their hands habitually when preparing food (an automatic behaviour, without thinking). Hand hygiene is particularly important when cooking or handling raw meats, eggs, or fish as participants recognise these as ‘high risk’ foods which can lead to cross-contamination and food poisoning. Many participants reported applying more thorough handwashing techniques when preparing these foods, in comparison to foods deemed ‘lower-risk’ such as fruit or vegetables[28].

4. However, peoples’ behaviour in kitchens is often unconscious or habitual, and not necessarily reflective of what people claim to do. For instance, handwashing is perfunctory and ad hoc, rather than consistently done at set times (e.g., before food preparation) as people claim. Behaviour around food storage and leftovers is also not in line with FSA guidance, including instances of reheating food more than once. We are conducting further work in the coming months to understand the ‘say-do’ gap when it comes to food hygiene.

What have we learned about life for people with hypersensitivities?

5. Consumers with hypersensitivities that feel comfortable asking staff for information and had confidence in written and verbal information when eating

[23] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/fsa-consumer-segmentation
[24] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-2
[25] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-2
[26] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-2
[27] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-2
[28] Consumer Handwashing Research: Handwashing in a Pandemic | Food Standards Agency

out had higher scores for quality of life. However, a greater frequency of having to check information at various stages of eating out and having to check labels created a burden on consumers and was related to poorer quality of life. People who reported more severe reactions also reported poorer quality of life.[29] We will track those factors among people with hypersensitivities through Food and You 2.

6. Conversations on social media about intolerances and hypersensitivities tend to fluctuate between months; though they increased 46% in September in the lead up to the introduction of the prepacked for direct sale allergen labelling changes from 1 October 2021 (also known as Natasha's Law).

What are consumers' views on our Future Delivery Model (FDM)?

7. Consumers have limited awareness of how food is regulated but were reassured by the thoroughness of current Official Controls. They are keen to see the FSA presence to remain the same in non-compliant businesses; more unannounced inspections; businesses held to account; independent training programmes for inspectors; human supervision of new technology; transparent information for consumers and trialling of the FDM before it is fully rolled out. These findings will be used to shape the ongoing development of the FDM and ensure that it meets consumer expectations[30].

What are consumers' views on genome edited (GE) food?

8. Consumers tend to have low awareness and knowledge of GE and tend to become more accepting as they became more informed. Overall consumers tended to be more accepting of GE than genetically modified (GM) food, once the differences are explained. For both technologies, consumers found it more acceptable if they were applied to plants rather than animals. Consumers had concerns about safety risks to humans and most consumers felt labelling should always inform the consumer of the presence of GE ingredients using the full term 'genome edited'. Most consumers felt it would be appropriate to regulate GE foods separately from GM foods and that regulation should be just as strict as for GM[31]. This insight informed the Defra consultation and will inform our second phase of consumer engagement on GE foods planned for next year.

[29] https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-allergy-and-intolerance-research/food-sensitive-study-quality-of-life-wave-1-report
[30] https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-21-09-05-otp-public-consultation-on-the-future-delivery-model.pdf
[31] https:/www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/consumer-perceptions-of-genome-edited-food.pdf

What consumers' views on eating healthily?

9. Most consumers believe they know what a healthy diet consists of (75%) and understand the impact that their diet has on their health (78%). An even greater proportion (87%) think it is important for them to eat a healthy diet, although only 65% reported that what they eat is 'healthy' which illustrates the gap between consumer knowledge and behaviour when it comes to healthy eating[32].

10. There is also a clear appetite for further improvements as most consumers agreed that they would like to change their diet to make it healthier (63%); with 68% agreeing that they would like to eat more fruit and vegetables and 61% wanting to reduce their calorie intake; although women were significantly more likely than men to agree with these statements. People think that individuals should be responsible for improving the health of their own diet (64%), followed by food retailers (38%). Participants from older age groups were significantly more likely to report that the responsibility of improving UK diets should be down to personal responsibility, than those in younger age groups[33].

11. When prompted, 77% of participants could identify at least one barrier that stopped them from eating a healthier diet at the moment, with the cost of healthier foods being the most commonly reported barrier (33%)[34].

What are consumers' views on eating more sustainably?

12. Just under half of consumers believe they know what a sustainable diet consists of (48%) with marginally more reporting that they understand the impact their diet has on the environment (51%). Despite this, nearly three-quarters (73%) think it is important for them to buy food that has a low environmental impact, whilst only 49% considered their personal diet to be environmentally sustainable. This implies that consumers are aware of the importance of sustainable diets, but their knowledge could be improved to help them to make more sustainable choices[35].

13. Over half of respondents agreed that they would like to improve their diet to make it more sustainable (54%), although women (61%) were significantly more likely to report this than men (47%). Views on meat and dairy consumption are more polarising; 41% of respondents agreed they would like to eat less meat, but 34% disagreed, whilst 33% agreed they would like to eat less dairy, but 34% disagreed. Women were significantly more likely than men to agree that they would like to eat less meat, whilst those in younger age groups were significantly more likely to agree they'd like to eat less dairy than those in older age groups. When prompted, 71% of participants could identify at least one barrier that stopped them from eating a sustainable diet at the

[32] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[33] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[34] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[35] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021

moment, with the cost of sustainable foods being the most commonly reported barrier (29%). 16% of respondents also reported that a lack of understanding about what is/isn't sustainable was a barrier to a more sustainable diet[36].

14. Most respondents thought that the Government (48%) and Food producers/manufacturers (48%) should be responsible for improving the sustainability and environmental impact of diets in the UK, with food retailers and individual responsibility following closely behind (45%)[37]. This implies that consumers may want further direction from government and those responsible for food production when is comes to sustainable diets. Furthermore, 58% of consumers feel that the Government should invest in developing new healthy and sustainable food products if the private sector does not[38].

[36] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[37] Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Consumer Poll, FSA, 2021
[38] Renew Normal: Food in a Pandemic