

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

1. I wanted to open my report by referring to the deeply worrying conflict in **Ukraine**. The FSA is working with Defra and other government departments to examine the impact on the UK, particularly on the food supply chain. We have not detected any imminent food safety implications at this time, but the food system could be impacted in a variety of ways, including changes in seasonal worker availability, energy price increases, and price increases for some imported commodities and fertilisers. We will continue to work closely with Defra and other agencies as the situation develops.
2. We are aware of the impact on our employees, particularly those who have friends or family in Ukraine. We are making sure that help is available and alerting employees to our employee assistance programme.
3. Next, in more positive news, I wanted to mention how excited I am about the new [FSA strategy](#). In it, we clarify our mission, which is that 'food you can trust' covers 'food that is safe,' 'food that is what it says it is,' and 'food that is healthier and more sustainable.' Also in it are a revised and sharpened set of guiding principles for our work, such as 'risk-based and proportionate' and 'working with and through others.' Over the next few months and years, you will see these phrases feature significantly in our papers to you, as we internalise and embed the new strategy. The new strategy promises to shape the FSA's work so that we are more influential and effective at achieving our mission.
4. Over the last quarter, the FSA has continued to engage closely with partners across Government to collectively address the major challenges in the food system. We have remained in regular contact with the Defra **Food Strategy White Paper** team and have been supporting DHSC and Defra as they work up a food system data programme. The White Paper is due to be published shortly.
5. As announced in the [Levelling Up White Paper](#), we are working jointly with the Department for Education, to help increase the level of assurance for **School Food Standards** through a pilot that will run across 2022 and 2023. This pilot will assess whether local authorities can identify instances of non-compliance through their regular hygiene inspections.
6. The FSA has been working closely with the Defra White Paper team and the Cabinet Office's Brexit Opportunities Unit on innovation in the food industry and the role of the novel foods process. As announced in the [Government Command Paper: The Benefits of Brexit](#), the FSA has committed to a **review of our novel foods regulatory framework**, to ensure that we can have a process that supports innovation while maintaining high food standards.
7. The UK Government's intensive discussions with the EU on the **NI Protocol** continue with the aim of delivering significant changes to the NI Protocol which are durable in the long term. The FSA continues to provide technical input into the work led by Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

(FCDO) and Defra to ensure that the food and feed safety implications of proposals are fully understood and considered as work progresses. The UK Government's preferred option is to reach an agreed way forward with the EU on changes to the NI Protocol, but it also maintains that the UK Government will use Article 16 of the NI Protocol if necessary.

8. In early February, Minister Edwin Poots directed his officials in the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to suspend checks at points of entry from Great Britain. The High Court have since confirmed that the direction should be suspended until a full hearing has been conducted. DAERA and District Council staff remain at the Border Control Posts and Sanitary and Phytosanitary checks continue to take place at the time of writing. As these controls are on GB goods moving into NI, in the event controls are suspended we have no evidence to suggest there would be any increased food or feed safety risk associated with GB goods being placed on the NI market.
9. We expect to receive a commission from the Department for International Trade for the FSA to contribute to a review of whether the UK's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Australia maintains statutory protections. Our advice will form part of a government report that is required to be placed before Parliament under **Section 42** of the Agriculture Act 2020. The full report, which is being developed across government will include an assessment of whether the FTA maintains statutory protections for human health, animal health and welfare, plant health and environmental issues linked to agriculture.
10. Since 1 January 2022, traders have been required to pre-notify high-risk food products from the EU upon entry to GB via the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS). **Pre-notification** allows the FSA to monitor high-risk food coming from the EU and enables sufficient traceability to mitigate health risks in the event of a food safety incident. Prior to 1 January 2022, businesses had been voluntarily submitting pre-notifications, but since this became a requirement, we have seen a significant increase in entries from around 400 per week in December to over 19,000 in the last week of January.
11. Over the coming weeks we will be analysing the pre-notification data against the Customs data we now also receive to monitor compliance levels. Where needed, we will work with Defra to target communications to any traders not following the new requirement. There is no evidence that pre-notification requirements have had a detrimental impact on food supply since being introduced on 1 January 2022.
12. Due to the ongoing need to resolve key issues with regards the Northern Ireland Protocol, the UK government announced its decision in December to extend, on a temporary basis, the current arrangements for moving goods from the island of Ireland to GB. Therefore, since 1 January pre-notification has not been required for goods from Republic of Ireland moving into GB. the permanent arrangements are being developed as part of the package of work

to deliver the next phase of unfettered market access for NI businesses over 2022.

13. I wanted to provide the Board with an update on the food colour **Titanium Dioxide (E171)**. Titanium Dioxide has recently been withdrawn from the list of colours permitted in food in the European Union. It is generally used in foods such as sauces, icing, white chocolate and confectionary to give a brilliant white colour. The EU action was on the basis of the advice of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which had raised potential concerns over accumulation of particles of the additive in the body and possible genotoxicity. Having reviewed the available evidence, the FSA has not identified any safety concerns that require a change in the regulatory approach in England and Wales. Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has come to the same conclusion. The Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) and the Committee on the Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM), highlighted, in their [joint interim statement](#) the reasons they do not agree with the EFSA risk assessment.
14. The FSA and FSS are proceeding with a risk assessment to inform any future risk management actions. This will allow consideration of areas where additional evidence is desirable. There is a large amount of data to be assessed and we expect the risk assessment to be concluded in early 2023.
15. The EU's decision which came into force on 7 February 2022, with a six-month transition period ending on 7 August 2022 applies in Northern Ireland by virtue of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and we have ensured that businesses and enforcement authorities in GB and Northern Ireland have been informed about these requirements through engagement with trade organisations, via our Smarter Comms platform and through changes to the additives pages of our website.
16. Board members may also be aware of the recent Statutory Instrument (SI) that has been laid before Parliament in relation to **Genome Edited** crop field trials. The SI is being debated in the House of Commons and House of Lords this month, with the House of Commons debate already having taken place on the 2 March 2022. The SI introduces changes that will allow researchers across England to undertake plant-based research using genome editing with greater ease, speed and lower costs. This is the first step in government proposals in this area and will pave the way for innovation and facilitate wider use of GE technologies. Building on your steers from the discussion at the September 2021 meeting, FSA officials continue to work with colleagues across governments in the UK to develop a new regulatory framework for GE Food and Feed in preparation for government seeking to bring forward further proposals at a suitable opportunity. The Government response can be found [here](#).

17. We continue to move the **CBD** market towards compliance. None of the products on the market have been authorised for sale under novel foods legislation and many applications have been made to us for that authorisation. We will shortly publish a more complete public list of CBD products. This list will indicate those applications and associated products that are either with the FSA for consideration or on which more information has been promised but is awaited. Over the next few weeks, we will be ensuring local authorities, suppliers, retailers and consumers are made aware of the timings for completion of the public list and its significance.
18. We will be suggesting that local authorities take account of our list when prioritising activity on these products. Those products that do not appear on our list should be removed from the market. We will soon be supplying local authorities with guidance on ways of dealing with unauthorised novel foods that are placed on the market. In light of Board comments in December, we are also developing a surveillance plan for CBD products on the market.
19. On 26 January we [published](#) results from [Wave 3](#) of our flagship ‘**Food and You 2**’ survey. This survey is conducted annually with around 6000 adults across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Wave 3 fieldwork took place between April and June 2021. In this wave, we continued to monitor consumers’ concerns about food, food security, and trust in food and the FSA. We also introduced new questions on online platforms. Consumer confidence in food safety and the food system remains high. Sugar and food waste continue to be the top (prompted) concerns amongst consumers.
20. On 24 February, we published our latest [consumer tracker survey](#) report. Topics covered in this report are household food insecurity, food purchasing behaviours, food habits at home, nutrition behaviours, food safety and hygiene in the home and consumers’ food concerns over 19 waves of data (April 2020 to October 2021). Levels of household food insecurity remain concerning. In April 2020, 18% reported skipping meals and cutting the size of meals because they did not have enough money to buy food. In August 2020, this proportion fell to 12%. It increased to a peak of 22% in May 2021, remaining at a similar level in October 2021 (21%). Food prices were the concern most often mentioned by consumers. We will continue to monitor and report on these, and we are working with others across Government and in the third sector to provide up to date evidence on the issue.
21. Since my last report to the Board in December 2021, I have met Lindsay Croisdale-Appleby, the Ambassador and Head of the UK Mission to the European Union and Pamela Byrne, CEO of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland to discuss further the FSA’s position in the regulatory environment post EU Exit.

I joined the Chair in stakeholder meetings with senior management at Sainsbury’s and Tesco and I also accompanied her to meetings with Jim

Moseley, CEO of Red Tractor Assurance, the Chair and CEO of WRAP, Julie Hill and Marcus Gover and in the joint meeting with Food Standards Scotland Chair, Ross Finnie and CEO, Geoff Ogle.

I met Rowena Hackwood, CEO of Astrea Academy Trust and our discussion fed into the FSA's work with the Department for Education on school foods standards.

I met John Herriman, Chief Executive of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute to talk about their vision of reframing and developing the roles of Trading Standards Officers.

In January, I had a meeting with Oliver Griffiths, CEO of the Trade Remedies Authority. I have also had meetings with Defra Director General, David Kennedy and Defra Special Adviser, Emma Pryor, to further discuss the Food White Paper.

In February, I recorded a 'Radical Reformers' podcast talking about the FSA, Brexit, how we work with local authorities, our National Food Crime Unit, and about leadership.

I held an introductory meeting with Dr Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Government and joined the quarterly Safety Regulators CEO meeting with my counterparts at the Care Quality Commission, Civil Aviation Authority, Office for Nuclear Regulation, Health and Safety Executive and The Office of Rail and Road.