

FSA Strategy

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1. Summary

1.1 This paper describes the development and proposals for the FSA's new strategy, covering the period 2022-2027.

1.2 The Board is asked to note:

- The FSA's overall approach to developing strategies
- The wider context of the changes in the food system that our strategy needs to reflect

1.3 The Board is asked to:

- Agree the proposal to publish a five-year strategy running from 2022 – 2027.
- Agree the mission, vision, guiding principles and roles described in this paper.
- Agree that the executive and FSA Chair can make final updates to address comments from the Board.
- Note that we will now develop a three-year business plan for 2023-26 in the course of 2022/23, to embed the strategy in the FSA's workplans.

2. Introduction

2.1 The FSA has historically worked on a series of fixed term strategies, which have broadly aligned (up until 2015) with general election cycles. Our most recent strategy 'Food we can trust' covered the period 2015–2020.

2.2 This strategy was dramatically affected by the 2016 EU Referendum and EU Exit. Although our underlying mission and vision remained the same, it introduced a whole new programme of work that had not been anticipated in 2015.

2.3 Given this, in [January 2020](#), the FSA Board agreed that we would maintain our mission as food we can trust and our vision as set out in the 2015-2020 strategy. The Board also agreed we should not seek to set a longer-term strategy at that time but be more agile in the face of uncertainty. This was two months before the first COVID-19 lockdown, which introduced further significant challenges to the delivery of our work, again not anticipated in the previous strategy.

2.4 However, now that the UK is outside the EU, and uncertainty around the pandemic is reducing, the time is right to set out a new, longer-term strategy, covering a five-year period from financial years 2022-2027. Our proposed title for this new strategy is 'Delivering a better food system'.

3. Context for the Strategy

3.1 The food system continues to evolve quickly, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the FSA. Since publishing our previous strategy, the food system and our role have undergone several significant shifts, including:

- Following the UK's exit from the EU, our role has grown significantly. We have taken on many functions from the EU, in particular, the approval of new food products for sale in the UK market. In England, Wales and Scotland, the governments have more control over food and borders policy and regulation, and the FSA, working together with Food Standards Scotland, plays a critical advisory role, including advising on new trade deals. We also now have the opportunity to grow our influence to become a stronger and more influential voice on the world stage.
- The way that food is produced, sold and consumed, is changing rapidly (see, for example, the annual [Horizon Scanning update](#)). The pace of this change accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue. This is partly being addressed through the [Achieving Business Compliance](#) Programme, but will have implications across the FSA.
- Resources across the food regulatory system remain under pressure, particularly the vet resourcing model and within local authorities.

3.2 The food system also has a significant role to play in delivering the UK's ambitions for net zero and supporting people's longer-term health. Food and drink are responsible for 17% of UK greenhouse gas emissions. Poor diet represents a large and growing burden on public health, costing the NHS £10 billion and wider society £27 billion. The FSA has an important supporting part to play delivering these ambitions.

3.3 The FSA is a non-ministerial government department, we are proud of our independence and its importance in delivering food you can trust. This will remain central to our work for the next five years.

Link to government priorities

3.4 There are several current and future government white papers and strategies that set the context within which the FSA will be operating over the coming years, and present opportunities for the FSA to contribute:

- In spring, Defra will publish a Food White Paper setting out the Government's plans to deal with challenges in the food system, following the publication of the [National Food Strategy](#). We will continue to work across government to develop and implement this strategy.
- In the recent months, the UK Government has published several other papers which include proposals affecting the food system and the FSA. These include:

- The [Benefits of Brexit](#) Command Paper (January 2022) which specifically references our future ambitions on Novel Foods Regulations, as well as Animal Welfare and Labelling;
 - The Government's priorities for 'Reforming the Framework for Better Regulation' (January 2022) that could have a material impact on the FSA over the coming years; and
 - The [Levelling Up](#) White Paper published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in February 2022. This included a specific commitment for the FSA and the Department for Education to deliver a joint pilot to test methods for assuring compliance with School Food Standards.
- The Welsh Government's [Programme for Government 2021-26](#) was published on 15 June 2021. There are areas of shared interest in the Programme, and we have offered support to the Welsh Government on the commitments to develop a Wales Community Food Strategy to encourage the supply of locally sourced food in Wales and on the commitment to develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare.
 - The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems, including health inequalities. The Act gives a legally binding common purpose via the seven wellbeing goals, which include a Healthier Wales, a Globally Responsible Wales and a More Equal Wales. Although the FSA is not named body under the act, we work to the principles it contains.
 - We are a key partner in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) led [Northern Ireland Food Strategy](#) Framework which sets out a shared vision to guide long term food decision making. Phase 2 will be the development of implementation plans and metrics which will be further informed by the [Green Growth Strategy](#) (the Northern Ireland Executive's multi decade strategy, balancing climate, environment and the economy) and the recently published [Kendall Review](#) of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Sector which includes recommendations for several further sustainability initiatives.
- 3.5 The FSA strategy is based on our statutory role, and our current view of the food system, informed by this wider context. The last years have seen a great deal of change, and we expect the food system and wider context to continue evolving. However, we believe it is now possible to set a high-level strategy that will endure for five years. The ambitions set out in the strategy will also take time to achieve, they are not short-term problems. We will need to retain flexibility to adapt to any changes that occur. These will be handled through the annual business planning process, or if necessary, an update to the strategy.

4. Our strategy

- 4.1 We have worked with the Board and Executive, the Wales and Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committees and individuals at all levels of the FSA over the last

months to develop our strategy and listen to feedback. We have also spoken informally to external stakeholders about the role they see the FSA playing over the coming years. Informed by their input, and the context described above, we have developed the following main elements:

- **Our mission and vision:** Describes ‘Why’ we are here: Sets out the outcome we want to achieve in the food system.
- **Our guiding principles:** Describes ‘how’ we will approach our work; how we deliver will be as important as what we deliver.
- **Our roles:** Describes the ‘what’; the FSA’s role and contribution to delivering our mission and vision.

Our mission and vision

4.2 We propose retaining the Food Standards Agency’s mission as **‘food you can trust’**. This mission has served us well and still reflects the outcome we want to achieve for the food system.

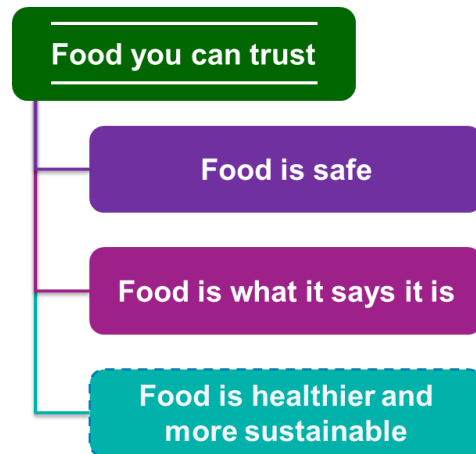
4.3 The first two parts of the vision also remain the same as our previous strategy. While we will need to evolve and update our approach, the overall outcomes of **‘food is safe’** and **‘food is what it says it is’** remain core to our work. Delivering this part of the vision will require us to continue to innovate, evolve and react to changes across the food system.

4.4 The third part of our vision; **‘food is healthier and more sustainable’** is new. Our core role, and majority of our work, ensuring food is safe and is what it says it is, is an evolution of our current work. However, we cannot ignore some of the wider challenges the food system faces, particularly around the food system’s environment impact and the long-term consequences of peoples’ diet choices. That is why we have added this third element to our vision, reflecting our desire to explore ways we can contribute to solving these challenges. Other departments have primary responsibility for health and sustainability, but as the only government body that looks solely at food, the FSA can help to support efforts by the three governments, to make food healthier and more sustainable (Note: this also incorporates our policy responsibility and expertise in relation to nutritional standards in Northern Ireland and food information (such as labelling) in Wales and Northern Ireland).

4.5 Food that is healthier and more sustainable replaces two points from our previous vision, which were ‘people can make informed decisions about what they eat’ and ‘consumers have access to an affordable diet, now and in the future.’ While these remain important and will feature in our work over the coming years, they are more specific than the first two parts of our vision and we want to replace them with a broader commitment to engage in solving the wider challenges in the food system.

4.6 Our new vision will be comprised of the following three parts:

- **Food is safe:** We will continue to prioritise our core role protecting consumers by preventing and responding to disease and contamination of food, in order to keep the level of foodborne disease low.
- **Food is what it says it is:** Consumers should be confident that food is what it says it is. That is why we will continue to prioritise the second part of our core role ensuring food is authentic and properly described.
- **Food is healthier and more sustainable:** We need to play our part supporting government partners and others in the wider food system to make it easier for consumers to access a healthier and more sustainable diet.



Our guiding principles

- 4.7 To describe ‘how’ we will go about delivering our mission and vision, the strategy will describe a set of ‘guiding principles’, that the FSA will embed into our work. These reflect both the strengths of our organisation that we want to maintain and double-down on, and the need to modernise and evolve our approach in the light of rapid change in the food system.
- **We are the trusted voice on food standards, protecting consumer interests.** We bring an in-depth understanding of the consumer interest to the debate and decisions about high food standards in the UK. We earn and maintain public trust. If we need to, we prioritise the consumer interest above other interests.
 - **We are science and evidence led.** We base our decisions on science and evidence. We produce insights and analysis that both inform our work and can inform the policy and practice of other organisations in the food system. We tell the truth about food.
 - **We are open and transparent.** We provide the public with clear information that helps them understand risk. We publish our research and evidence and take our decisions in public.
 - **We work with, and through, others.** We work with others to use their reach and influence to improve food standards, and where appropriate, change consumer and industry behaviour. We work closely with partners across the UK, with each government and local governments and across industry, our suppliers, academia and civil society. These relationships help us to make best use of our resources and align the sector around common goals.

- **We make it easier for businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing.** We listen to feedback and remove obstacles to achieving high standards. We want to help businesses get it right for consumers, and to innovate. This will benefit consumers and businesses alike.
- **We are risk-based and proportionate.** We are proportionate in our approach, focusing on food and businesses that pose the greatest risk to consumers. We also make sure the burden on business is no more than it needs to be.
- **We are innovative.** We anticipate change and respond quickly to fast-moving developments in the food sector here and abroad. We are proactive in our work to make sure that food is safe and to maintain confidence of consumers, businesses and trading partners. We support innovation while protecting consumers. We use data and digital technology to drive change.

Our roles

4.8 To deliver our mission and vision we undertake a wide-ranging set of activities. To help describe these in our strategy we have grouped them under a series of 'roles' that describe what we do, and how that work contributes to our mission and vision. We have set out the way we see our role in achieving the vision as follows:



- **An evidence generator:** We have a global reputation for science and research. From the rapid assessment of risks to consumer safety, to developing new surveillance techniques to identify risks more quickly, to understanding consumer behaviour. We publish our evidence in line with our commitment to transparency, so it is freely available to others making policy and decisions, to inform guidance to businesses and so consumers can trust our decisions.
- **A policy maker:** We advise Ministers in Westminster, Wales and Northern Ireland who make the laws and rules for all businesses involved in the production and sale of food. We risk assess new developments using science and evidence and we provide advice to Ministers on food safety and consumer interests in relation to food.
- **A regulator:** We inspect meat, dairy and wine production. We work with local authorities, which inspect local businesses selling food – setting the inspection framework, providing advice and guidance. We do the same for port health authorities, which inspect food imports. We provide guidance to

food businesses. We use surveillance to identify risks to consumers or potential food safety incidents, and we respond to these when they happen.

- **A watchdog:** We review and report on food standards and consumer interests in relation to food, using horizon scanning, intelligence and surveillance. We speak out publicly about areas of consumer interest, when we have evidence or expertise to add.
- **A convenor and collaborator:** We bring together parties to address issues in the food system, working with other parts of government, academia, civil society and with businesses to support shared goals and objectives. We share insights and evidence on consumers' interests into wider government to help inform their thinking.

4.9 Throughout the document we will include examples of the work we expect to carry out during the strategy period. These will be further developed through our business planning process, described below.

Delivering the Strategy

4.10 The strategy sets our direction for the next five years. Our organisation and our work will evolve over that time to meet the ambitions set out in the strategy but will need to retain flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

4.11 The delivery of the strategy will be embedded in our annual business planning approach, but we will also set out a three-year business plan starting 2023/24. The paper on FSA Priorities and Budget 22-23 (FSA 22/03/12) shows how we are starting to embed the strategy into our workplan. They include doing our day job exceptionally well – continuing the important work that will deliver food you can trust, delivering our regulatory responsibilities within meat, dairy and wine, and supporting local authorities. They also include work to evolve the food regulatory system such as our priority programmes and delivering an efficient, effective and forward-looking risk analysis process. Finally, the priorities also include evolving our own capability and capacity to deliver the strategy.

4.12 We will expand our work on healthy and sustainable food in targeted ways (e.g., expanding our consumer insight work on health and sustainability, developing a framework for taking into account impact on health and sustainability when we assess new products) and will work across government and with others to identify ways the FSA could take on new roles in the future (e.g., through pilots on how inspection might help assure compliance with school food standards).

Measuring successful delivery:

4.13 We already have in place a performance reporting framework, which creates a cascade of metrics and targets, from our top-level strategic objectives down to the daily activities of our frontline work. Many of the existing measures already align with our new strategy, as they include sections on food is safe and food is

what it says it is, which remain parts of our vision. These measures will provide a useful baseline to measure progress against.

4.14 During 2022/23, we will evolve the performance reporting framework by:

- Developing and improving measures covering our core role in food that is safe and is what it says it is.
- Incorporating the right set of measures to understand progress in the area of food that is healthier and more sustainable (building on existing nutrition measures we report on for Northern Ireland).
- Expanding the measures relating to how we are embedding our principles, for example measures of FSA service delivery such as user feedback, or how long it takes us to perform certain actions.
- Tracking the benefits we have delivered in areas covered by our strategy. For example, what corporate plan milestones have we reached and what positive impact for consumers can we demonstrate (either as forecasts or retrospective evaluations)?

4.15 We will return to update the Board on progress during the first year of the strategy. This will include more detail on the measures we will incorporate into our performance reporting.

Conclusion

4.16 The Board is asked to note:

- The FSA's overall approach to developing strategies.
- The wider context of the changes in the food system that our strategy needs to reflect.

4.17 The Board is asked to:

- Agree the proposal to publish a five-year strategy running from 2022 – 2027.
- Agree the mission, vision, guiding principles and roles described in this paper.
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Annex – Content of the strategy document

We propose the draft content of the strategy will be as follows, incorporating the content discussed above:

Foreword	A note about the strategy from Susan Jebb, Chair of the FSA and Emily Miles, CEO
Introduction	Emphasising the importance of food within society and the risks and challenges the system is currently facing The FSA's role in the UK food system, including our statutory responsibilities The context of devolution, the post-EU exit landscape and working across England, Wales and Northern Ireland How this strategy will set out the FSA's mission and vision, and a roadmap and guiding principles to deliver them
Mission & Vision	Our overarching mission which is "Food we can trust" and emphasises that this has been our core mission for over 20 years and is the reason the FSA exists. Sets out the vision we have for the food system, being that food is a) safe, b) what it says it is, and c) healthier and more sustainable. Key statistical figures and research/report findings which demonstrate the importance of each part of the vision and set out the main challenges
Guiding Principles	Updated set of principles to guide our approach across all areas Ambition to 'double down' on our organisation's strengths and continue building them
Delivering a better food system	How we plan to achieve each part of our vision in practice Our roles as an evidence generator, policy maker, regulator, convenor, collaborator and watchdog
Implementing the strategy and measuring progress	Examples of specific activities we will undertake and others that we could take to deliver the strategy Our approach to implementing the strategy Measures of success for the strategy, covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland