

Minutes of the Food Standards Agency Board Meeting – Wednesday 25 March 2026

The Rembrandt Hotel, Weymouth

Present:

Susan Jebb (Chair); Frank Atherton; Alison Austin; Clare Evans; Fiona Gately; Anthony Harbinson (online); Rhian Hayward; Louise Hoste; Timothy Riley; Steve Ruddy; Sue Paterson.

Officials attending:

Katie Pettifer	–	Chief Executive
Nathan Barnhouse	–	Deputy Director Head of Regulatory Compliance
Laura Blair	–	Deputy Director International, Trade and Devolution
Beth Chaudhary	–	Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance
Rachel Cooper	–	Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance
Sam Faulkner	–	Deputy Director International, Trade and Devolution
Claire Forbes	–	Director of Communications
Ian Gibson	–	Director of Corporate Resources
David Holmes	–	Deputy Director of Strategy
Junior Johnson	–	Director of Operations
Rick Mumford	–	Head of Science Evidence and Research
Julie Pierce	–	Director of Information and Science
James Robinson	–	General Counsel
Natasha Smith	–	Deputy Director of Food Policy
Rebecca Sudworth	–	Director of Policy

Other attendees:

Christopher Westwood – Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA)

1 Introduction and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Board meeting in Weymouth. She formally welcomed Professor Ian Young to his first Board meeting following his appointment as the Agency's new Chief Scientific Adviser. She also welcomed Laura Blair who, along with Sam Faulkner, had jointly overseen the UK and International Affairs portfolio during the interim period prior to the appointment of the new Director.
- 1.2 The Chair recorded the forthcoming departure of Rachel Cooper and Beth Chaudhary following their secondment from the Department for Education. She expressed her thanks for their contributions across the past year, including on the Future of Food Regulation Programme and development work on Healthier Food Targets and Reporting.
- 1.3 The Chair noted 15 questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting, relating to the SPS Agreement, the Future of Food Regulation Programme and

Foodborne Disease. These had been published on the FSA website and would receive written responses. She added that Members might address the questions during the relevant agenda items.

- 1.4 Declarations of interest were invited. Alison Austin declared a new appointment as a Non-Executive Member of the Consumer Council for Water with effect from 1 April 2026. Steve Ruddy highlighted his published interest as Chair of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, noting its relevance to discussions on the Future of Food Regulation.
- 1.5 No Board Member raised items for discussion under Any Other Business.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (FSA 26/03/01)

- 2.1 The minutes of the December 2025 Board meeting were approved as an accurate record.

3 Actions Arising (FSA 26/03/02)

- 3.1 The Chair reviewed progress on actions, noting most were complete. The paper summarising consultation responses on CBD products had been delayed pending the launch of Food Standards Scotland's (FSS's) own consultation on 24 March 2026. An update from the Foodborne Disease Epidemiology Group had been circulated to Board Members earlier in the year and had informed the Foodborne Disease item on the agenda.
- 3.2 The Chair also reported that engagement on illegal meat imports had progressed, including constructive discussions with Baroness Hayman. Assurance was sought in relation to monitoring of biosecurity risks linked to foot-and-mouth disease in Cyprus and Greece, and it was confirmed that the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU), together with Port Health Authorities, continued to track developments closely.

4 Chair's Report (Oral Report)

- 4.1 The Chair presented her report, reflecting positively on the Board's programme of visits the previous day. Board Members had joined Dorset Council's Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers to observe food hygiene and feed inspection work; visited the Langham Wine Estate with WineGB representatives to discuss the sector's growth and regulatory needs; and toured the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), which undertook official controls for shellfish and contributed to the PATHSAFE surveillance programme. Members agreed the visits had been valuable and strengthened their understanding of operational delivery.
- 4.2 The Chair reported that SPS-related activity continued to dominate much of the FSA's work. She had represented Ministers at the latest session of the ministerial Europe Implementation Board. She had maintained close contact with the Secretary of State at Defra, noting the pace and sensitivity of

negotiations. The Government's announcement earlier in March, encouraging businesses to prepare for a mid-2027 implementation of the SPS Agreement, had been followed by FSA letters to businesses engaged in the Market Authorisation Service. These communications had set out expectations on alignment and clarified the implications of the Common Understanding text agreed in May 2025.

- 4.3 In reaffirming the Board's commitment to transparency, the Chair confirmed the closed-session SPS paper discussed in December had been published, alongside the minutes.
- 4.4 On international engagement, the Chair described her recent visit to Poland, which included meetings with Government counterparts and industry stakeholders and a speaking engagement at the British Ambassador's residence. She highlighted her participation in an innovation showcase held jointly with FSS at Imperial College London, which had focused on cultivated products and acknowledged the achievements of the Innovation Research Programme.
- 4.5 The Chair summarised her recent engagement with the Senedd and the Welsh Government and noted the forthcoming maternity leave of the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing. She also welcomed the reappointment of Rhian Hayward for a second term as FSA Board Member for Wales.
- 4.6 The Chair informed Members that recruitment would shortly begin for a new Board Member and for a new Deputy Chair, due to Timothy Riley completing his term as Deputy Chair at the end of 2026. She confirmed that the Board meeting dates for 2027 had been set and published on the website.
- 4.7 The Chair concluded by emphasising the importance of the FSA's independence and evidence-based approach, particularly during a politically sensitive period of SPS negotiations.

5 Chief Executive's Report (FSA 26/03/03)

- 5.1 The Chief Executive (CE) introduced her report by highlighting the FSA's continued focus on how regulation could support economic growth while maintaining high standards of food safety and consumer protection. She confirmed that all commitments made under last year's Regulation Action Plan had been fulfilled. She had attended the Regulators' Council alongside the Chancellor and the Business Secretary and had given evidence to Parliament on how robust regulation contributed to confidence among trading partners and supported businesses.
- 5.2 The CE noted strong feedback from stakeholders involved in the Innovation Research Programme. The Programme had produced a series of outputs welcomed by innovators and had improved clarity for businesses developing precision-bred, cultivated or otherwise novel products. She said the Agency now needed to embed this learning in its mainstream delivery processes.

- 5.3 She reiterated that SPS activity was progressing rapidly and remained a significant operational focus. No additional Government funding had yet been allocated to support SPS activity, and the Agency was therefore managing resource pressures carefully. She explained that the organisation had taken managed risks to ensure progress did not stall and that discussions with the Treasury were continuing. The CE stressed the importance of preparing clear guidance for businesses as soon as possible, while recognising that many detailed questions could not yet be answered pending the outcome of negotiations.
- 5.4 Board Members emphasised the importance of continued vigilance in relation to global food system pressures, including the potential implications of conflict in the Middle East on food security, food prices and supply chain resilience. The CE noted that, while no immediate food safety risks had been identified, the FSA remained in close contact with Defra and industry to monitor the situation. She highlighted the significant impact that geopolitical disruption could have on commodity markets, fertiliser availability and shipping, all of which would influence the food system in the coming months.
- 5.5 The CE referred to the recent large-scale incident involving contamination of infant formula, which had required extensive joint working across national and international regulators. The incident had now been de-escalated, but it had illustrated the importance of effective global cooperation in food safety.
- 5.6 Responding to questions on raw pet food, the CE and Rebecca Sudworth noted the findings of newly published research into microbiological contamination risks. The FSA had already used the research to reinforce public messaging on hygiene in domestic settings. Board Members encouraged further engagement with manufacturers and with local authorities to ensure that risks were well understood throughout the supply chain.
- 5.7 The CE updated the Board on the FSA Ready transformation programme and accompanying structural changes within the Executive. She noted that recruitment was under way for a new Director of Food System Resilience, and that Emily Antcliffe would shortly join the Agency as Director of Strategy, Trade and Food System Policy. She reiterated her thanks to Beth Chaudhary and Rachel Cooper as they approached the end of their secondments.

6 How the FSA is Preparing for a UK–EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement (FSA 26/03/04)

- 6.1 The Chair noted SPS preparations were among the most significant and time-critical areas of work facing the Agency. She welcomed Laura Blair and Sam Faulkner to the table.
- 6.2 Presenting the paper, Sam summarised the FSA's work to date and its role within the wider Government programme. He explained that, although the Agreement remained subject to final negotiation, the Government had been clear that it would be based on dynamic alignment with EU law. The FSA had been fully engaged across Government structures, providing evidence-based

advice to Defra and the Cabinet Office and contributing to discussions on both negotiation and implementation.

- 6.3 Laura described the structure of the internal SPS programme, which had been designed to reflect the FSA's four-nation responsibilities and to support the devolved administrations. She acknowledged the ambitious timeline set out by the Government for mid-2027 and confirmed that internal reprioritisation had taken place to ensure the FSA could sufficiently resource the programme.
- 6.4 The Board asked about future cooperation with European agencies, including the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Sam confirmed that access to EU agencies, systems and databases was an important feature of the negotiations and would support the UK's ability to maintain high food safety standards. He explained that details remained subject to negotiation, but that re-establishing connections at a technical level was a priority.
- 6.5 The relationship between the SPS Agreement and the Windsor Framework was raised. Laura confirmed that the UK Government's commitment to implementing the Windsor Framework remained unchanged and the Windsor Framework would continue to apply. GB alignment with EU law would reduce instances of divergence and ease administrative burdens for businesses operating across the UK.
- 6.6 Board Members welcomed the strong emphasis on four-nation working and encouraged early engagement with Ministers in the devolved administrations, particularly given the forthcoming Welsh elections. The Chair agreed that early alignment of political expectations across all nations would be essential.
- 6.7 Board Members emphasised the importance of clear communication with small and micro businesses not directly involved in EU trade but affected by dynamic alignment. Laura noted the FSA was working closely with trade associations, specialist networks and local authorities to ensure information would reach such businesses in a timely and accessible manner.

Action 1 - International Trade & Devolution team to liaise with Communications, and local authority liaison teams to develop and deliver strengthened, targeted communication plans to ensure SMEs and non-exporting food businesses receive clear guidance on SPS-related changes, including supporting materials for local authority inspectors.

- 6.8 There were concerns about the absence of confirmed funding for the SPS programme. Laura Blair and the CE acknowledged the challenge and confirmed that a business case had been submitted to the Treasury. Ian Gibson added that discussions with the Treasury were active and that the Agency would continue to press for the necessary resourcing.
- 6.9 The Board noted that some businesses might wish to align with EU standards ahead of the Agreement coming into force. Laura confirmed that cross-Government work was underway to develop a coordinated approach to questions on early alignment and transitional arrangements.

6.10 The Chair noted the scale of both the challenge and the opportunity represented by the SPS Agreement. She emphasised that the Agreement had the potential not only to ease trade friction but also to strengthen the UK's evidence base and collaboration with EU partners, thereby benefiting public health. She confirmed that a further update would be provided at the June meeting, including at the joint private session with FSS.

Action 2 - International Trade & Devolution team to bring a further SPS progress update at the June 2026 Board meeting, including in the joint private session with Food Standards Scotland.

7 Future of Food Regulation Programme (FSA 26/03/05)

- 7.1 The Chair welcomed Beth Chaudhary and Nathan Barnhouse to introduce the paper. She recorded her thanks to the Board subgroup, comprising Steve Ruddy, Louise Hoste and Fiona Gately, for their contributions to scoping work over recent months, and to Beth Chaudhary and Rachel Cooper for their leadership of this agenda.
- 7.2 Beth explained the programme sought to deliver a step-change in the food regulation system, in recognition of the evolving food landscape and the persistent pressures on local authority delivery. She emphasised that the Programme aimed to strengthen public health protection, support responsible business growth and address structural challenges in regulatory capacity. The Government had asked the FSA to develop a consistent national approach for large food businesses in England and the team believed that wider system reform would be required to ensure that changes were coherent and effective.
- 7.3 Nathan described the extensive engagement undertaken with stakeholders across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This early work had underscored the need to take a whole-system perspective, including hygiene, standards and feed, and had revealed significant concerns about workforce shortages in local authorities. Stakeholders had supplied detailed feedback on proposals, including suggestions for alternative approaches, which would be taken account of in the development of options.
- 7.4 The Board emphasised that the programme should provide practical support for local authorities, whose capacity had been constrained over many years. The Board asked that the reforms were sensitive to operational realities and protected the value of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). The Chair endorsed this point.
- 7.5 The breadth of engagement was welcomed and the need to address misunderstandings and continue to rebuild trust where needed was noted, as was the progress on this agenda over the last year. It was suggested local government reorganisation would pose additional challenges and should be incorporated into planning.

- 7.6 The Board noted the challenges posed by online platforms, new business models and the need for consistency across regulatory functions. Sequencing would be important, but the programme should remain ambitious.
- 7.7 The Board asked whether the FSA had the digital infrastructure required to support modernised regulatory models and data flows. Julie Pierce confirmed that the FSA had already invested in a modern data platform and emerging AI-enabled tools but would require additional resource to develop any new systems needed for the Programme. She welcomed the way the programme was being set up to include digital specialists at an early stage.
- 7.8 Board Members highlighted the importance of early engagement with Ministers in Wales and NI, particularly after the Welsh elections, to ensure that proposals were aligned with each Government's priorities. The Chair reiterated the importance of joining up with FSS, including at the forthcoming joint private Board session, noting the close work already underway between officials in FSA and FSS.
- 7.9 The need for a clear approach to enforcement was emphasised, including the potential use of fixed penalty notices. The workforce pipeline was a major concern across all nations, and Members encouraged the FSA to explore models for improving training and recruitment, including through apprenticeships and joint working with professional bodies.
- 7.10 The Chair confirmed broad Board endorsement for the scope and workstreams of the Programme and that the Programme should now be formally established. She emphasised that detailed design work should now proceed at pace, supported by continued engagement with stakeholders and with the Board subgroup. A full package of options would return to the Board later in the year.

Action 3 - Future of Food Regulation team to return to the Board later in 2026 once a substantive update becomes possible.

8 Healthier Food Targets and Reporting (FSA 26/03/06)

- 8.1 The Chair invited Rachel Cooper and David Holmes to present the update. She reminded the Board that the Minister for Public Health had asked the FSA to support the development of a mandatory healthier food sales reporting regime and associated targets for large food businesses, a commitment originally set out in the NHS Ten Year Plan. The Chair noted that the proposal aligned closely with the Agency's strategic commitment to contribute to a healthier and more sustainable food system, and she declared her academic interest in diet and health.
- 8.2 Rachel explained that DHSC was responsible for the policy and would lead on consultation later in the year, covering the detailed design of the scheme, including the businesses in scope, the definitions and metrics to be used, and the methodology for reporting. She confirmed that Ministers had not yet taken decisions on the identity of the regulator which would be subject to the outcome of consultation. The FSA had therefore focused on providing technical and

regulatory design advice at working level, ensuring that DHSC had access to the Agency's experience in enforcement, data, and proportionality. She emphasised that no additional funding had yet been provided to the Agency for this work, and that if the FSA were appointed as the regulator, this would require significant new resource.

- 8.3 Board Members sought clarification on several aspects of the developing policy. Members discussed the importance of situating the scheme within the wider public health landscape, noting that while the proposed reporting requirements would not resolve obesity on their own, they could strengthen accountability and encourage change in the food environment. Rachel agreed that any future role for the FSA would require a strong focus on evaluation and clear definitions to avoid perverse incentives.
- 8.4 The Board noted the considerable burdens that the scheme could place on businesses, particularly in relation to data collection and system changes. Retailers and manufacturers would need adequate lead-in time to adapt their systems. David confirmed the FSA had been providing DHSC with advice on likely data requirements, and the operational considerations that would affect business readiness.
- 8.5 The position of the devolved administrations was discussed. Board Members stressed that divergent schemes across the UK would create complexity and additional cost for businesses that operate nationally. The Chair and officials agreed that maintaining alignment across nations would be beneficial, though decisions for Wales and Northern Ireland would remain matters for their respective Ministers.
- 8.6 The Board also considered the risks of loopholes or gaming of the system and the need for carefully designed indicators that reflected genuine health improvements. Rachel confirmed the FSA's technical advice to DHSC had included considerations of enforceability and data verifiability.
- 8.7 Julie Pierce highlighted the scale of the data challenge for both businesses and regulators. She noted the majority of the workload would fall on businesses to ensure their own data quality and consistency, and she emphasised the importance of drawing on the principles previously developed through the Food Data Transparency Partnership. She explained that modern data systems could support this work but only if implementation was approached systematically and with sufficient resource.
- 8.8 The Chair summarised the discussion by noting broad Board support for continued engagement with DHSC at this early stage, while recognising that the FSA could not take on a formal regulatory role without dedicated funding and careful planning. She asked the Executive to continue working with DHSC on the design questions and to return to the Board with fuller proposals if Ministers indicated that the FSA might become the regulator. The Board endorsed the proposed approach.

9 Foodborne Disease – Update (FSA 26/03/07)

- 9.1 The Chair reminded Members the Board had previously noted threshold breaches for both *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in 2024. She explained that, following the December meeting, the Epidemiology of Foodborne Infections Group (EFIG) had provided an initial written update, and she had asked the Executive to bring a fuller discussion to this meeting in view of the strategic importance of foodborne disease.
- 9.2 Natasha Smith presented the update, confirming that both pathogens had exceeded the Board's agreed thresholds and that a programme of detailed analytical and scientific work was now underway. She explained that, at this point, no single cause appeared sufficient to account for the recent increase. Instead, surveillance data, expert assessment, commissioned research and four nation engagement were being brought together to build a clearer understanding of the drivers. She noted that *Campylobacter* continued to represent the most significant portion of the foodborne disease burden, with an estimated 300,000 cases annually, compared with around 32,000 *Salmonella* cases. She also highlighted that the upward movements in the data were not unique to the UK, with European figures showing similar trends.
- 9.3 The CSA provided scientific context, noting that one plausible contributor was the shift from culture-based laboratory testing to more sensitive PCR based systems across parts of England. This transition meant more cases were likely to be detected than under the previous methods, and he observed that the lack of information around how many total tests were being conducted made it difficult to determine how much of the increase reflected a genuine rise in incidence versus increased diagnostic sensitivity. He confirmed further engagement with UKHSA would be essential to improve access to the underlying testing data. He also noted other potential contributing factors included increased international travel, particularly to regions with higher *Salmonella* prevalence, changes in consumer behaviours, and environmental or climate-related influences.
- 9.4 Board Members discussed the potential impact of consumer behaviour. Several Board Members highlighted the growth in raw pet food consumption and the increase in pet ownership, raising concerns about cross contamination in domestic kitchens. It was confirmed that the recently completed study on raw pet food had already informed public messaging and would shape further work to understand pathways of transmission between pets and humans. It was noted that illnesses in pets could also contribute to onward transmission, especially where raw feeding practices were poor.
- 9.5 Concerns were raised about the rise in backyard poultry ownership, including handling practices and the potential for faecal contamination of eggs. Natasha Smith confirmed that raw pet food was an area where further research, including social science work, was already being commissioned and would consider the rise in backyard poultry ownership as part of that.
- 9.6 On industry practices, the Board asked whether the Agency had identified any changes in slaughterhouse or processing controls that might explain the

increase in *Campylobacter* contamination. Natasha responded this remained a hypothesis at present, but there was already research underway, and the FSA intended to intensify engagement with the poultry sector to investigate whether operational changes had occurred. The Board also raised the possibility of reinstating quarterly retail sampling for *Campylobacter*. While recognising the benefits of the earlier retail monitoring programme, Natasha noted that alternative approaches might deliver more efficient surveillance, and the FSA would consider these options further, working with industry.

- 9.7 The Chair emphasised the importance of deepening the evidence base and noted that foodborne disease levels had proved stubbornly difficult to reduce in recent years. She encouraged the Executive to ensure that the programme brought forward clear, actionable next steps and to continue working closely with local authorities, industry and scientific partners. She welcomed the contribution of the Advisory Committees and noted the value of cross-nation comparisons, including Northern Ireland's recent contrasting trends. The Board noted the update.

10 Report from the External Effectiveness Review of the FSA Board (FSA 26/03/08)

- 10.1 The Chair welcomed Christopher Westwood from the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA). She noted that the Review formed part of the FSA's commitment to regular external assessment of Board effectiveness. The Review had been overseen by the Board Lead for Governance, Deputy Chair, Timothy Riley.
- 10.2 Christopher presented the findings. He reported that the Board had been described consistently as positive, professional and collaborative. Observations by GIAA supported this view. Eight recommendations had been proposed, all focused on opportunities for further enhancement rather than areas of concern.
- 10.3 Key recommendations included continuing efforts to improve diversity of experience and background on the Board, completing the long-running update to the FSA's Framework Agreement with DHSC, and strengthening induction materials to ensure clarity on the relationship between the Board, its subcommittees and the Executive.
- 10.4 The Chair welcomed the Report and thanked Members and officials. She acknowledged the need for further progress on diversity and on formalising aspects of governance, particularly the Chair/CE ways-of-working document and the Framework Agreement. She noted that the next Annual Governance Report would fall in March 2027 but committed to providing an interim update, most likely at the September 2026 Board.

11 Report from the Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) (FSA 26/03/09)

11.1 Rhian Hayward presented her annual report as Chair of WFAC. She explained that the Committee had returned to full complement following recent appointments, bringing enhanced expertise in areas relevant to the Welsh food system, including red meat, veterinary interests and feed. She thanked the Secretariat in Wales for their support.

11.2 WFAC had continued its programme of themed meetings, covering consumer protection, the Future of Food Regulation, animal feed and supplements. The Committee had also maintained joint sessions with the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC), which had proved highly valuable in ensuring consistent four-nation discussion of Board papers. Board Members asked if the outputs from the WFAC meeting around supplements could be shared with the Board.

Action 4 - WFAC Secretariat to ensure that outputs from themed WFAC meetings, including on supplements are shared with the Board.

11.3 Engagement with stakeholders had been strong throughout the year, including participation in the Welsh food and drink awards, the Royal Welsh Show, the National Eisteddfod and ongoing liaison with local authority representatives. Rhian noted regular meetings with Public Protection Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association, which had strengthened understanding of local authority pressures and priorities.

11.4 The Chair welcomed the report and thanked Rhian for her leadership.

12 Report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) (INFO 26/03/01)

12.1 Anthony Harbinson reported that ARAC had met two weeks earlier. The Committee had reviewed financial performance, progress against audit recommendations and the management of key risks. The National Audit Office had provided an update on the 2024/25 management letter and planned work for 2025/26. The Committee had also held a deep dive on the commercial pipeline. No issues of concern were raised.

13 Report from the Business Committee (INFO 26/03/02)

13.1 Timothy Riley presented the Report from the most recent meeting of the Business Committee. He emphasised that the Committee continued to monitor delivery performance across all areas of the Agency's work, with a particular focus on local authority activity, incidents handling, market authorisation processing times and progress against regulatory reform commitments.

13.2 Timothy noted that steady progress had been made across incident response, market authorisations and delivery of the Regulation Action Plan. The Committee had also examined the implementation of the Food Standards Delivery Model and the challenges faced by local authorities in meeting

inspection targets within current resourcing levels. He highlighted the improvement in data quality resulting from the revised model and reiterated its importance in enabling a more risk-based and intelligence-led system.

13.3 The Chair thanked Timothy and the Committee for their work.

14 Reports from the Chairs of the Food Advisory Committees (Oral Reports)

14.1 Anthony Harbinson reported on NIFAC's recent activities. He noted that the Committee's themed session in February had focused on surveillance, nutrition research and the proximity of fast-food outlets to schools, particularly in areas of deprivation. Members had also toured laboratory facilities used for official controls work.

14.2 NIFAC had worked closely with WFAC throughout the year, ensuring that four-nation considerations were reflected in Board discussions. Anthony highlighted that Northern Ireland had not experienced the same increase in *Campylobacter* levels observed elsewhere in the UK and noted the positive contribution of strong industry–regulator collaboration in the poultry sector.

14.3 NIFAC had continued to emphasise the importance of maintaining strong relationships with district councils, particularly given their central role in food sampling, enforcement and the Food Standards Delivery Model. He encouraged Board Members to attend future NIFAC meetings where possible and highlighted the Committee's plans to examine emerging science and surveillance priorities in Northern Ireland.

14.4 Rhian Hayward noted that WFAC's recent themed meeting on supplements had revealed significant concerns about consumer understanding, labelling practices and the regulatory complexity in this area. She noted that the Committee intended to undertake further work on this topic, alongside its ongoing programme of themed sessions on SPS readiness and the Future of Food Regulation.

14.5 The Chair thanked both FAC Chairs for their reports and the Advisory Committees for their continued engagement and support across the three nations.

15 Any Other Business and Public Questions

15.1 During the questions from the public audience session, a representative of an allergy charity raised concerns about allergen labelling practices for imported supplements. Officials reaffirmed that all products sold in the UK must comply with labelling standards, and that intelligence relating to mis-labelling would be referred to local authorities. The complex regulatory landscape across the UK was highlighted with responsibilities for supplements belonging to the FSA in Wales and to DHSC in England.

15.2 A representative of the Cannabis Trade Association asked about the implications of the SPS Agreement for CBD products, including whether an

exemption from the novel foods process was possible. The Chair explained that SPS negotiations were ongoing and that the Common Understanding text expected dynamic alignment with EU law. She emphasised that negotiations could not be discussed publicly. Officials advised that businesses should consider submitting novel foods applications to the EU given the direction of travel toward alignment and the duration of authorisation processes.

15.3 The Chair acknowledged the complexity of the regulatory environment for supplements and CBD products and thanked the questioners for raising issues of concern.

15.4 No further questions were raised.

16 Close of the Meeting

16.1 The Chair expressed her appreciation to Dorset Council, CEFAS and the Langham Wine Estate for supporting the Board's visits.

16.2 The next meeting of the Board would take place on 17 June 2026 in Newcastle, including a joint private session with the FSS Board the day before the FSA Board meeting in public.