

# **FSA LA Sampling Policy research**

Non-LA interviews

Discussion Guide – FINAL (Appendix B)

9th March 2020

30-45 mins

## Objectives

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- To explore:
  - How other (non-local authority) organisations consider and develop their sampling policies and programmes, in particular:
    - The factors that influence the scope of their sampling framework;
    - How they use and respond to the sampling results;
    - How they create methodologies for assessing the effectiveness of a sampling programme;
    - What LAs and the FSA could learn from how sampling is planned and implemented in other sectors.
  - The views of people who have broader oversight and/or influence over local authorities' food sampling policies and programmes (e.g. Chairs of regional food groups; public analysts and food examiners). In particular:
    - Factors that influence the scope of local authorities' sampling frameworks;
    - What would improve the scope and effectiveness of local authorities' sampling policies and programmes;
    - What the FSA could do to help improve local authorities' sampling policies and programmes.

## Introduction and warm up

5 mins

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- Moderator to introduce self
  - Explain moderator role: impartial, independent, run tasks and keep to time
  - Explain recording, confidentiality and anonymity in verbal and written comms with FSA and confirmation of receipt of participant information sheet
  - Session length
  - Nature of research:
    - We would like to understand how you develop your sampling policies and programmes and to 'identify examples of good practice for sampling policies/planning which could be adopted on a wider basis'
  - Need to be as open and honest as possible – no right or wrong answers
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## Context

5 mins

*Purpose: to understand where sampling sits in the context of their role, and the nature of this sampling.*

- Respondent introductions: Name, what organisation they work for, what their role is, their background.
- Where does **sampling** sit in your role – what are you responsible for?
  - What type of sampling? For what purpose? *Spontaneous, then prompt: Design of sampling policies? Design of programmes? Carrying out sampling? Analysing samples? Reporting back on results?*
- Do you get involved in any regional or national food safety groups?
  - If yes – do these deal with sampling?
- If responsible for (overseeing) sampling activity:
  - What **role and purpose** does sampling serve within your organisation?
  - How is sampling **implemented** at a local level? By your organisation?
  - What proportion of budget is allocated to sampling?

## Developing Sampling Policies

5 mins

*Purpose: to gain an overview of the role they play in developing/ shaping sampling policies and factors that are taken into account.*

Moderator: I want to find out about your role in developing sampling policies. We'll talk about developing sampling plans/ programmes (i.e. implementing the policy) a little later.

- Do you have any involvement in developing sampling policies?
  - Spontaneous then prompt – *writing policy? Contributing to policies, e.g. what they need to cover; evidence/ intelligence; guidance; review and advice?*
  - Any involvement in developing regional/ national 'templates' of sampling policies for other organisations to adapt and use?
- *If food sampling policies* – is this for food standards, food hygiene or both?
- *[If they have their own sampling policy]*
  - **When** was your sampling policy **first developed**?
  - **When** was it last **refreshed**?
    - What **prompts** a refresh?

- How often do you **refer** to the policy?
- Does your sampling policy specify **KPIs? If so:**
  - How are KPIs **decided**?
  - How do you **monitor and report** on these?
- *[If they do not have their own sampling policy but, have contributed to/ overseen/ influenced the development of a policy]:*
  - When was this?
  - Were you involved in its development?
  - How does it **benefit** you to get involved in developing a sampling policy?
    - *Note any reference to **consistency**/ a co-ordinated approach, tying in with **national/ regional** sampling programmes/ surveys, ensuring **accuracy** and quality of evidence (both to inform a policy and evidence generated by resulting sampling activity).*

## Developing Sampling Programmes

15 mins

- *[If they have their own sampling policy and programme of sampling]*
  - What's the **process** for developing your sampling plan/programme?
    - **When** do you develop your plan/programme? How often is it reviewed?
    - What **influences** your sampling plan/programme? *Note any references to their sampling policy, budget, staffing, local factors (e.g. higher risk businesses; investigations), results of previous sampling exercises.*
    - How do you **prioritise** which samples will be incorporated in your sampling plan where there are competing objectives?
  - Do you focus on **numbers** or **types** of samples, or both? Why?
  - To what extent do **local, regional and national sampling programmes/surveys** affect what goes into your sampling plan?
  - What **guidance, information and intelligence** (if any) influence your sampling plan?
    - **Where** do you obtain the information– which organisations? What is helpful?
  - What is the balance between **proactive & reactive** sampling?
  - How is the programme **implemented** on the ground?
    - **Who** carries out the sampling? How is the programme **co-ordinated**? How is this **recorded and reported**?

- **How many** sampling projects do you run in any one year and how are these prioritised?
  - How do you determine **what analysis** is required and if multiple tests are carried out on one sample?
  - How confident are you in the **consistency of approach** between officers/ organisations carrying out sampling? What do you do to ensure this?
  - How do you make sure staff have the **right skills** and competencies to carry out sampling? Any gaps around staff skills/ training?
- How do you **monitor and evaluate** the effectiveness of sampling programmes?
- What **limits** your sampling performance and effectiveness? (*probe*: budget, staffing, staff time, skills/ competence, organisational priorities)
- *[If they do not have their own sampling policy but, have contributed to/ overseen/ influenced the development of a policy]:*
  - What **involvement/ influence/ contribution** do you have in developing and overseeing sampling programmes?
    - In how many local authorities/ organisations? Where?
  - **Who** else is involved in developing these programmes?
  - What else **shapes or influences** sampling programmes that you have input into?
    - *Probe* – local factors? Regional/ National/ EU sampling programmes? Results from previous sampling exercises?
    - *Probe* – what intelligence, guidance, information?
  - Do you set sampling **targets**? If yes:
    - By **type**? What type?
    - By **number**?
    - How are these **decided**?
  - Where does sampling work **best**? Where does it **not work so well**?
    - What influences the **scope and effectiveness** of (local authority) sampling programmes? I think this already covered above?
  - Are you aware of any **gaps** in the sampling programmes that you know about?

## Use of sampling results

5 mins

- How widely do you share the sampling results? For example, do you produce and publish a report? Who is this distributed to?
- What **action** is taken in response to sampling results?
  - Are you aware of any prosecutions in the last 12 months based on unsatisfactory results?

## Summing up and close

10 mins

- Overall, **how effective** do you think sampling is in your organisation/ organisations you deal with?
  - To what extent would you say it is an effective and efficient use of resources?
- What evidence is there that the use of sampling leads to **better / worse outcomes** for consumers and for the industry?
- How could the sampling process be **improved** to make the system more efficient and effective?
  - *If not mentioned, probe:* competency requirements tied to sample taking? More/ different national sampling projects? Online test purchases?
- **How can the FSA assist** local authorities to develop and implement food sampling policies and programmes?
- Can you point to any examples of **innovation** and **best practice**?
- Do you share your findings with the FSA? If not, would you be **willing to share** your policies, procedures or evaluations of your sampling approach with the FSA? If so, who is the best person to approach for this?
- Do you have **any other thoughts or comments** on the topics we've discussed?
- Thank and close