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Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland  
Strategic Plan 2015-20



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## Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland Strategic Plan 2015-20

In UK terms, Northern Ireland is a unique place, particularly because of its sharing of a land border with another Member State. This border presents us with a distinctive opportunity to form close working relationships with colleagues in government organisations based in the Republic of Ireland (RoI).

In terms of differences to how we deliver key activities, changes made in 2010 by the coalition government to the FSA's responsibilities means that we are the only UK nation in which the FSA holds the remit for Standards and Dietary Health.

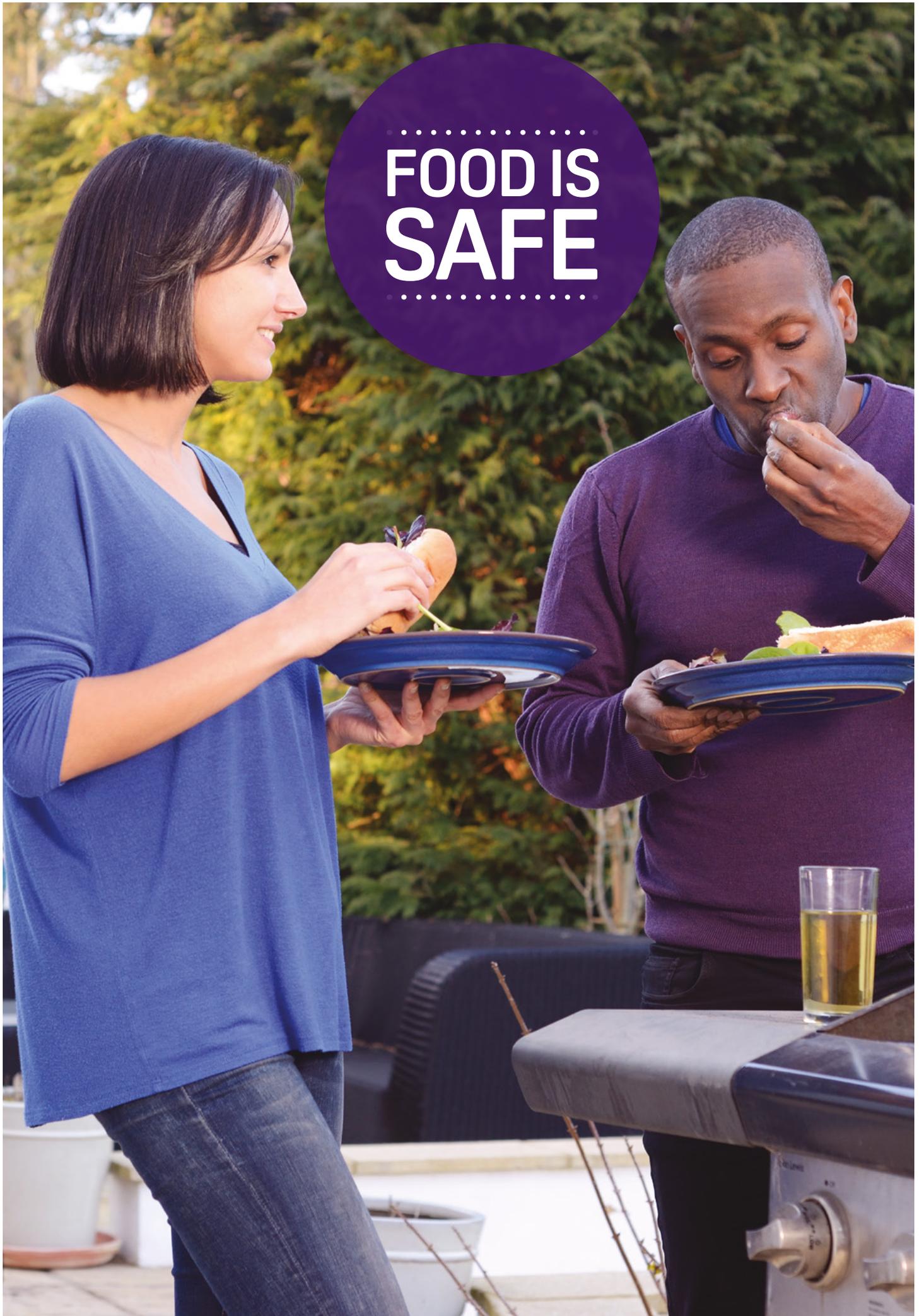
Another difference is that meat and dairy hygiene inspections in Northern Ireland are carried out on our behalf by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

Our stakeholders have told us that they see the way in which we work here in Northern Ireland, on a comparatively small scale to the rest of the UK, to be both advantageous and an opportunity – to lead the way and succeed where others might not elsewhere.

We are committed to collaborative working in order to keep food safe and prevent food crime. Our stakeholders have said they see FSA in NI working together with other government departments, agencies and non-government organisations, and our use of existing industry surveillance, as crucial to improving co-operation and integration.

This annex outlines key areas of our work that will dovetail with the Strategic Plan 2015-20.

FOOD IS  
SAFE



**The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is a Northern Ireland government department that delivers official controls in the areas of meat, dairy, egg and primary production hygiene on behalf of the FSA.**

Whilst the policy for animal feedingstuffs rests with the FSA, DARD is the competent authority for the enforcement of this policy. We will continue to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of these official controls through risk based audit programmes and robust management of our service level agreements with DARD.

We will continue to work in partnership with our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) which has a similar remit to FSA in NI. This relationship will promote consistency and uniformity of approach and will strengthen the arrangements for co-operation between both parties in relation to food incidents, hazards and alerts.



FOOD IS  
WHAT IT  
SAYS IT IS

**Food Allergens**

*If you have any concerns regarding food allergies please speak to a member of staff before ordering.*



**We set policy on the labelling and composition of foods and deliver this in partnership with Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Department of Health (DH) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS).**

Enforcing standards will focus on manufacturers and the accuracy of their product claims – ensuring that consumers are not misled. We will concentrate our efforts on improving the health of the population by influencing and supporting the food industry and its work in the promotion, reformulation and clear labelling of foods.

‘A Fitter Future for All’ is the Government’s 10-year obesity prevention framework for Northern Ireland. FSA in NI takes the lead on the industry-focused outcomes of this strategy. To achieve these outcomes, we will support and engage with retailers, manufacturers and caterers on key policy areas including sector specific reformulation, easy-to-understand nutrition labelling, food promotions, portion size and energy values (kilojoules and kilocalories) on menus.

We will also address the issues of affordability and access to foods for low income households through our role on the All Island Food Poverty Forum.



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GATHERING AND  
USING SCIENCE,  
EVIDENCE AND  
INFORMATION  
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**Our stakeholders have given us a clear message that we need to exploit opportunities to work collaboratively across the island, as utilising strong scientific evidence is seen as important in protecting consumers.**

Challenges around laboratory capacity and funding make it even more important to identify opportunities to share research findings and avoid duplication. We will work in partnership with safe food, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Public Health Agency and other RoI equivalents to develop an action plan on nutrition surveillance for the island of Ireland.

We have access to robust nutrition surveillance and information on purchasing habits, specific to Northern Ireland. This helps to inform and direct our priorities. Research will be undertaken into how well consumers understand food nutrition labels – which will in turn, shape future messaging.



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**EMPOWERING  
CONSUMERS**  
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**We will continue to progress the primary legislation for mandatory FHRs as well as prepare and consult on secondary legislation and the statutory guidance required for implementation of the mandatory scheme.**

The mandatory scheme will, by law, require publicity of the scheme to consumers. So, we will continue to promote its messages to keep the momentum of the high awareness and usage levels of the scheme in Northern Ireland.

The Dietary Health and Standards team in Northern Ireland is working side by side with colleagues in the FSAI to develop MenuCal – a free, online tool for businesses to identify any of the 14 major allergens (which must be declared by law for all pre-packed and non-prepacked foods), as well as help determine the energy values (kilojoules and kilocalories) of the food they produce.

MenuCal will form part of a wider consumer campaign to promote messages around information on allergens and energy of food purchased to eat out of the home.



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**ALIGNING  
INCENTIVES**  
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**The agri-food industry plays a significant role in the NI economy and it is supported by the strategic action plan, Going for Growth.**

In partnership with other Government departments, FSA in NI will work with the agri-food industry as it responds to consumer demand for healthier eating.

Food Fortress is a key theme and FSA in NI will support it – by developing initiatives on safe food production and assisting in the production and authorisation of new testing techniques.

We will continue to contribute to the Government's better regulation initiatives through participation in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's (DETI) Regulatory Reform Group and the regulatory review of the agri-food sector.

Following recent local government reform, which has seen Northern Ireland's 26 district councils reduced to 11, we will continue to support the structures of the new super councils. In line with the principles agreed with the Chief Environmental Health Officers Group (CEHOG) colleagues in 2014, we will ensure that arrangements for liaison, co-ordination and engagement are put in place to enable delivery against agreed priorities.



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