FSA Strategy Stage 2- Omnibus Survey

Research Findings

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Background & Objectives

• In Jan/Feb 2014 Harris Interactive undertook an Omnibus study on behalf of the FSA to support the development of the FSA Strategy 2015 – 2020.

• Since then, much work has been done on the strategy including Citizens’ Forums and internal stakeholder sessions, which have been documented in a recently published Board Paper.

• A second stage of consumer research was needed to further explore areas within the strategy such as:
  – definition of consumers’ interests in relation to food
  – what consumers think should be included in a “Consumer Food Charter”
  – a definition of responsibilities for consumer protection in relation to food

• To achieve this, an Omnibus survey was recommended as it quickly canvasses the opinions of a representative sample of 2,000 members of the GB public.
Approach & Panel

• We conducted an online omnibus survey with 2,173 adults aged 16+ across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

• The survey took place using the Harris Interactive online panel

• The Harris Interactive Omnibus consists of members of the general public who have opted in and voluntarily agreed to participate in online research studies. Through careful recruitment and management, we are able to rapidly survey large numbers of the general population to represent the views of the nation.

• We have over 100,000 active panellists in the UK and our panel is used solely for market and opinion research. Members are contacted at random and invited to take part in a survey.
Omnibus Audience – a representative sample

- The results of the study were weighted to best reflect the size and shape of the population of the UK.
- This means that the results in this report reflect an audience that is as true as possible of the population with the same age, gender and regional profile. The audience profile is detailed below.
- Of course not everyone in GB has internet access, but online panel research results are considered to be extremely accurate. In fact, according to the British Polling Council, Harris Interactive was the most accurate online polling company during the last UK elections in 2010: http://www.britishpollingcouncil.org/press100508.html

**Gender**

- Men: 48%
- Women: 52%

**Age**

- 16-24: 12%
- 25-34: 17%
- 35-44: 19%
- 45-54: 17%
- 55-64: 15%
- 65+: 20%
Please note all results are based on England, Northern Ireland & Wales

Scotland has been excluded from these results. Therefore, the base size excluding Scotland is 1,995 instead of 2,173.
Key Findings

- Respondents were asked to tell us in their own words how the FSA should protect consumers’ interests in relation to food, the three key themes that emerged were:
  - Having food that is safe to eat (26%)
  - Ensuring the preparation and storage of food is clean (22%)
  - Having regulations and legislations that are followed (22%)

- According to our respondents, the FSA’s definition of the ‘interests of consumers in relation to food’:
  - Is easy to understand (65%)
  - Shows that the FSA understands consumer needs (62%)
  - Is comprehensive (61%)
  - Gives people confidence in the FSA (59%)

- 61% of people said that the current definition included all that is should

- Only 10% believed that there were aspects of the definition that should not be included such as, the focus on affordability (5%)

- When asked which part of the Food Standards Agency’s definition of ‘interests of consumers in relation to food’ do you think the FSA should focus on, respondents told us that the core focus should be on ensuring food is safe and fit for consumption (47%)
Key Findings (2)

- Respondents were asked to review the 3 consumer rights included in the FSA’s ‘Consumer Food Charter’ and comment on their importance:
  - 84% of people believed the consumer rights included are the most important ones

- 80% agree that having a ‘Consumer Food Charter’ in place is important. Reasons for this included:
  - Ensuring food safety (16%)
  - Setting out and maintaining standards (11%)
  - Protecting the consumer (11%)

- Respondents believed that the FSA’s definition of responsibilities to protect consumers:
  - Is clear and easy to understand (70%)
  - Matches expectations (68%)
  - Is a fair split of responsibilities (67%)
  - Gives people confidence in the FSA (63%)
Key Findings (3)

- **Over 90%** agreed that storing and cooking food safely, keeping food at correct temperatures and cooking it thoroughly are all **consumer responsibilities**.

- When asked about food labels, two-thirds of people **(66%)** believed that they have the correct amount of information on them.

- Respondents were presented with several possible straplines the FSA might use to communicate its strategy and purpose and were asked to rank the three straplines that best represent the FSA’s aspirations to protect consumers, give people the information they need and deliver a better food future. Two similar straplines performed the best:
  - ‘Food we can trust’ **(40% put it in their top 3 choices)**
  - ‘For food we can trust’ **(38% put it in their top 3 choices)**
Consumers believe that making sure that food is safe to eat is the most important way for the FSA to protect their interests in relation to food (open)

**How should the FSA protect consumer interests in relation to food? (open)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food is safe to eat</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and storage of food is clean and tidy</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation and legislation</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spot checks and carrying out regular inspections</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it says</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food is produced ethically, from a reputable source and sourced locally</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure food is good quality</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and correct labelling</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show ingredients and nutritional value</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tighter control of fast food outlets etc</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of a healthy lifestyle</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1: A key purpose of the Food Standards Agency is to ‘**protect public health and the interests of consumers in relation to food**’. Please take a moment to think about what this means to you and your household. Using the box below, please tell us how you believe the FSA should protect your interests in relation to food.

Base 1995
Q1: A key purpose of the Food Standards Agency is to ‘protect public health and the interests of consumers in relation to food’. Please take a moment to think about what this means to you and your household. Using the box below, please tell us how you believe the FSA should protect your interests in relation to food.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbatim comments from ‘How should the FSA protect consumer interests in relation to food? (open)’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They need to ensure that the food we eat either in or out of the home is fit for human consumption”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ensure food is an acceptable quality and prepared and served in safe, clean conditions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Have enough inspectors in place to check that health and safety rules are obeyed in all restaurants, fast food outlets and supermarkets”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By making sure what is written in the ingredients, is what is in the meal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Make sure companies involved in supplying food have good and ethical practices”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To ensure that the food hygiene in each restaurant is checked without warning regularly and health and safety rules are checked every six months”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Make sure that the ingredients that go into the food are those that are listed”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The key is accurate and honest labelling, so that we know what is in our food and where it comes from”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“check, inspect supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, and takeaway places to ensure that food is fresh and cooked well”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I want my family to have wholesome, nutritious food, that provides them with the energy and fibre they need for a healthy life”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“make sure food is good quality, safe to eat, and does not include any unwanted ingredients”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“make sure food is good quality, safe to eat, and does not include any unwanted ingredients”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other themes that show how consumers believe the FSA should protect their interests in relation to food (open)

- Heavy fines and warnings needed (3%)
- Ensuring that the horse meat scandal does not happen again (2%)
- Educate the people about food safety - cooking/storage etc (2%)
- Inform the general public of any issues/food related dangers (1%)
- Control imported food (1%)
- More options for vegetarians/be clear on what is vegetarian food (1%)

Q1: A key purpose of the Food Standards Agency is to ‘protect public health and the interests of consumers in relation to food’. Please take a moment to think about what this means to you and your household. Using the box below, please tell us how you believe the FSA should protect your interests in relation to food.

Base 1995
Agreement with all the statements is relatively strong. ‘This definition is easy to understand’ had the highest level of agreement (65%).

‘Food is safe and what it says it is and we can afford enough of it for a healthy life, and have choices about what we eat, now and in the future.’

- **This definition is easy to understand**: Agree 65%
- **This shows that the Food Standards Agency really understands consumer needs**: Agree 62%
- **This definition gives me confidence in the Food Standards Agency**: Agree 59%
- **The definition is comprehensive and covers my key concerns**: Agree 61%

Q2: Below is how the Food Standards Agency proposes a definition of the ‘interests of consumers in relation to food’. Please read through this definition and tell us how much you agree that it is described by the statements below.

Base 1995
The majority of people (61%) did not think anything was missing from the FSA’s definition of ‘interests of consumers in relation to food’

‘Food is safe and what it says it is and we can afford enough of it for a healthy life, and have choices about what we eat, now and in the future.’

Suggestions for what else should be included

- “There should be a reference to food hygiene preparation in both factories and restaurants”
- “It needs to be more simple, as in easier to understand”
- “It should be written in Plain English (2%)”
- “It should cover how ethically the food has been sourced.”
- “Food is guaranteed to be safe as it has been rigorously checked”
- “Food is safe/is it fit for human consumption (2%)”
- Food produced in a fair and sustainable way/ethically sourced (2%)
10% thought there were aspects that should not be included in the FSA’s definition of ‘interests of consumers in relation to food’. Affordability was most mentioned.

‘Food is safe and what it says it is and we can afford enough of it for a healthy life, and have choices about what we eat, now and in the future.’

Comments on what should not be included:

“Whether or not we can afford it doesn't seem to me to be part of food "standards""

Affordability (5%)

"I think the sentence is too long”

Not in plain English (1%)
Nearly half (47%) of people believed that the FSA should focus on food being safe and fit for consumption. Which part of the definition do you think the FSA should focus on? (open)

‘Food is safe and what it says it is and we can afford enough of it for a healthy life, and have choices about what we eat, now and in the future.’

- “That food conforms to UK health and safety standards.” (47%)
- “Concentrate on actually making sure food is actually what it says it is” (16%)
- “Meets nutritional needs of consumers” (9%)
- “Making food affordable for everyone” (7%)
- “It should all receive equal focus” (5%)

Only themes with a total above 5% are included.
The majority of people (84%) believed that the 3 consumer rights are the most important ones for the ‘Consumer Food Charter’.

**3 consumer rights outlined in the Consumer Food Charter:**
- Consumers have the right to be protected
- Consumers have the right to make choices knowing the facts
- Consumers have the right to the best food future we can deliver

**Are the 3 consumer rights outlined in the Consumer Food Charter the most important ones?**

- Yes: 84%
- No: 2%
- Not sure: 14%
80% of people believe that having a ‘Consumer Food Charter’ in place is important. Ensuring food is safe (16%) was seen as the greatest reason behind this.

*How important is it to you that such a ‘Consumer Food Charter’ is in place?*

- 2% Not at all important
- 16% Not very important
- 36% Neither important nor unimportant
- 44% Important
- 80% Very important

Q4b: How important is it to you that such a ‘Consumer Food Charter’ is in place?

Q4c: Why do you say this?

80% of people believe that having a ‘Consumer Food Charter’ in place is important. Ensuring food is safe (16%) was seen as the greatest reason behind this.
Verbatim comments from ‘Why do you say it is important that such a ‘Consumer Food Charter’ is in place?’ (open)

“It is important to have the guidelines for food safety laid out so that the public can ensure that their food is safe”

“I believe consumers should be protected and that retailers know there is a government body in place to protect consumer”

“A charter sets a benchmark that is clear and an exacting point of reference for significant issues”

“Food is fundamentally one of the most important things in life people need to be responsible for”

“I like to know that the food I feed my family is safe and as healthy as possible”

“It is important we know what is in our food, where it came from and how is was prepared”

“It's important because it safeguards the consumer from abuses within the food industry”

“People need to be informed so they can make the correct decisions on what to purchase”

“Consumers should be protected and that retailers know there is a government body in place to protect consumer”
There were similar levels of agreement across all of the statements on the FSA’s responsibilities for consumer protection

‘It is the responsibility of people supplying food to ensure it is safe and what it says it is and the Food Standards Agency has a key role to play in making sure they step up to that responsibility.

It is the responsibility of the consumer to manage the risks relating to food that they can effect. They have a right to be informed about those risks. The Food Standards Agency has a key role to play in encouraging and supporting consumers to take appropriate action.’

Q7a: The Food Standards Agency has defined responsibilities for consumer protection. How much do you agree with the responsibilities laid out here...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Net agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are clear and easy to understand</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are a fair split of responsibilities</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match my expectations of the role of the Food Standards Agency</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give me confidence in the Food Standards Agency</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Very few respondents felt that there were aspects missing or that needed changing in the definition of responsibilities for consumer protection.

Are there any aspects you feel are missing or should be changed?

- 6% of respondents felt that the definition of responsibilities was comprehensive and covered all aspects.
- 3% of respondents felt that the definition was not the consumers' responsibility and that it was their right.
- 3% of respondents felt that the definition was far too vague and needed to be much more specific.

Only themes with a total above 3% are included.

Q7b: Are there any aspects you feel are missing or should be changed?

Base 1995
Other themes that emerged on what should be changed or what is missing from the FSA definition of responsibilities (less than 3% of mentions)

- Suppliers to take ownership (1%)
- Make sure rules are enforced (2%)
- Define ‘manage risks’ (2%)
- What checks? How many? How often? (2%)

Q7b: Are there any aspects you feel are missing or should be changed?

Base 1995
People strongly agreed with all of the consumer responsibilities, especially cooking food thoroughly, storing and cooking food safely and keeping food at the correct temperature (all over 90% agreement).

- **Cook food thoroughly e.g. Burgers and chicken**: 92% agree
- **Store and cook food safely**: 91% agree
- **Keep food at the correct temperature after you have purchased it**: 91% agree
- **When cooking for vulnerable people (e.g. small children, people over 75yrs) take extra precautions**: 87% agree
- **Choose food that is produced in line with your values**: 77% agree
- **Dispose of food that has gone past its use-by date**: 77% agree

Q8: The Food Standards Agency suggests that consumers have responsibilities in relation to food. How much do you agree with the idea that, as a consumer, you have the responsibility to: Base 1995
Respondents came up with very few other responsibilities that consumers should have in relation to food.

8% mentioned good food hygiene and cleanliness as their responsibility.

Other responsibilities that consumers have in relation to food (open)

- 8% mentioned good food hygiene and cleanliness as their responsibility.
- 7% mentioned buying healthy food for a balanced diet.
- 7% mentioned storing and cooking food safely.
- 6% mentioned not wasting food.

“Washing their hands before either preparing or eating food.”

“Monitor the amount of fat/sugar/salt in the food to ensure a balanced diet.”

“They have to make sure food home is stored according to instructions.”

“Only purchasing enough for their immediate needs, to reduce waste.”

Only themes with a total above 5% are included.
Two-thirds (66%) believed that the amount of information that is present on food labels is about right. 
31% felt that there is not enough information on food labels.

The amount of information on food labels is...

- About right: 66%
- Not enough: 31%
- Too much: 4%
Very few respondents gave answers on whether there was anything that does not currently appear on food labels that should be included or whether there was anything that should not be included? (open comments)

**Should be included**

“The exact origin of the food should be made clearer and more of a focus point on the packaging”

“Better information on allergens such as gluten and nuts”

“Information should be easy to read as most information is in such small text it is often hard to read”

**Should not be included**

“Misleading sell by dates”

“Far too much nutritional information”

“Technical names for additives”

“100 g nutritional info”

“Misleading claims about what benefits the food can give you”
Respondents believed that the straplines that best represent the FSA’s aspirations are ‘Food we can trust’ (40%) and ‘For food we can trust’ (38%).

Q14: Below are a few potential straplines that the Food Standards Agency might use in its communications to describe their strategy and purpose. Please select the three that you believe best represent the Food Standards Agency’s aspiration to: Protect consumers, give people the information they need and deliver a better food future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strapline</th>
<th>Rank 1st</th>
<th>Rank 2nd</th>
<th>Rank 3rd</th>
<th>Net ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food we can trust</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For food we can trust</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling food concerns</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for a better, trusted food future</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because Our Food Matters</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for our food</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a better, trusted food future</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for a better food future</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our food matters</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together We Make A Difference</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food is our focus</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for You</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a better food future</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food for us all</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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For any questions please contact

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