
DELIVERING THE FSA STRATEGY: PRIORITIES FOR 2017/18

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1 SUMMARY

1.1 The Business Committee is asked to:

- **Discuss and agree**: the FSA's high-level priorities for 2017/18; and
- **Discuss**: where we plan to have got to with delivering these priorities by the end of that financial year.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Board agreed the FSA's strategy for 2015-20¹ at its meeting in November 2014.² The FSA's strategy focuses on why we exist – our purpose and mission, and our statutory objectives of protecting consumers and their interests in relation to food, as set by Parliament in the Food Standards Act (1999). The strategy is informed by research with consumers from across the UK on the scope and nature of their interests in relation to food.³ The Board agreed the strategic plan in March 2015.⁴ The plan describes our high-level approach to delivering our strategic outcomes.

2.2 2017/18 will be the third year of the FSA's five-year strategic plan.⁵ The Business Committee agreed the FSA's high-level business plan priorities and budget for 2016/17 – the second year of the strategic plan – in March 2016.⁶ The Board and Business Committee also determine the future direction of individual pieces of work through their decisions on particular subjects.

2.3 We are consulting the Business Committee on a consolidated view of our future plans earlier this year than in previous years, in order to give the Committee an opportunity to feed in views and shape plans at an earlier stage than before.

2.4 This paper sets out the FSA's proposed high-level priority activities for 2017/18. Following the Business Committee's discussion of this paper, the executive will develop the corporate business plan for 2017/18 to support delivery of the strategic plan. We will return to the Committee in March 2017 with an update on the FSA's priorities for 2017/18, together with the high-level budget to deliver those activities.

¹ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Strategy%20FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/board-mins-5nov14.pdf>

³ <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ssres/crosscutss/fsa-strategy-2015-2020-citizen-forums>

⁴ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/meeting/minutes/board-mins-mar2015.pdf>

⁵ https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/FSA%20strategy%20document%202015-2020_April%202015_interactive%20%282%29.pdf

⁶ <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa160311.pdf>

- 2.5 The FSA carries out a wide range of work to fulfil its duties (such as risk assessments, policy work and the delivery of official controls). Just because a piece of work is not included in this paper does not mean that it will not be done. The proposed high-level priorities for 2017/18 in this paper are those that will significantly change and develop both our delivery capability and the way in which we deliver our statutory objectives.
- 2.6 Like all organisations, the FSA's decisions about which activities to pursue are shaped by what it can afford and what will provide value for money. For the FSA, the financial context is the department's spending review settlement with the Treasury for the four years 2016/17 to 2019/20, which keeps the FSA's Westminster budget flat at its 2015/16 baseline level. The FSA's Westminster resource budget for each year of the spending review period is £82m, which equates to a real-terms reduction of 7% over the period.
- 2.7 The budgets for the Devolveds have not yet been agreed for 2017/18, but our current planning assumption is that they will be unchanged from 2016/17 at £8.2m for Northern Ireland and £3.5m for Wales.

3 STRATEGIC AIMS

- 3.1 The FSA aims to use its limited resources to leverage better outcomes for consumers. Those outcomes, which were specified in the strategic plan, are aligned to the Board's definition of consumers' interests in relation to food as set out in the strategy:
- Food is safe
 - Food is what it says it is
 - Consumers can make informed choices about what to eat
 - Consumers have access to an affordable healthy diet, now and in the future
- 3.2 The FSA has a joint responsibility with others – including industry, consumers, and other areas of government – to improve these food-related outcomes for consumers. The outcomes are co-produced and result from many factors; the FSA alone cannot achieve them. Only by everyone working together and playing their part will we be able to deliver food we can all trust.
- 3.3 The FSA concentrates its efforts and resources on “food is safe and what it says it is” because those are the areas in which we are particularly well placed to make the biggest contribution to consumers' interests. These are areas where there are fewer other partners across Government and the third sector, and where the FSA takes the lead.
- 3.4 In areas such as affordability, choice, food security, and sustainability, others have a much greater ability to make a difference than we do. In those areas, the Board has said that the FSA's role is to contribute to the work that others do where we can to support the best outcomes for consumers. The Board has also agreed that the FSA has a particular role, as laid out in its founding

legislation, to encourage openness and transparency in the food system to support informed consumer choice.

- 3.5 Even within our key areas of focus (“safe and what it says it is”), it is important to be clear about the FSA’s role and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of others. It is the responsibility of people producing and supplying food to ensure it is safe and what it says it is, and the FSA has a key leadership role in making sure they step up to that responsibility
- 3.6 We ensure we play our part and set ourselves targets for those factors which we can take responsibility for delivering. The Business Committee assesses our performance and success against KPIs which measure our impact on the outcomes in the quarterly Performance & Resources report.

4 HOW WE WORK

- 4.1 In the strategic plan, the FSA Board identified the major themes that inform how we build the organisation and its capabilities in order to achieve the FSA’s purpose and objectives that are set out in the strategy.
- 4.2 These themes from the strategic plan endure and determine how we work:
- We use **science, evidence and information** both to tackle the challenges of today, and to identify and contribute to addressing emerging risks for the future.
 - We use **legislative and non-legislative tools** highly effectively to protect consumers’ interests and deliver consumer benefits – influencing business behaviour in the interests of consumers.
 - We are genuinely **open and engaging**, finding ways to empower consumers both in our policy making and delivery, and in their relationship with the food industry.
 - We are creating an environment in which **our people** are highly capable, effectively supported, and consistently choose to make outstanding contributions to **protecting, informing and empowering consumers**.
 - We are developing an organisation that leverages **great impact from small resources**.

5 ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIRST 2 YEARS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 As the first year of a five-year strategic plan, in 2015/16 our focus was on putting in place building blocks on which the rest of the strategic plan period will rest.
- 5.2 Our ambitions became tangible – as exemplified in our work to tackle *Campylobacter*, delivery of the first step in our plan to move to a sustainable future funding model for meat official controls (the ‘Stow 1’ agreement), and the principles that underpin moves to different delivery models. And, crucially,

we developed our organisational capabilities, so that we can achieve the best outcomes for consumers.⁷

- 5.3 By the end of 2016/17, the second year of our strategic plan, we will have made further progress towards our strategic aims, we will be clearer about future delivery models, we will be more confident in describing the steps we will take to get there, and we will be building coalitions to get support for change. In particular:
- There should be 100,000 fewer cases of human campylobacteriosis;⁸
 - We will have engaged extensively on the design of our future delivery models;
 - We will have begun the transition to these new models, with new contractual arrangements in place for official controls delivered by the FSA;
 - We will have identified near-term changes to food law code of practice that could alleviate pressures on delivery of official controls by local authorities;
 - We will have completed the phase two review of the National Food Crime Unit and concluded on the scope, capabilities, scale and resourcing of the unit as envisaged in the Elliott Review; and
 - We will have completed our first steps to becoming a data-driven organisation (a process to deliver ‘open by default’, a data strategy, and pilot projects).

6 FSA PRIORITIES FOR 2017/18

- 6.1 The FSA is planning to prioritise three activities in 2017/18 as part of continuing to take forward its strategy:

IMPLEMENTING OUR REGULATORY STRATEGY

- **Regulating Our Future programme**

- 6.2 The ‘Regulating Our Future’ programme aims to develop and implement a new and sustainable approach to regulation that leverages business behaviour change to deliver benefits for consumers. The FSA is doing this by building a regulatory toolkit that ensures a long-term sustainable delivery approach to regulating food. There is a separate paper about the programme on the Board’s agenda for this September meeting.

- 6.3 By the end of 2017/18, we plan to have achieved the following:

⁷ A fuller outline of what the FSA delivered and achieved in 2015/16 is in the “activities and performance” section of our Annual Report for the year:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/540636/fsa-annual-report-and-consolidated-accounts-2015-to-2016.pdf

⁸ This is measured against a counterfactual of how many cases there would have been without the industry action that we have catalysed. Achieving this target will mark the end of our change programme on Campylobacter, and explains why reducing illness from Campylobacter is not included in our priorities for 17/18. However, it does not represent the end of our work on Campylobacter, we will ensure that improvement on the part of industry is sustainable and sustained, and that industry is effectively held accountable on an ongoing basis.

- a new model will be in place for regulating big businesses, based on clear standards – the FBOs will have to demonstrate that they comply with those standards;
- we will have completed pathfinder projects for new ways of regulating SMEs;
- we will putting FHRS in England on a statutory footing with a sustainable delivery model behind it;
- we will have designed a sustainable future model for meat hygiene services, in line with Regulating our Future principles, and capable of delivering effective controls for less money;
- we will have scoped the contractual arrangements for veterinary and meat inspection in England & Wales to come into place in 2019, in line with the future model for meat; and
- subject to the Government's wider negotiations about leaving the EU, we will have developed high-level designs for how official controls will be delivered outside the EU, the wider implications for the role and responsibilities of the FSA, and organisational and financial solutions to meet these demands.

BEING THE BEST ORGANISATION WE CAN BE:

- **Becoming a data-driven organisation**
- **Our Ways of Working**

- 6.4 The overall objective for our work to become a data-driven organisation is that the FSA will have access to the data it needs to be effective across all strategic priorities, and makes full use of this data. As mentioned above, we are taking the first steps in this direction in 2016/17.
- 6.5 We envisage that by the end of 2017/18 the technology will have been implemented to support our needs, and we will be delivering data products and services in support of the FSA's corporate objectives and in particular initiatives such as the Regulating Our Future programme and our new approach to surveillance. Data exploitation will be embedded into the fabric of the FSA, enabling a forward looking organisation where teams are active in making predictions, recommendations and interventions; telling stories around the findings, bringing the data to life; and driving the ever increasing value of data.
- 6.6 The overall objective of the 'Our Ways of Working' programme is to build a vibrant, progressive, learning organisation that attracts and retains the best staff who are engaged, motivated to deliver, collaborative and well led. Ahead of the FSA moving out of our London office by February 2018, the programme is currently working to enable and support each individual to do their best work and contribute effectively to delivery of our strategic outcomes irrespective of the location(s) in which they work.
- 6.7 By the end of 2017/18, we will have moved out of Aviation House, and we will be a location- agnostic organisation where people work together in highly effective teams regardless of their locations. New contracts will be in place for staff, and we will have put in place the right infrastructure to support location-

agnostic working, and the business processes, skills and management tools to help maximise productivity and organisational benefit in the new working environment.

Other priority activities planned for 2017/18:

- 6.8 There are also four other areas of work which the FSA need to be delivered in 2017/18, in order to deliver positive outcomes for consumers. We envisage that these priorities will require less investment from our existing resources than the key strategic priorities above. As always, the corporate business plan will be a dynamic one which the Executive team and the Business Committee will keep under review and, if it becomes apparent that this assumption is incorrect (for example in connection with the post referendum work), we will review the balance of the plan and resource allocation.

EU and International

- 6.9 We do not yet know the full implications of the result of the EU referendum for the UK food system and its regulation. Nonetheless, our role remains to carry out our mandate from Parliament of “protecting public health and other consumer interests in relation to food”. Preparations for leaving the EU could involve a lot of work for the FSA in 2017/18, as so much of the regulation relating to food is founded on EU law.
- 6.10 The FSA has a coordination and steering group that includes senior colleagues experienced in international negotiation and regulation and cross Whitehall working, to ensure that we are able to rapidly identify and respond to issues as they emerge and work effectively with the Department for Exiting the EU.
- 6.11 By the end of 2017/18, we will have developed high-level models for achieving the FSA’s outcomes for consumers outside the EU in a highly globalised food system, these models will include the FSA continuing to engage positively in international dialogue (e.g. through Codex) to promote consumers’ interests.⁹

Efficacy of Product Recalls project

- 6.12 The FSA has initiated a project to review and enhance the efficacy of current withdrawal and recall processes in the retail supply chain from both an industry and competent authority perspective, to ensure that they deliver effective consumer protection. The project is being delivered as a joint initiative with Food Standards Scotland, in close collaboration with external stakeholders.¹⁰

⁹ The Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code" was established by FAO and the World Health Organization in 1963 to develop harmonised international food standards, which protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.

¹⁰ For further information, see the FSA Board paper from July 2016:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa160706.pdf>

6.13 The project is at the planning and evidence-gathering stage. Its objectives for 2016/17 are: to gather the necessary evidence to assess the efficacy of current processes; and to take a systems-based approach to identifying and implementing actions required to enhance those processes in order to deliver more effective consumer protection. Until that work is further advanced, it is too early to set the project specific objectives for 2017/18.

Surveillance

6.14 The FSA is committed to developing in 2016/17 a new strategic approach to surveillance, which meets the WHO definition of the ongoing systematic collection, collation, analysis and/or interpretation of data, followed by dissemination of information so that directed action may be taken. The objectives of this new approach will be aligned to our strategic mission of “food we can trust”, prioritising within that “food is safe” and, after that, “food is what it says it is”.

6.15 In 2017/18 we will:

- review learning from the development and pilot phases in 2016/17 to frame a strategic surveillance process;
- apply that process to priorities which we identify through the emerging risks activities that we and partner organisations undertake; and
- review liaison with, and the impact on, external organisations active in the field of strategic surveillance.

6.16 By the end of the year, we will systematically be generating actionable knowledge that shapes and informs risk management interventions that are made by us and by our stakeholders.

Our Food Future

6.17 The Food Standards Act (1999) gives the FSA an objective “to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food”. The Act also gives the FSA the function of “ensuring that members of the public are kept adequately informed about and advised in respect of matters which the Agency considers significantly affect their capacity to make informed decisions about food”. Whenever we engage with consumers they tell us that their ‘interests in relation to food’ are broader than safety and authenticity.¹¹ Based on our consumer research, the Board agreed a definition of consumers’ interests as being that “food is safe and what it says it is, and we can make informed choices about what we eat and have access to an affordable healthy diet, now and in the future”.

¹¹ In our most recent consumer survey, the wider food issues of concern most frequently reported were the amount of sugar in food (55%), food waste (53%), the amount of salt in food (45%) and animal welfare (45%). <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/tracker-wave-12.pdf>

- 6.18 In 2015/16, the first year of our strategic plan, the FSA ran a successful large scale engagement project called ‘Our Food Future’¹² to identify where consumers had concerns about the food system as they saw it developing and how different groups could play a role in increasing the probability of good outcomes for consumers from the changes ahead. We are building on that work to identify and prioritise a number of small, targeted interventions that enable us to make our most effective contribution to this issue with minimal investment.
- 6.19 The FSA currently assigns modest resources to work in this space, as the Board has defined our role here as being to contribute to the work that others do where we can make a specific impact towards the best outcomes for consumers, and that will continue.
- 6.20 For example, in 2016/17, the FSA has produced consumer research on food waste by consumers, which informed new advice we issued to help people to understand how to waste less food safely by making more of their freezers.¹³ And the FSA, working with Defra and WRAP, has launched a review of the guidance provided to the food industry on date marking on food. Revised guidance will be published by July 2017.¹⁴
- 6.21 The FSA will continue such work in 2017/18, with the aim of promoting a dialogue on the challenges that will face food systems supplying UK consumers, supported by consumer insight research that develops an understanding of what consumers perceive as the ‘best food future’.

FSA Capability-building

- 6.22 In order for the FSA to achieve its organisational objectives in 2017/18 and beyond, and so deliver the best outcomes for consumers, it will be necessary for us to continue to invest to build and develop our capability in three particular areas next financial year, all of which underpin delivery of the proposed priorities above.

Implementing our IT strategy

- 6.23 In 2015/16, the FSA adopted a new IT strategy. The strategy is designed to deliver four outcomes: IT solutions are provided to meet user and business needs; data is valued and exploited to support business activity as needed; we exploit modern, standard and commoditised IT as far as possible, with the minimum of bespokeing; and the overall control of the IT design and delivery is brought back in-house to the FSA (it is currently contracted out to Capita as a managed service).

¹² For further information, see the FSA Board paper from May 2016 (<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa160507.pdf>) and accompanying presentation: <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/off-presentation.pptx>

¹³ See <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2016/15277/fsa-urges-public-to-face-freezer-fears-in-a-bid-to-tackle-food-waste>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2016/15351/food-standards-agency-pledges-review-of-date-marking-guidance>

- 6.24 There is a separate paper about the IT strategy and its implementation on the Business Committee's agenda for this September meeting.

Implementing the FSA's communication strategy

- 6.25 The FSA also has a new communications strategy. The objective of the strategy is that we use communication more effectively so that the FSA can be 'genuinely open and engaging, finding ways to empower consumers in their relationship with the food industry'.
- 6.26 By the end of 2017/18, the FSA will have a multi-skilled communications function. Our enhanced capability will have developed our staff advocacy and a more structured way for engaging our key stakeholders. The result will be that we have enhanced the FSA's reputation and increased consumers' trust. We will have built our influence so that we are considered to be a clear and audible voice on behalf of the public.

People engagement

- 6.27 The FSA can only deliver the best outcomes for consumers if our people are well-motivated and engaged, and so achieving this is a priority for us. As previously reported to the Business Committee, we have made great progress in this area, which is closely connected to the Our Ways of Working programme mentioned above.¹⁵ Until we have the results of the 2016 civil service people survey, we cannot know the exact scale and scope of the further work required in 2017/18. But our objective is clear: to continue to improve staff engagement results to be on a par with the 'high performing units' in the survey – that is, to be in the top 25% of the civil service.

7 IMPACT

- 7.1 The impact of the continuing real-terms reduction in our budget is that the FSA has had to make further efficiencies and prioritise more than ever before.
- 7.2 We have improved how we prioritise in order to ensure that our activities are aligned to the strategic plan and offer maximum value for money. We have a corporate approach to prioritising what our people do (i.e. the activities in which they invest their time, expertise, etc.), because our people are our most constrained and critical resource in terms of achieving our strategic objectives. We rigorously prioritise the elements of our activity that are key to delivering the strategy and reducing people resources in other areas, so that they can be redeployed to where they will make a bigger difference to us achieving outcomes for consumers.
- 7.3 We have an investment sub-group of EMT to prioritise work across the organisation and focus our funding on the projects that make the greatest contribution to the achievement of our strategic goals. This sub-group has

¹⁵ See, for example, slide 20 of 2015/16 Q3 Performance & Resources report: <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa160310.pdf>

improved our ability to join up work across directorates and ensure we maximise our impact for consumers.

- 7.4 If the Business Committee approves the priorities proposed in this paper for next financial year, the executive will apply these methods in developing the corporate business plan and budget.
- 7.5 Whilst these are presented in this paper as a list of 10 activities, it should be noted that they are not discrete projects, rather they are interconnected and heavily inter-dependent. For instance, the work on data and implementing our IT and communications strategies are fundamental to successful delivery of the Regulating Our Future programme. The FSA's portfolio board ensures that these inter-dependencies are effectively managed.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The FSA carried out extensive consultation on its strategy and strategic plan. No separate consultation was done on the 2017/18 priorities.

9 DEVOLUTION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The FSA produces a single corporate business plan, with a single set of priorities. However, the FSA in Northern Ireland and Wales each produce their own more detailed plans and budgets, setting out how they will contribute to these priorities and deliver devolved activities (for example, in 2016/17 the FSA in Northern Ireland will deliver dietary health campaigns, which contribute to strategic outcomes around informed choice and "access to an affordable healthy diet, now and in the future" as well as to NI specific issues).

10 CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

- 10.1 Given our pledge to put consumers first in everything we do, we seek to ensure that consumers' interests in relation to food are reflected in what we do and in how we allocate resources. We have prioritised the activities that taken in combination we consider will make the biggest contribution to our strategic outcomes for consumers while sustaining our networks of influence and growing our capabilities to deliver for consumers in the future.
- 10.2 The FSA conducts a biannual tracking survey with consumers, in order to monitor changes in consumers' attitudes towards food-related issues.¹⁶ As we continue to develop our understanding of consumers' interests in relation to food, we will continue to use this insight to review how we allocate resources (e.g. in the light of the outcome of the Our Food Future conference in February).

11 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The Business Committee is asked to:

¹⁶ <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ssres/publictrackingsurvey>

- **Discuss and agree:** the FSA's high-level priorities for 2017/18; and
- **Discuss:** where we plan to have got to with delivering these priorities by the end of that financial year.