
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by Catherine Brown, Chief Executive

GENERAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

1. Since my last report to the Board in September, I have continued to meet a wide range of stakeholders, including Which? and the Advertising Standards Agency, to discuss matters of mutual interest, particularly focusing on the future regulatory framework.
2. I have also continued my regular update meetings with other Government Departments, including Food Standards Scotland, the Department of Health, and Defra to continue our close working and discuss a wide range of shared interests.
3. A delegation from the French Ministry of Agriculture visited at the end of September, during which we had the opportunity to compare priorities and work plans. We identified a number of shared interests and as a result are developing a joint work programme to enable us to learn from each other and collaborate to the benefit of consumers in both countries.
4. Earlier this month I had the opportunity to speak at the London Vet Show 2016 where it was a pleasure to talk to a group of vets about the food system and the role that they play within it, reflecting also on the Board's recent discussions on animal welfare.
5. Heather Hancock hosted our 11th Parliamentary Reception on 11 October. As always it was a good opportunity for us to talk to MPs, Peers and stakeholders about our strategy and our priorities for the year ahead. This year we particularly concentrated on Regulating our Future (RoF) and our plans for Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) mandation in England.
6. More than 100 guests attended the event which was co-sponsored by Angela Smith MP and Michael Fabricant MP. As well as Heather, Lord Prior of Brampton spoke and he talked supportively about the need to balance effective regulation with business growth. Attendees had an opportunity to watch videos about our work on Regulating our Future and it was especially pleasing to see so many stakeholders who are involved with this programme and with FHRS at the Reception.

CAMPYLOBACTER CAMPAIGN

7. The reporting rate for Campylobacter poisoning has decreased in the UK from 109.2 per 100,000 population in 2014 to 97.7 per 100,000 in 2015, the lowest reported rate of Campylobacter infections in England since 2008. The latest figures for 2016 indicate that the reporting rate for Campylobacter remains low, and while this needs to be viewed with caution as the reductions need to be sustained over time, the trend is encouraging.
8. Following discussions with major retailers on their willingness to publish their sampling results on Campylobacter, we have suggested a protocol on setting the standards and criteria to ensure the robustness of the data to be published. Final comments came in at the beginning of November and responses are currently being collated.
9. The Campylobacter Programme Review was held earlier this year. This peer-reviewed all the FSA's Campylobacter research. The final report from this has now been finalised by the independent Chair and is due to be published in mid-November.

REGULATING OUR FUTURE

10. Since the last Board meeting we have continued to engage a number of stakeholders to help us develop the programme. We held a workshop on 20 October with representatives from organisations representing, or who work with, smaller businesses – among them Food Solutions, the Association of Convenience Stores and Just Eat. In a useful, interactive day we: identified areas where the current regulatory regime is not working so well for consumers and businesses (the 'pain points'); looked at solutions; and worked out what the benefits from doing things differently might be. From this session we have some useful ideas we can develop and pilot.
11. We have further meetings planned with bigger businesses in November and hope to be able to pilot further initiatives. In addition, our Expert Advisory Groups with representatives from the food industry and local authorities will have their second meeting in December. At these meetings we will explore the detail of what a new model might look like and look to bring together the various elements that will form our new approach. We are also recruiting consumers to a Consumer Panel and this group will have their first meeting in January 2017.

12. The media interest in RoF and what it might mean to both industry and consumers, is growing and Heather Hancock gave an interview to the Grocer and was on BBC Radio 4's You and Yours to explain our ongoing commitment to modern and effective consumer protection. Nina Purcell appeared on BBC Wales Today and gave an interview to Environmental Health News. We continue to look for opportunities to both promote our activity on RoF and set the record straight when we need to.
13. We are also talking to staff across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and have held well attended interactive sessions with meetings in Belfast, Cardiff, London and York.

OUR PEOPLE

Civil Service People Survey 2016

14. We have very recently received the results from the 2016 Civil Service People Survey.
15. The FSA's engagement index was 58%, which is a slight fall from 2015 (60%). It remains above the 2013 and 2014 scores of 50% and 53% respectively and the Executive are committed to working with the whole team to ensure it is a "blip" in a strongly positive overall trend. Whilst this year's overall engagement score is 1% below the Civil Service overall and 6% below the Civil Service high performers, we did compare well in a number of areas, for example, having a clear vision for the future and senior managers actively role modelling behaviours in the Civil Service leadership statement.
16. The slight dip in our engagement score is potentially a reflection of the significant restructure programmes that have been taking place throughout 2016 – and timing of those programmes in relation to the timing of the People Survey. We are now working to embed some of the changes, for example, the revised management structure in field operations and the timetable for implementing Our Ways of Working – and can use the results from the survey to continue to shape and help to embed these and other change programmes effectively.
17. Managers will now be analysing the data for their teams to identify areas to celebrate, improve and explore further and I continue to strongly encourage all staff to actively get involved and contribute to this process. At the same time, the senior leadership team under the leadership of Maria Jennings (Director of Organisational Development and Northern Ireland) will be

identifying priority areas for the FSA as a whole and creating a corporate action plan to complement the local action planning process.

National Field Operations Conference

18. I had the pleasure of attending the National Field Operations Conference last month, for Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHIs), which was the first of its type. The conference theme was 'Vision, Engage, Sustain' and by holding the event on a Saturday we hoped to maximise attendance, and approximately 300 MHIs (70% of the MHI work force) attended.

19. Jason Feeney and I had the opportunity to talk about the recent restructure and share our "vision" for the future role of Field Operations. We celebrated what we are achieving, both locally and nationally, and how individual MHIs contribute to the success of the FSA.

Icing on the Cake

20. In October we held our annual event that celebrates winners of an "Icing on the Cake" award, the FSA's staff recognition scheme. The event is an opportunity to celebrate their achievements and share our success across the FSA. I was delighted that almost 60 colleagues representing every group within the FSA joined me at the House of Commons to celebrate. Congratulations to all those involved.

FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

21. I am delighted to report that the statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Northern Ireland came into operation on 7 October 2016, making it a legal requirement for food business operators to display their hygiene rating where it can be easily seen by consumers before they enter the premises. The Food Hygiene Rating Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides transitional arrangements to allow ratings from the voluntary scheme to be issued under the statutory scheme. This agreed approach will result in around 85-90% of businesses within scope of the scheme receiving notification of their statutory rating before the end of October 2016 with remaining businesses receiving a statutory rating within 12 months. Introduction of the statutory scheme in Northern Ireland received significant media coverage on regional television and radio.

22. The FSA continues to develop proposals for the delivery of a FHRS statutory scheme in England, as part of the Regulating our Future programme. Work continues on the, non-legislative, alignment of the voluntary scheme in England (with the statutory schemes in Wales/Northern Ireland). The cost

recovery trial (for requested FHRS re-visits) is in progress with around 40 local authorities in England, with findings and a plan to roll out nationally expected early in 2017.

23. In Wales, new regulations (coming into force on 28 November) require takeaway food businesses to publish a bilingual statement on certain hardcopy publicity materials. The statement directs customers to the food hygiene ratings website and reminds consumers that they have a legal right to ask the food business for their food hygiene rating when ordering food.
24. There has been significant recent national and regional press coverage highlighting poor levels of food hygiene at more than 400 hospitals, care homes and nurseries. The FSA confirmed that almost 99 per cent of hospitals and other care providers achieve a food hygiene rating of 3 'generally satisfactory' or above, which is particularly important when providing services to potentially more vulnerable consumers.

SCIENCE UPDATE

Chief Scientific Adviser Report

25. On 4 November 2016, the 5th Chief Scientific Adviser's report, focusing on food allergy and intolerance, was published. Guy Poppy launched the report at the FSA's annual food allergy workshop and it will also be shared by key stakeholders in the area, such as the Anaphylaxis Campaign and Allergy UK.
26. The report explains the complex and evolving science behind food allergy and intolerance, indicating important differences between food allergy-related conditions and also considers how new food sources, such as insects, may bring new implications for food allergy and intolerance.

Food Standards Agency Science Summit

27. On 2 November 2016 around 70 staff attended the annual Science Summit meeting, which provided inspiring talks from eminent external speakers as well as internal staff. Professor Patrick Wolfe from the Alan Turing Centre spoke about emerging techniques in the analysis of big data; Professor Peter Jackson, Chair of the Social Science Research Committee, delivered a talk which highlighted the benefits of in depth studies into consumer behaviour; and Professor Dame Julia Slingo, Chief Scientist at the Met Office, gave a talk on climate change and its likely impacts on the food supply and on weather forecasting.

Quality Adjusted Life Years

28. The FSA is particularly interested in being able to compare the impacts of microbiological pathogens in terms of pain, grief and suffering through the use of Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs). QALYs measure health outcomes and enable the comparison of gains/losses in the quality of health with the gains/losses in the number of life years that a particular intervention across different food policy areas might produce.
29. The FSA commissioned a research project to produce a set of QALY values for food related intestinal infectious diseases in 2015 to support delivery of the Strategic Plan 2015-20 and its corporate priorities. Findings from the project are expected to be published in early 2017.

Food and You

30. The FSA has published a series of secondary analysis papers, based on the FSA Food and You data. Following a series of workshops in January 2015 with a number of leading academics from a range of different disciplines with food-related interests, a number of topics and research questions for secondary analysis papers were developed in line with FSA interests. From these, five papers were produced on different subjects and sub-groups in 2015-2016. These were:
- i. A typology of food safety activities.
 - ii. Wellbeing and Food safety.
 - iii. 'Vulnerable' consumers and food safety.
 - iv. Food affordability and Food Safety.
 - v. The use of food hygiene rating schemes.

Full findings and wider papers can be found online¹.

Foodborne virus research workshop

31. The report of the jointly organised FSA-EFSA foodborne viruses' research workshop was published on 20 October. The event focussed on three main foodborne viruses; norovirus, hepatitis A and hepatitis E viruses and its purpose was to identify priority areas for future research funding in order to maximise efficiency and to benefit from synergies provided by interdisciplinary collaborations. As well as providing a clear consensus on the most pressing research priorities that would support improved management of the risks from foodborne viruses, the event has created the environment for new co-operation at both a national and international level.

¹ <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/research-reports/ssresearch/foodandyou>

LOCAL AUTHORITY ENFORCEMENT DATA

32. The 2015/16 UK local authority food law enforcement report and individual local authority (LA) data were published as official statistics on 21 November².
33. Earlier this year the Board considered the changing picture in LA performance over the five years period 2010/11 to 2014/15³. There were concerns about the sustainability of the current enforcement delivery model and about the performance of some individual local authorities.
34. Comparing the 2015/16 data with the trend data considered in January 2016, there has been a small increase in the percentage of UK businesses considered to be broadly compliant for food hygiene, from 93.0% in 2014/15 to 93.5% in 2015/16. This continues the trend of improved compliance seen over recent years, from a level of 88.9% in 2010/11.
35. The downward trend of LA staffing levels continues, with a further reduction of 6.0% from 2,303 in 2014/15 to 2,164 in 2015/16 and the number of UK food businesses has again increased by 1% to 633,638 in 2015/16 compared with 627,425 in 2014/15.
36. The majority of LAs are prioritising resources and continuing to target activity on a risk basis. For food hygiene, 99.7% (Cat A), 99.2% (Cat B) and 93.5% (Cat C) were achieved. For food standards, 88.8% (Cat A) were achieved. For medium to low rated premises, percentages of due interventions achieved were lower, with 80.5% (Cat D) and 57.2% (Cat E) for food hygiene and 41.1% (Cat B) and 42.8% (Cat C) for food standards. The number of businesses not yet rated as a proportion of all food businesses remained fairly steady at 5% (last year 4.9%).
37. Although we noted a 6.8% decrease in the overall number of food hygiene interventions from 431,852 to 402,475 during the period from 2010/11 to 2014/15, the latest results suggest a small increase of 0.5% from 402,475 in 2014/15 to 404,551 in 2015/16. Similarly, the latest results suggest a 8.9% increase in the number of food standards interventions from 117,877 in 2014/15 to 128,364 in 2015/16. This reverses an overall decrease by 6.0% during the five year period from 125,410 in 2010/11 to 117,877 in 2014/15.
38. The 2015/16 data indicates the total number of establishments subject to enforcement actions has increased by 5.4% from 181,877 in 2014/15 to 191,719 in 2015/16. The number of food hygiene enforcement actions

² <http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/monitoring/laems/mondatabyyear>

³ <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/our-board/meetings/2016/010116/fsa-board-agenda-jan-2016>

increased by 0.7% from 167,338 in 2014/15 to 168,663 in 2015/16. The significant proportion of the overall increase was due to food standards enforcement actions, which increased by 58.6% from 14,539 in 2014/15 to 23,056 in 2015/16. This was primarily due to a large increase in written warnings (56.3%) evident across all countries from 14,324 in 2014/15 to 22,717 in 2015/16. One possible reason for this is the implementation of the Food Information Regulations and new requirements on allergen information.

39. We will continue to analyse the LAEMS data and use the statistics to inform our consideration of food law enforcement delivery models and how we can best support our LA partners.

FOOD CRIME

40. At the end of October the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) published 'Working Together to Tackle the Threat from Food Crime', a guide that aims to encourage closer working relations between industry partners involved in the food, drink and feed sectors and the NFCU. It explains the NFCU's role in the fight against food crime, and how the Unit and industry can support each other. It is the latest step in building meaningful two-way dialogue between the NFCU and industry to enhance the UK's resilience and response to food crime in its many forms.
41. Production of the latest iteration of the UK's Food Crime Annual Strategic Assessment is well underway, with engagement now complete across law enforcement and industry partners. Due for publication in March 2017, the report highlights the threats that the UK faces from food crime and sets the NFCU's strategic direction for the following twelve months.
42. The NFCU continues to provide strategic and tactical direction and support to local authorities in their investigation of food related criminality. In September, the NFCU coordinated a multi-agency intervention in respect of a toxic chemical being sold as a food supplement. The intervention was the result of intelligence developed within the NFCU to identify a UK based online seller of the substance. A quantity of the substance was seized on the day and a criminal investigation is on-going.
43. Work on the two year review of the NFCU is now complete and the Board will be considering the steering group's recommendations at this meeting.

INCIDENTS & EXERCISES/RESILIENCE

Multi-country outbreak of *Salmonella* Enteritidis PT8 associated with eggs

44. From 1 May 2016 to 12 October 2016, seven EU/EEA countries reported a total of 112 confirmed cases and 148 probable cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis PT8 originating from two distinct but related genetic clusters.
45. The countries where cases have been reported to date are Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (where there have been 19 reported cases of illness). Nine of the total confirmed cases are associated with a travel history to Hungary or Poland, and Croatia has reported a cluster of *S. Enteritidis* cases with an epidemiological link to the outbreak. Owing to the multi-country nature of this outbreak, the European Centre for Disease Prevention & Control (ECDC) and European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) have been working at both an individual Member State and at the EU level to facilitate the coordination of the investigation and response measures. In support of this, the ECDC and EFSA issued a Joint Rapid Outbreak Assessment on 27 October.⁴
46. Extensive environmental, food and traceability investigations, as well as the results of whole genome sequencing (WGS) have established a link between the outbreak and an egg packing centre in Poland. On the back of this, the FSA and colleagues in FSS have actively been working with the European Commission and other Member States to confirm whether affected eggs have been distributed to the UK and to get them withdrawn from the market as quickly as possible.

National outbreak of Norovirus associated with Wahaca restaurant chain

47. The FSA was notified by Public Health England (PHE) on 1 November 2016 of an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting associated with the restaurant chain Wahaca. The company had noticed an increase in staff sickness across their 27 restaurants and had notified their Local Health Protection Team.
48. Wahaca voluntarily closed the restaurants where illness was reported by staff and/or customers and implemented norovirus control measures which included deep cleans. Environmental Health Officers from Local Authorities in affected areas have worked with the company to ensure that all satisfactory measures were taken before premises were re-opened.

⁴ http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/_layouts/forms/Publication_DispForm.aspx?List=4f55ad51-4aed-4d32-b960-af70113dbb90&ID=1593

49. As of 13 November, 289 restaurant staff reported illness and 828 complaints have been reported by members of the public. No foodstuff has been identified as the source of the outbreak to date, but investigations into the supply and distribution chains are on-going. The incident has attracted significant media coverage.

Resilience

50. In December the FSA, with the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England, will take part in an exercise to rehearse our plans to respond to a large scale public health incident.

Norfolk Meat Traders Ltd

51. On 14 October 2016 Hillside Animal Sanctuary (HAS) posted a message on their Facebook site encouraging their supporters to contact the FSA following the approval of Norfolk Meat Traders Ltd to operate at the same site previously used by Simply Halal.

52. By Friday 4 November 2016, the FSA had received 726 emails and had responded to 721 of these. In addition the FSA is also responding to letters from eight Members of Parliament and one Member of the European Parliament. The topics raised by correspondents can be broadly summarised as follows; the management of Norfolk Meat Traders Ltd; a new food business operator opening at this site; religious slaughter; and CCTV.

53. The FSA are satisfied that Norfolk Meat Traders Ltd has taken the necessary actions to comply with the statutory controls governing approval to operate as a slaughterhouse and they were granted conditional approval 26 September 2016. We are closely monitoring the operation of this plant and its approval will be reviewed after 3 months.

EFFICACY OF RECALLS PROJECT

54. The efficacy of food withdrawals and recalls project is making good progress. The project has established an External Stakeholder Reference Group, made up of a cross-section of representatives from industry, consumers and regulatory bodies to help inform, support and guide the project with their collective experience and knowledge of this area. The first meeting of this group took place on the 20 September and the next meeting is scheduled for early January 2017.

55. Current work includes various evidence gathering activities to assess the effectiveness of the current process from a consumer, regulator and industry perspective as well as to identify potential improvements. This includes the live monitoring and review of a number of recalls as they occur, as well as a comparison of the UK traceability, withdrawal and recall systems against those operated in other EU and third countries. This work is expected to be delivered in three phases between December and May 2017, with corresponding improvement activity being delivered alongside it.

SENTENCING FOR FOOD HYGIENE AND FOOD SAFETY OFFENCES

56. A number of successful prosecutions have been undertaken. Blackpool Council and Coventry City Council both secured successful outcomes to prosecutions relating to hygiene offences.

57. A conviction was also secured by the FSA against the operator of a poultry meat slaughterhouse in Barnsley who was fined £22,000 after pleading guilty to eleven offences. The company was also ordered to pay prosecution costs of £7,193.