



Impact of FHRS on small/ micro food businesses

FBO Interview guide

December 2018-January 2019

45-60 minutes

Objectives

- To gauge responses from small/ micro food businesses to the potential impact of ROF on how the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) works.
- To gain insight on how they think ROF impacts on FHRS could be managed.

Materials

- Handouts
- Digital recorder
- Incentives

Introduction and warm up

5 mins

- Moderator to introduce self
- Explain moderator role: impartial, independent, run tasks and keep to time
- Explain recording and confidentiality
- Session length
- Nature of research:
 - We will be discussing food hygiene rating scheme
- Need to be as open and honest as possible – no right or wrong answers
- Respondent introductions: Name, what business they run, how long they've run it for.

FHRS attitudes and behaviour

5 mins

- What is the FHRS rating for your business?
- How satisfied are you with your rating? Why / why not?
 - Has it changed over time? How?
- How do you use FHRS for your business?
 - [England] do you display it? Why? Why not?
 - Do you use your rating in any other way? (Probe: put on website / menu / marketing materials etc.)
- What impact do you think FHRS has
 - On your business? Spontaneous, then probe – reputation, competitiveness, ability to get business/ bookings, insurance premiums etc.
 - For your customers – do you think they use it? Do they ask you / your staff about it? Do they ask about the date the rating was given?
- To what extent do you look at the ratings of other food businesses? Why / why not?
 - Where do you look (i.e. on premises vs online)?
 - Do you have different expectations of different food business types, for example, retailers vs. restaurants vs. takeaways; static vs. mobile food businesses?
 - Any different expectations of different sizes of business? Chains vs. single outlets? Small local chains vs. national/ international businesses?

Knowledge and understanding of FHRS

10 mins

- Who gives you your rating? Spontaneous, then probe: local authority, Food Standards Agency, someone else?
- Do you know if all food businesses get a rating now?
 - If they don't, do you know which don't and why?
- How often do you get a new rating? Do you know how food safety officers decide how often to visit your premises to give you a new rating? Spontaneous, then probe: type of business, type of process and how risky that is, previous rating etc.
 - Thinking about that, do you think that you get a rating too often, not often enough or is the frequency about right? Can you explain why? Is the inspection date / date of rating important to you? Why?
- What do food safety officers look for when deciding what rating you should have? Spontaneous, then prompt: hygienic food handling, cleanliness and condition of the facilities and premises, management of food safety
- What kinds of information or records do they look at? Spontaneous, then prompt: SFBB diary, temperature control records, pest control records, staff training records, other.
- Do you think the things that the officer looks at allows them to give you an accurate rating?
 - Is this about right? Too much – what could be missed out? Too little – what do they miss?
 - Do you think it necessary for the officer to visit your premises to assess your hygiene standards? Spontaneous, then prompt, what if you completed a questionnaire or shared your information/records with them – could they give you a rating on that basis?

Different approaches for different businesses

20 mins

- *Introduce **Handout A** – brief description of the risk segmentation approach and the risk engine.*

Handout A

The Food Standards Agency works with local authorities to run the food hygiene rating scheme and is thinking about some changes to it.

At the moment, all new businesses when they register with their local authority should be inspected by a food safety officer so that they can decide how often to visit in future. Most businesses will also get their food hygiene rating on the basis of the inspection findings.

A new online system for food businesses to register with their local authority is being introduced. This will capture more information about a food business and about its activities at the time of registration than is captured at the moment. This extra information will help

local authorities to decide whether or not the business needs to have an inspection. Where the risk to food safety is low, the officer may decide that inspections are not needed. This means that these businesses will not get a food hygiene rating.

An example might be a newsagent that sells only newspapers and prepacked chocolate and sweets and a few other pre-packed goods that do not need to be refrigerated.

A newsagent that also sells dairy products including cream and milk and pre-packed sandwiches that require refrigeration would still be inspected and get a rating.

The FSA is testing the new online system now.

- Overall response – what do you think about these proposals?
- What do you think about individual businesses (as opposed to all businesses of the same type/ category) being treated differently?
- One of the proposals is that low risk/ very low risk businesses are taken out of FHRS altogether because they will not be inspected.
 - What do you think of this idea?
 - What impact would it have on these businesses? Spontaneous response, then probe: insurance premiums? Access to trade opportunities? Reputation? Marketing?
 - What about other businesses? E.g. Level playing field as one business may have a rating while another very similar business does not?
- If a business doesn't get a rating, do you think it needs to have something, such as a sticker that it can put up, to show that it is not part of the scheme? Does this information also need to go on the FSA website?
- Introduce **Handout B** – brief description of Primary Authority (PA) and National Inspection Strategies (NIS)

Handout B

The FSA is also thinking about how ratings might be given where a business has already shown that it operates to very good hygiene standards – has a food hygiene rating of 5.

Rather than inspecting the business premises before a new rating is given, other sources of information could be used to check that the rating of 5 is still valid and that customers are protected.

The FSA thinks this could work well for chain businesses – restaurant chains and supermarkets - that have outlets across the country, or groups of businesses that work together with a single or lead local authority (primary or home authority) to make sure all outlets/businesses in the group have good hygiene standards.

It would mean that these businesses would get fewer inspections at their premises but they could display a more up to date rating to their customers.

The type of information that the FSA is thinking about includes things like reports of audits of the food safety management system that the business itself pays for, assessment of centrally held records on staff training, pest controls systems, temperature control systems, records of actions taken when things have gone wrong etc.

If the evidence suggests that standards have slipped, an inspection could then take place

Additional information for moderators if necessary:

A range of different information sources could be used to establish that compliance with food law is being maintained. This provides the potential to reduce the frequency of interventions at individual outlets or individual businesses in a coordinated group.

- What do you think about some businesses getting their rating of 5 confirmed by looking at data and other documents/records (rather than a physical inspection)?
 - What impact might it have on these businesses?
- To what extent do you think this should be communicated to consumers?
 - Do you think the sticker for these businesses should indicate that the rating was worked out in a different way or should it just be the same?
 - Do you think the FSA website should indicate that the rating was worked out in a different way?
- Do you see any problems for businesses that will still only get a rating after an inspection at the premises?
- What do you think might be the impact on local authorities that undertake inspections? Spontaneous, then prompted: no impact, better use of resources, , officers could spend more time with poor businesses.

Summing up and close

5 mins

- Overall, what do you think about these suggested changes?
 - How fair to food businesses and consumers are these changes?
 - What could the FSA do to reassure you that the scheme is fair?
- Thank and close