

# Food you can trust

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FSA Strategy 2022–2027



**Food  
is safe**



**Food  
is what it  
says it is**



**Food  
is healthier  
and more  
sustainable**



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# 1. Foreword – a changing food system

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The Food Standards Agency (FSA) works to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our work protects people's health, reduces the economic burden of foodborne disease and supports the UK economy and trade by ensuring – together with Food Standards Scotland – that our food has a strong reputation for safety and authenticity in the UK and abroad.

Much has changed since our last formal strategy was published in 2015.

Our role has grown significantly since the UK left the EU. We have taken on new responsibilities, including the regulation of novel foods, advising the UK Government on new trade deals, and advising on and assuring standards for imported and exported food.

Meanwhile, the pace of technology and business change in the food system continues to accelerate. People are buying food in new ways, for example via online marketplaces and through social media. These changes are affecting the way people purchase food and the way food businesses operate.

People and governments around the world are becoming increasingly conscious of the impact that food production has on the planet. The climate crisis is driving innovation in food, as more companies are investing in alternative protein sources or sustainable food packaging.

There is also a continuing challenge to improve our national diet, so the food we eat helps us to live longer and healthier lives. Our research shows that some of people's biggest concerns about food are around health and nutrition.

People are also very worried about food affordability and insecurity. We will continue to consider the impact of these issues across all our work.

The food industry and the UK and devolved governments worked together to ensure a safe supply of food throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Each major shock to the food system affects supply chains, staffing and operating models. The FSA must be ready to adapt.

Against this changing landscape, the FSA's mission – food you can trust – remains as important as ever.

This strategy describes what we will do. We will continue to protect consumers by ensuring that food is safe and is what it says it is. We will also play our part in helping to make food healthier and more sustainable for everyone. These are outcomes we want for everyone, wherever they live in the UK and whatever their personal circumstances. Issues like affordability, and the information given to consumers so they can make informed decisions, cut across our entire mission.

Our strategy also sets out how we will work as an independent, non-ministerial government department. It reaffirms the role of science and evidence in informing everything we do and our commitments to transparency, proportionality and innovation. It sets out our aspiration to make it easier for food businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing to protect public health.

Looking ahead, it will be vital for the FSA to work with and through others. We can bring particular strengths to the table: our scientific and analytical capability; our reputation with the public; our expertise on and passion for food; and our technical working relationships with local authorities and with the food industry.

The food system is changing but there are exciting opportunities to ensure it is safer, healthier and more sustainable for the future. This strategy will ensure we play our part.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Jebb".

March 2022

**Professor Susan Jebb**  
Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Miles".

March 2022

**Emily Miles**  
CEO

## 2. Our strategy

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The FSA's job, set out in law, is to safeguard public health and protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. We work closely with the UK Government and the governments in Wales and Northern Ireland, but we act independently and transparently, led by science and evidence.

Our fundamental mission is food you can trust. This mission has remained constant since our previous strategy, published in 2015. However, the food system is evolving and our strategy to deliver this mission needs to reflect and anticipate change. The FSA has greater responsibilities now that the UK is outside of the EU. New technologies and business models and changing consumer behaviours, means the FSA needs to think differently about how we deliver our mission. We also need to take account of growing public concern about health and sustainability and affordability.

By food you can trust, we mean a food system in which:



**Food is safe**

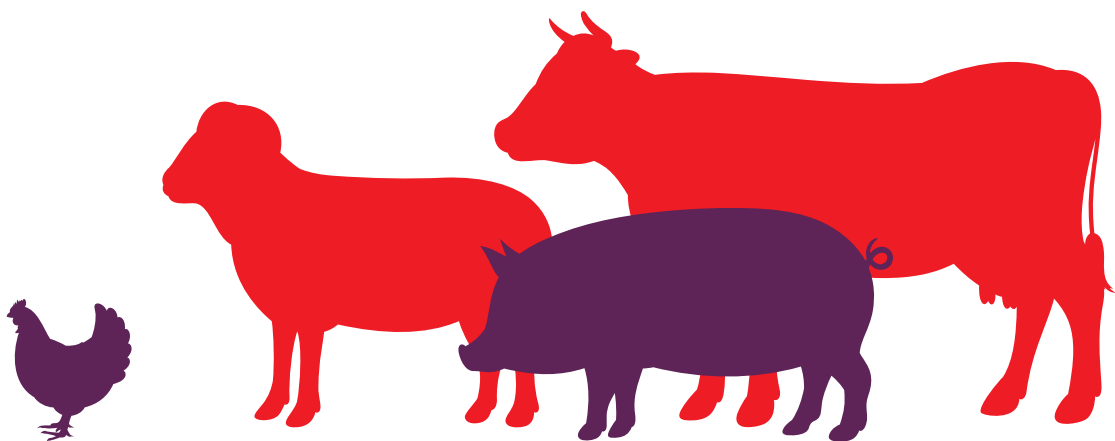


**Food is what it says it is**



**Food is healthier and more sustainable**

This is our vision for the food system for the next five years.





**The FSA is a non-ministerial government department. Our objectives, powers and duties are set out in legislation, primarily the Food Standards Act 1999.**

**Our main statutory objective is to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food (including risks caused by the way in which it is produced or supplied) and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. Where we refer to ‘food’ in our strategy, we also include this wider role in the way food is produced or supplied, for example animal feed and animal welfare.**

**We operate in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Most of food policy making is devolved, so we maintain strong working relationships with the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the NI Executive. But we act independently of ministers and are governed by an independent board. We work closely with Food Standards Scotland (FSS), an independent public body with responsibility for food policy and implementation in Scotland. We always factor circumstances or data specific to each nation into the approaches we take and the advice we provide. This strategy covers our role in each country, reflecting our ‘one FSA’ approach.**

## **Our policy context**

The UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive are setting out their own plans on the strategic direction for the food system and other relevant areas. We will work closely with them as we deliver our strategy.

For example, we are a key partner in the [Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework](#) which sets out a shared vision to guide long term food decision making. Phase two will be the development of implementation plans and metrics which will be further informed by the [Green Growth Strategy](#) (the Northern Ireland Executive’s multi decade strategy, balancing climate, environment and the economy) and the [Kendall Review](#) of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Sector which includes recommendations for several further sustainability initiatives.

We intend to work closely with the UK Government to deliver its strategy for the food sector following the recommendations published in Henry Dimbleby’s independent review entitled “[National Food Strategy](#)”. We will also work with the UK Government to inform any future potential changes to retained EU law on food, in line with the [Benefits of Brexit](#) Command Paper, and to deliver commitments made in the [Levelling Up](#) White Paper. In preparing our strategy, we have taken account of the UK Government’s priorities for ‘Reforming the Framework for Better Regulation’, and these will inform our work programme in relevant areas.

We work closely with the Welsh Government on various areas of shared interest of their [Programme for Government 2021-26](#). It includes the commitments to develop a Wales Community Food Strategy to encourage the supply of locally sourced food in Wales and to develop a national model for regulation of animal welfare. In formulating and delivering our strategy, we have also borne in mind the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems, including health inequalities. Although we are not a named body under the Act, we work to the principles it contains.

The UK, Welsh and Northern Ireland Governments have each set out more general net zero ambitions, including the [UK Net Zero Strategy](#), the [All Wales Plan](#) and the [Northern Ireland Green Growth Strategy](#). Similarly, each government has set out goals around people's health. We are working with the Department for Health and Social Care on their upcoming White Paper on Health Disparities, to provide insights and ensure that communities across the UK have access to healthy and nutritious diets. The Welsh Government has set out the [Healthy Weight Healthy Wales](#) delivery plan to prevent and reduce obesity. This plan will help support a green recovery and generate changes to the way we move and eat. The Department of Health in Northern Ireland leads on the cross-Departmental Framework: [A Fitter Future for All](#), preventing overweight and obesity across the life course of the population. Work is underway to develop a successor strategy. The food sector has an important part in delivering these.

## Food is safe

Food is vital to everyone, every day. We all have the right to expect that the food we eat will not make us ill.

This is why we will prioritise keeping the level of foodborne disease low. We do this in many ways; from our direct inspection work in the meat, dairy and wine industries to our surveillance and preventative programmes.

Delivering this part of the vision will require us to continue to innovate, evolve and react to changes across the food system.

In the UK, five people every minute are made sick from eating contaminated food. There are more than 2.4 million foodborne disease related cases per year of which 15,500 receive hospital treatment and an estimated 160 deaths. This costs UK society around £9.1 billion per year (Burden of Foodborne Disease, FSA, 2018). Our work reduces the likelihood of incidents of foodborne disease.

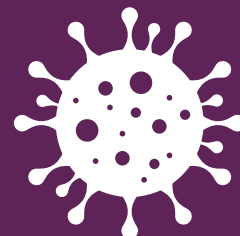
We also invest in preventative programmes such as the **Campylobacter Reduction Strategy**, which averted c.100,000 cases in 2016 ([Annual Report and consolidated accounts 2016/17](#)), compared to the the average number of cases between 2009 and 2013.



- The FSA has direct responsibility for inspecting, auditing and assuring businesses in England and Wales producing meat, wine and dairy. We deliver Official Controls in abattoirs and game handling establishments, and we audit and inspect meat cutting plants, wine producers and on-farm dairy establishments. The FSA and local authorities together deliver shellfish controls. Effective regulation of these areas remains one of our top priorities.



- In the field, day in and day out, Meat Hygiene Inspectors and Official Veterinarians deliver inspections to ensure businesses in the meat industry meet their obligations regarding food safety and animal health and welfare, to protect consumers and in support of international trade.



Local authorities are responsible for delivering activities such as inspections, audits and surveillance, sampling (known as Official Controls) in most food and feed establishments. These controls relate to food hygiene (microbiological quality and contamination of food by micro-organisms or foreign matter) and food standards (composition, chemical contamination, adulteration and labelling of food). We work with all 344 local authorities in England, 22 in Wales and 11 in Northern Ireland and with The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) who also deliver some controls in Northern Ireland. Of these local authorities, 89 also perform port health controls at the border together with four separate port health authorities.



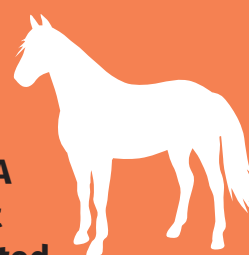
## Food is what it says it is

Consumers should be confident that food is what it says it is. That is why we will ensure food is authentic and properly described. This is essential to maintain the confidence of the public and our international trading partners in UK food. Food authenticity is also closely linked to food safety.

**In 2008, some milk products manufactured in China were found to have been adulterated with melamine. This contamination led to the deaths of six babies. Hundreds of thousands of children were affected, and over 50,000 were hospitalised. The melamine milk scandal is estimated to have cost the global economy £7.7 billion.**



**The horsemeat scandal of 2013, when traces of horse and pork DNA were found in meat products, is estimated to have cost UK industry approximately £850 million.**



## Food crime

Our National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) works to tackle serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains. Food crime, which often involves compromising the authenticity of food, is estimated to cost society up to £3.6 billion a year. The work of the NFCU is essential to help protect the reputation of UK exports and to help reduce the burden of food crime for on the UK economy.

## Food hypersensitivity

In the UK, an estimated two million people are living with a diagnosed food allergy and six hundred thousand people with Coeliac Disease. The FSA is responsible for allergen labelling and providing guidance to consumers with food hypersensitivity (which includes food allergy, Coeliac Disease and food intolerance). We work closely with food businesses to ensure they understand their responsibilities and embed the management of food hypersensitivity in a strong food safety culture. This means consumers can make safer choices about the food they buy.

## Food is healthier and more sustainable

Dietary health and sustainability are growing priorities for the UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, and for the consumers whose interests we protect.

To meet these ambitions, the food system needs to contribute.

We need to play our part in supporting government partners and others in the wider food system to make it easier for consumers to access a healthier and more sustainable diet.

These issues also affect the other parts of our vision. For example, rising temperatures mean food and feed chains are at greater risk from pathogens and other hazards like aflatoxins, the toxic substances caused by fungus. If we don't act now to play our part in tackling climate change, we will be much less able to keep food safe. Extreme weather events can affect supply chains, which in turn can mean pre-printed labels are no longer accurate if ingredients are substituted at short notice. The desire for sustainable proteins will result in food industry innovation, and any novel foods need risk assessing by the FSA.

We know that consumers want to see change. Over three in five participants in the FSA's most recent consumer insights tracking survey reported feeling concerned about the impact of food production on the environment. Over half of those surveyed reported concern about the healthiness of their personal diet ([FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, November 2021](#)).

Other departments have primary responsibility for health and sustainability, but as the only government body that looks solely at food, we can help to support efforts by the three governments to make food healthier and more sustainable. We also have specific policy responsibilities in relation to nutritional standards in Northern Ireland.

Poor diet represents a large and growing burden on public health, costing the NHS £10 billion and wider society

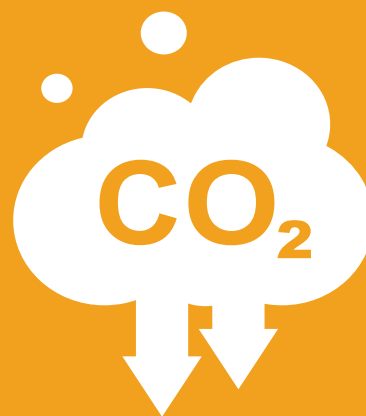
**£27 billion**



Dietary risks remain one of the largest factors that can increase your risk of developing a disease (Global Burden of Disease, October 2020). In England, the highest modifiable risk factor is high Body Mass Index and more than half of the top 20 risks to health relate to diet. (Public Health England, Health Profile for England 2017).

Food has a huge impact on the environment. Food and drink are responsible for

**17%** of UK greenhouse gas emissions, and the Climate Change Committee says changes to food, for example reducing waste or shifting diets, are a key part of achieving net zero.



### **Eating Well Choosing Better programme**

Our Eating Well Choosing Better (EWCB) programme supports small and medium sized food businesses in Northern Ireland to reduce the calorie, sugar, saturated fat and salt content of the food they produce, sell or serve, as well as reducing portion sizes to help consumers make healthier choices. The EWCB programme aligns with the UK Government's sugar reduction and wider reformulation programme with UK retailers and producers operating in Northern Ireland.

To deliver this programme we work closely with representatives from across Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, the Republic of Ireland Department of Health, Invest NI, the food industry, district councils and academic institutions.

## **Making sure everybody has food you can trust**

The FSA's mission – food you can trust – is an outcome we want for everyone, wherever in the UK they live and whatever their personal circumstances. This will only happen if everyone is able to access the food they need and to make informed choices about the food they eat. These issues cut across all three parts of our vision.

We therefore need to understand the factors that affect people's ability to access food and the choices they make. We will continue to monitor and report high quality data on these areas, to inform our own work and those making decisions across the food system.

**Household food insecurity and rising prices are a matter of growing concern. Concerns around affordability grew during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have risen again in recent months. 25% of consumers surveyed in November 2021 said they were worried about food affordability and 21% reported cutting down the size of meals or skipping meals because they could not afford to buy food ([FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, November 2021](#)).**

# 3. Our guiding principles

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We have developed seven **guiding principles** that set out how we want to work over the next five years.

The principles reflect some existing strengths of our organisation that we must maintain, and some critical ways in which we need to keep evolving:

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**1 We are the trusted voice on food standards, protecting consumer interests.** We use our in depth understanding of consumer interests to inform decisions about the food system. We earn and maintain public trust. If we need to, we prioritise the consumer interest above other interests.

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**2 We are science and evidence led.** We base our decisions on science and evidence. We produce insights and analysis that inform our own work and the policy and practice of other organisations in the food system. We tell the truth about food.

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**3 We are open and transparent.** We provide the public with clear information that helps them understand risk. We publish our research and evidence and take our decisions in public.

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**4 We work with, and through, others.** We work with others to use their reach and influence to improve food standards, and where appropriate, change consumer and industry behaviour. We work closely with partners across the UK, with national and local governments and across industry, academia, civil society and our suppliers.

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**5 We make it easier for businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing for consumers.** We listen to feedback and remove obstacles to achieving high standards. We want to help businesses get it right for consumers and to innovate. This will benefit consumers and businesses alike.

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**6 We are risk-based and proportionate.** We are proportionate in our approach, focusing on food and businesses that pose the greatest risk to consumers. We make sure the burden on business is no more than it needs to be.

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**7 We are innovative.** We anticipate change and respond quickly to fast-moving developments in the food sector here and abroad. We are proactive in our work to make sure that food is safe and to maintain the confidence of consumers, businesses and trading partners. We use data and digital technology to drive change.

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We will continue to embed these principles through all the work our teams perform.

# 4. Our roles

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The FSA has a range of statutory powers and duties, and we carry out different roles in the food system.

	<b>We are an evidence generator</b>
	<b>We are a policy maker</b>
	<b>We are a regulator</b>
	<b>We are a watchdog</b>
	<b>We are a convenor and collaborator</b>

This chapter doesn't set out a complete work plan for the next five years, but includes some key examples to illustrate the work we expect to do. Our more detailed approach to business planning is described in [section 5](#).

In most cases, these roles work together to deliver the different parts of our vision.

# The FSA as an evidence generator



## What do we do?

We have a global reputation for science and research. From the rapid assessment of risks to consumer safety, to developing new surveillance techniques to identify risks more quickly, to understanding consumer behaviour. We publish our evidence in line with our commitment to transparency. This means it is freely available to others making policy and decisions, to inform guidance to businesses and so the public can trust our decisions.

## Why do we do this?

To ensure that our decisions, and those of others, are informed by the best evidence – so that people can have food you can trust. We want strong data, analysis, insight and research to be influential on the big environmental and health outcomes around food, as well as on food safety and authenticity.

## What's our ambition?

We will create and join up evidence across a range of issues relating to food. We will build our evidence base. We will incorporate evidence about health and sustainability alongside our body of knowledge on food safety and authenticity.

One of the main statutory functions of the FSA is to act as a generator of evidence and analysis on the areas within our remit (set out in section 8 of the Food Standards Act 1999).

We obtain, review, and publish information. We understand risks and develop our evidence base. We also gather intelligence to inform our approach across other areas of our work, for example targeting our resources where they are most needed.

Most of our work as an evidence generator will concern food safety and authenticity. However, we will also grow our existing evidence base on healthier and more sustainable food. We will focus particularly on the behaviour and experiences of consumers in these areas, and on making sure we are well-equipped to engage with evidence generated by others in these areas.

## Examples of our work in this role include:

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### **Building our scientific capability**

Official Laboratories (OLs) are responsible for carrying out important analysis of food and feed samples. This analysis is used to run statutory checks at the border for imports, support criminal law enforcement, support local authorities in carrying out their environmental health and trading standards duties, and allow effective responses to major food and feed incidents.

The scale and range of analytical tests has declined in recent years, and following our departure from the EU, we have also lost access to EU Reference Laboratories, which developed analytical methods and undertook knowledge sharing with UK labs. In the coming years, we will reform and improve the system, to address the decline in capacity and build a resilient Official Controls laboratory system.

### **Foodborne Disease Framework**

We have developed our Foodborne Disease Framework to bring together data and surveillance information on the thirteen pathogens with the most detrimental effect on society. The framework is also informed by a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis tool, developed by the FSA, to calculate which of the pathogens has the most detrimental effect on society (e.g. number of cases per year, cost to society and the level of public concern). Overall, the approach will assist our work in delivering risk reduction plans for each, in line with our principle of being risk-based and proportionate.

## **Dietary health surveillance in Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, where the FSA is responsible for advising ministers on nutrition, we commission and analyse a range of surveys to monitor aspects of diets and purchasing patterns. We use these to inform our work, to share with stakeholders working on these issues and to monitor outcomes in the Northern Ireland obesity prevention strategy. The data is regularly shared with key stakeholders in Northern Ireland to support wider dietary health research and policy development.

## **Assessing alternative proteins**

In the future we expect to receive regulated product applications for alternative proteins. Enquiries received so far have included cultured (lab grown) meat, plant and algae-based products and edible insects. We want to be proactive, recognising the potential of alternative proteins to benefit dietary health, the environment and the UK economy, while still ensuring food is safe and what it says it is.

We will continue to advise stakeholders and partners about providing high quality evidence to support their applications and help address any concerns. We are also funding research to better understand the possible safety risks and other new issues that may be associated with alternative proteins. We are looking at consumer attitudes to these products and how the safety risks might be different to traditional proteins, to help inform future regulatory decisions and advice to industry.

# The FSA as a policy maker



## What do we do

We advise ministers on food safety, food authenticity and consumer interests in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The policy areas we advise on are different in each nation (see page 19).

Ministers then make the laws and rules for all businesses involved in the production and sale of food. This is underpinned by risk assessments of new developments and using science and evidence.

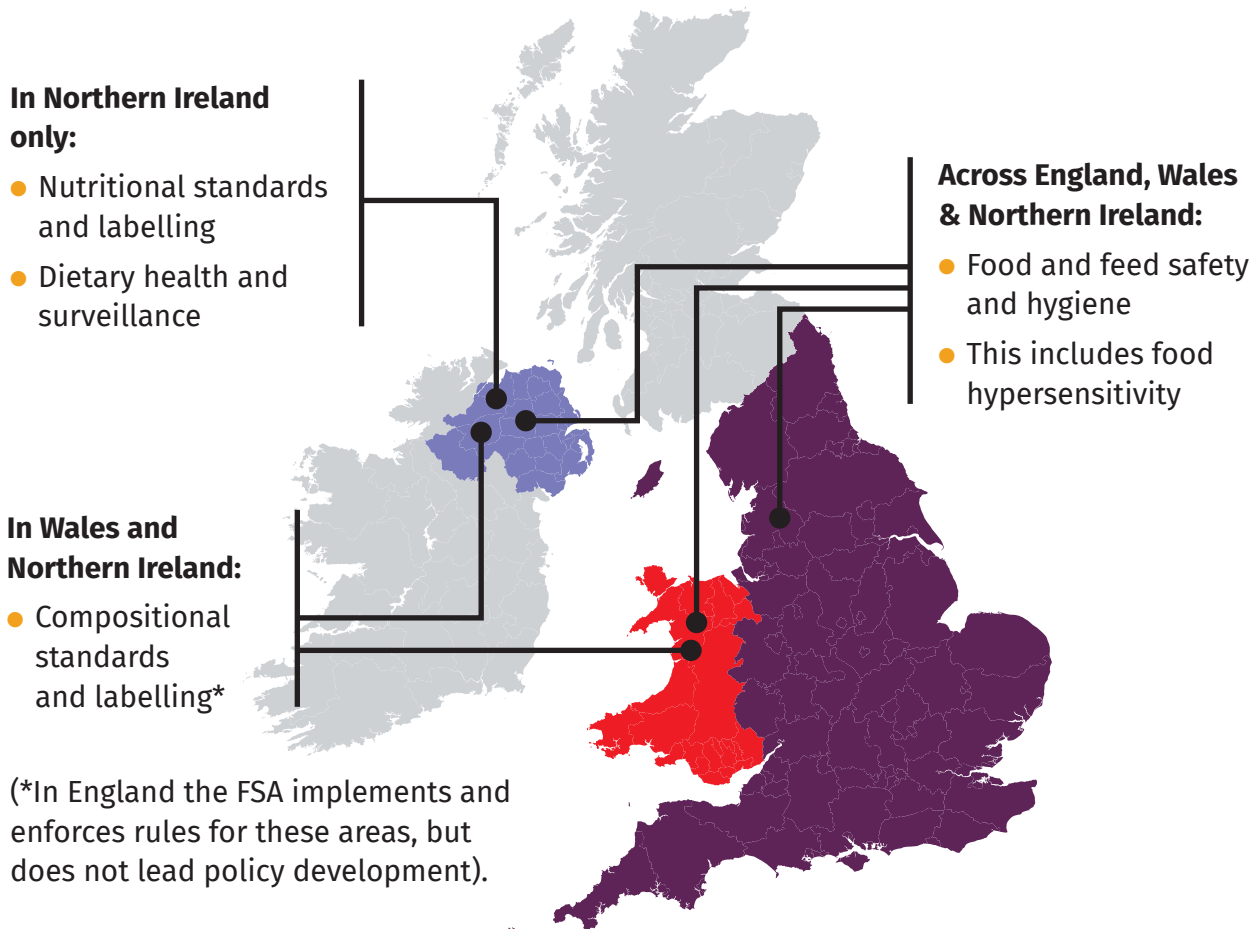
## Why do we do this?

To make sure the body of guidance, rules and regulations that exist – nationally, internationally and at a devolved level – deliver food you can trust.

## What's our ambition?

We will make robust recommendations and support ministers to take informed decisions on rules relating to food, based on evidence and independent assessments. We will carry out this work in line with our principles to act in a proportionate and risk-based manner and to make it easier for businesses to meet their obligations. We will take a four-country approach to our work, considering England, Wales, Northern Ireland and collaborating with FSS for Scotland. We will identify and grasp opportunities for regulatory reform, so our approach adapts to the changing food system.

## Our areas of policy responsibility



We have a statutory function to develop policies that relate to the areas set out in the diagram above.

In other policy areas, we will still offer advice or input to policymakers where we have relevant evidence or skills, but other departments will “own” the policy and advise their ministers on it.

As a policy-maker, our focus will primarily be on our core role of food that is safe and is what it says it is, and our nutrition remit in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland will also require a different approach to policy making, as it is still subject to EU policy decisions under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

## Examples of our work in this role include:

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### **Authorising Regulated Products**

The FSA and FSS are now responsible for making recommendations to ministers on authorisations for regulated food and feed products before they can enter the market in Great Britain. We also plan to review and modernise the inherited legislation from the EU to streamline the authorisation approach. This will make it clearer and easier, which will promote UK innovation and economic growth, making it easier for businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing.

### **Securing National Food Crime Unit legal powers**

The FSA's National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) is responsible for tackling serious, organised, and complex cases of food crime. We will publicly consult on proposals for enhanced powers for the NFCU to support investigations and relieve the burden on police and trading standards colleagues.

### **Working across the UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive following EU Exit**

We are increasing our capability to support the government's work on trade opportunities for the UK outside of the EU. We provide risk assessments of countries that want to start importing to the UK, supporting Free Trade Agreement negotiations and demonstrating our own food safety arrangements to countries we export to.

The NI Protocol and the devolved nature of food policy decisions also mean that, now Great Britain is outside the EU's harmonised system, divergence has already started to occur between the regulatory systems of different UK nations. We are committed to working with other parts of government to seek consensus in the advice we provide to ministers in each country. However, there may be occasions where the advice we give to ministers includes potential for divergence between different countries. Our approach to these questions is to keep safety, and public health risks identified through risk assessment, as the central factor in our decisions, while acknowledging the wider context and the impact our proposals may have on other consumer interests.



# The FSA as a regulator



## What do we do?

We regulate the food system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We directly deliver controls in meat, primary dairy and wine production. We work with local authorities who inspect local businesses selling food – setting the inspection framework, providing advice and guidance. We do the same for port health authorities, who inspect food imports. We provide guidance to food businesses. We use surveillance to identify risks to consumers and spot potential food safety incidents, and we respond to these when they happen.

## Why do we do this?

To make sure that food businesses are compliant with the rules and to support them to follow best practice, so that consumers have food you can trust.

## What's our ambition?

We will act in line with our principle to be proportionate and risk-based, tailoring our approach to different businesses and the level of risk they present to consumers. We will invest our resources to regulate and assure food businesses in smarter ways, making it easier for businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing for consumers.

We will work with and through other influential actors on the food system, such as digital aggregators.

We have specific responsibility as a direct regulator within the meat, dairy and wine sectors, enforcing rules including food safety, integrity and wholesomeness. We also monitor and enforce compliance with animal welfare rules in slaughterhouses on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in England and the Welsh Government in Wales. In Northern Ireland, this work is carried out for the FSA by DAERA.

We guide, advise and train the local authorities and port health authorities who enforce the rules for the food and feed businesses that the FSA does not directly regulate.

We are also supporting local authorities and port health authorities to build their capability for the introduction of checks on imported food and feed from the EU following the UK's exit.

Our statutory responsibilities as a regulator are focused on making sure that food is safe and is what it says it is. However, we will explore how we can make sure that we appropriately consider the health or environmental impacts of food in our work assuring food safety and authenticity.

**Examples of our work in this role include:**

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### **Achieving Business Compliance**

Our Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme will modernise the way food businesses are regulated by the FSA and local authorities, by developing new ways to maintain effective regulatory oversight over a more diverse and complex food system.

Our ABC programme will develop a set of smarter regulatory approaches which will make it easier for businesses to provide safe and trusted food for consumers, target regulatory resources at the areas which pose the greatest risk and improve compliance across the system by working with and through others.

The programme includes three workstreams:

1. Targeted and proportionate regulation: We are designing a more targeted and proportionate approach to local authority regulation of food businesses.
2. Enterprise-level approaches: We will design new regulatory models for a set of large businesses that are compliant with regulation and influential in the food chain.
3. Assurance of online food sales: We will assess the potential risks to consumers from buying food online, and the regulatory levers available to address these.

## Operational Transformation

The regulatory model for the Official Controls we deliver directly needs to keep pace with industry innovation. Similar to the ABC programme described on page 21, we will regulate in a smarter way while continuing to ensure trust and food safety. We will be innovative, and risk based and proportionate and ensure a cost-effective future delivery model.

Our Operational Transformation programme will:

- a. Develop a modernised, proportionate approach to inspections
- b. Improve process and delivery to increase compliance, refocus limited resources in the areas of highest risk.

We will look to make improvements within the current legislative framework, but will also seek legislative change where needed.

## Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The FSA operates the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in partnership with local authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The scheme provides information to the public on the hygiene standards in food premises at the time of local authority inspections to check compliance with legal requirements. The scheme is an important public health protection measure: high ratings are linked with a lower incidence of foodborne disease.

People can access ratings at [food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings), via smartphone apps, and through open data. Businesses are also given distinctive black and green stickers showing their rating for display at their premises.

Businesses in Wales and Northern Ireland are required by law to display their rating stickers at their premises, and proposals to legislate for online display are being progressed. In England, display is currently voluntary, but we are committed to pressing the case for mandatory display both at premises and online to align with Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Feed delivery programme

The FSA is responsible for commissioning the delivery of feed Official Controls through local authority partners. The UK's departure from the EU along with the need for the feed sector to contribute to sustainable food production has created the environment for a swiftly changing landscape in feed supply chains.

For example, there have been developments in the use of insect proteins and feed additive applications, which their developers hope will have positive environmental impacts. The FSA has a role to play to ensure that feed regulation is sufficiently agile to respond to the fast pace of innovation.

We will work with our stakeholders to ensure safety and continued public health protection. We will support our local authority delivery partners by:

- Making best use of the capability and capacity of enforcement partners.
- Developing tools and mechanisms to speed up the identification of feed imports, thereby focusing resource on matters of most impact.
- Updating our Official Control directions and guidance to provide timely clarity where fast paced developments require this.

## Shellfish site classification

The FSA is responsible for the classification of shellfish harvesting areas which is a pre-requisite for shellfish production. Sites are classified depending on the level of contamination indicated by E.coli testing. The UK's departure from the EU placed additional focus on this sector and on the classification programme.

We are refining our approaches to delivering shellfish official controls, working within the current legal framework to support businesses as they adapt to new export requirements and making sure any changes are evidence-based and public health is protected. We will continue to work with our stakeholders to modernise the way these controls are delivered.

# The FSA as a watchdog



## **What do we do?**

We review and report on food standards and consumer interests in relation to food, using horizon scanning, intelligence and surveillance. We speak out publicly about areas of consumer interest, when we have evidence or expertise that could make a difference.

## **Why do we do this?**

As an organisation working across the food system, we can help to spot emerging issues, trends and potential risks to consumers, and make sure that all those who make decisions that affect the food system are aware of them. This helps us, and others to protect the UK's high food standards and make sure everyone can continue to have food you can trust.

## **What's our ambition?**

We will use our independence, our voice and our evidence to inform and persuade others in line with our principle to be the trusted voice on food standards, protecting consumer interests.

The FSA can look across the food system and monitor developments or progress toward actions that support public health, or the other interests of consumers in relation to food. We will use our powers to publish advice and information. We do this by: publishing reports on food standards, assessing the scale of food crime threats, and publishing independent advice to governments when we judge that there are risks to public safety or consumer interests. We will seek to use this watchdog role to drive changes in policy, consumer behaviour and business behaviour.

We will review and report on standards and consumer interests in relation to food in the UK, jointly with FSS.

We will gather and share intelligence on food crime, and then investigate and disrupt it as part of our regulator role.

We will speak out publicly about areas of consumer interest, when we have evidence or expertise to add.

## Examples of our work in this role include:

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### **Annual Report to Parliament**

The FSA will publish, jointly with FSS, a new annual report on food standards in 2022. Throughout the UK's preparations for EU Exit, the FSA and FSS were clear that we would work to uphold our high standards of food safety and authenticity once we left the EU. Our annual report has been developed to give consumers an independent, evidence-based report about UK food standards.

The report will cover the state of the nation's plate by providing an overview of people's eating and food purchasing behaviour: where people buy food, where people eat, what they eat and how much they spend on food. It will cover consumers' concerns, interests and priorities when it comes to food. The report will use a wide range of evidence to examine the core question: are food standards being maintained, raised, or lowered across the UK?

### **Food crime strategic assessments**

The FSA's NFCU and the FSS Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit publish periodic strategic assessments of food crime. These assessments describe threats from food crime to the UK and its interests. For example, the previous assessment concluded that most food crime relates to two broad classes of activity – either the repurposing of materials holding little or no value in the food chain as edible and marketable, or the sale of passable food, drink or feed as a product with greater volume or more desirable attributes.

We use these assessments to develop our priorities, and deliver strategies to counter the most harmful threats, and to direct intelligence collection where we have gaps in our coverage or understanding. The next strategic assessment is due to be published in early 2023.

# The FSA as a convenor and collaborator



## **We are a convenor and collaborator**

We bring together parties to address issues in the food system, working with other parts of government, academia, civil society and businesses to support shared goals and objectives. We share insights and evidence on the interests of citizens to help inform thinking across government.

### **Why do we do this?**

To make sure that influential actors in the food system are working together, because we all have a role and responsibility to create a food system you can trust.

### **What's our ambition?**

We will be even more networked with other players in the food system. We act in line with our principle to work with and through others and develop deeper working relationships. This will deliver better outcomes for people and businesses, because we can achieve more together.

The FSA is just one of the actors in the food system. To deliver food you can trust, we will need to work with other parts of government, including the UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, FSS and local authorities, our delivery partners, industry and consumer associations.

We expect to be playing a convenor or collaborator role for much of our early work on food that is healthier and more sustainable. We do not hold policy responsibility for these areas, aside from nutritional standards and labelling in Northern Ireland, but we expect to work closely with the departments that hold this, alongside partners outside government. We can bring our evidence and our experience of food policy regulation and consumer insights to help shape the development of their plans to make food healthier and more sustainable.

## Examples of our work in this role include:

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### **Growing our international presence**

The FSA's international strategy is to grow our influence to become a stronger and more influential voice on the world stage. We want to use our expertise to help solve problems faced internationally, and we want to learn from other regulators so that best practice is applied in the UK. We also want to make sure that imported food meets high standards, so will play our part in multilateral conversations about food standards.

The UK is influential in international forums, which set global food and animal and plant health standards, which are also used by the World Trade Organisation. Responsibilities for leading on the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission's different committees are split between government departments. The FSA leads on food safety committees, such as food hygiene, food additives and contaminants; other committees have leads in other departments. The FSA is also active within the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

### **PATH-SAFE**

The PATH-SAFE (Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment) project brings together the FSA, FSS, Defra, DHSC, the Health Security Agency and the Environment Agency to test the application of genomic technologies in the surveillance of foodborne pathogens and antimicrobial resistant microbes in all four nations of the UK. £19.2m funding provided through the Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund will support a three-year project to develop a pilot national surveillance network, using the latest DNA-sequencing technology and environmental sampling to improve the detection and tracking of foodborne and antimicrobial resistant pathogens through the whole agri-food system from farm to fork. This is a good example of delivering our principles of working with and through others, and being science and evidence led.



## **School Food Standards**

We are working closely with colleagues in the Department for Education, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, and local authorities to assess and improve the level of compliance with School Food Standards. These standards are mandatory for state-funded schools in England, and set minimum nutrition standards for school food.

Using our knowledge of the food system and experience of working with local authorities, we are running a series of pilots to test how compliance with the standards can be better assured.

# 5. Implementing the strategy and measuring progress

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This strategy sets our direction for the next five years. We expect our organisation and our work to evolve to meet the ambitions we have set out.

We will need to be flexible in our approach, particularly as we explore new areas of our strategy such as our vision for food that is healthier and more sustainable.

We are setting our corporate objectives and work plan for the first year alongside this strategy and will set work plans for subsequent years through our corporate planning process. We will discuss these at public Board meetings. We will also work with external stakeholders to inform work planning, as part of our commitment to work with and through others.

We know from the last five years with EU exit and the COVID-19 pandemic that our context can change significantly. But we expect this strategy to provide the framework with which to face those changes: clarity about our vision, our objectives, and how we are going to do our work.

Having set out our strategy, we will need to make sure that the FSA has the capacity and capability to deliver on it. We will include in our work plans some internal pieces of work that help us to build that resource, and to ensure that the guiding principles are fully embedded in the FSA.

## Our people plan

We are developing a new people plan to enable us to deliver on our strategy. Its focus will be on maximising organisational capability, living our values, ensuring an excellent employee experience and growing and developing our people.

## Services approach

We believe it is important to see some of our work as a ‘service’ for the public, industry, local authorities or other parts of government. We have applied a service design approach to our digital services for some time but are now expanding this into other areas of our organisation. This will include increasing the amount of feedback we receive on our work, establishing and monitoring performance metrics and redesigning some of our processes to work more smoothly. Through this process we aim to make it easier for businesses to meet their obligations and do the right thing.

# Measuring progress

## Existing measures

The food system is incredibly complex. To measure the successful delivery of our strategy, we will need to consider a range of metrics acknowledging the complexity involved in measuring progress in the food system.

There are also many actors, including the FSA, with different roles and responsibilities to make food safe, what it says it is and healthy and sustainable. This means we will need to look at progress from several angles.

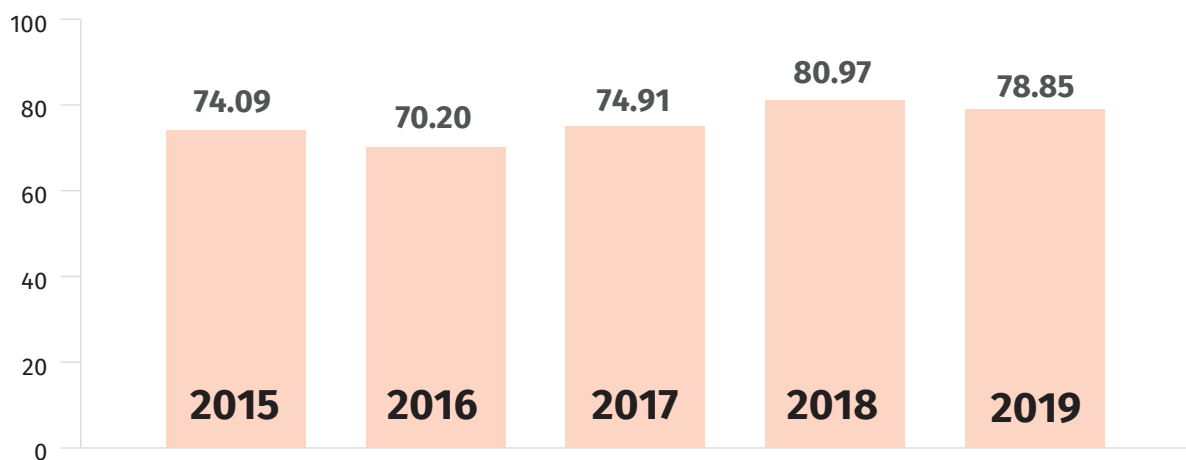
The FSA has a performance reporting system with a cascade of metrics and targets, from our top-level strategic objectives down to the daily activities of our frontline work. We publish performance data on a regular basis, for example in performance and resources reports to the FSA Board’s Business Committee.

We plan to evolve this performance reporting system and use it to measure progress against our new strategy.

Many of the existing measures already align with our new strategy including on whether food is safe and food is what it says it is.

For example, relating to our vision that **food is safe**, we publish figures for the number of laboratory confirmed cases of the ‘big four’ food pathogens. These are the number of cases, confirmed by laboratory tests, of four of the main sources of foodborne illness – E. Coli, Salmonella, Campylobacter and Listeria. This allows us to measure an outcome in the food system we want to see - that cases remain low.

### Lab confirmed cases of ‘Big 4’ food pathogens (000s)



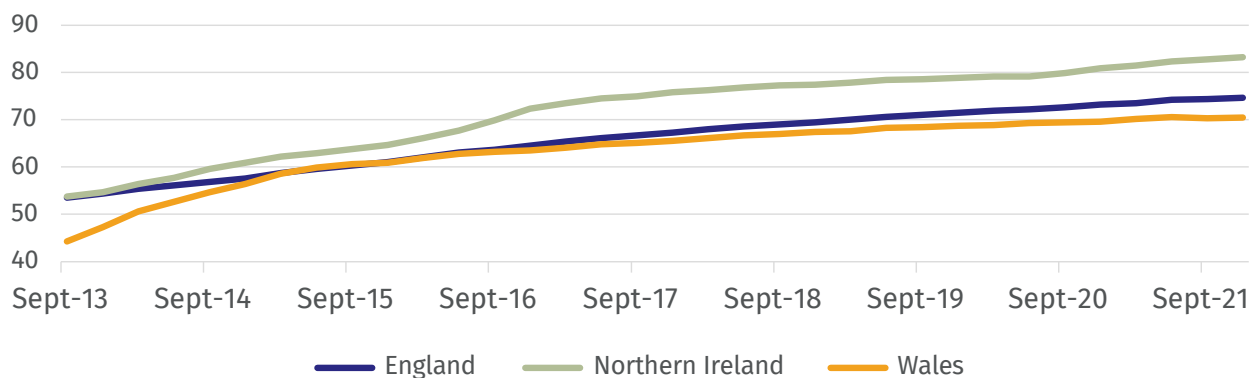
We regularly measure consumer perspectives on the food system and of the FSA:

### % of consumers who are confident in food safety and authenticity

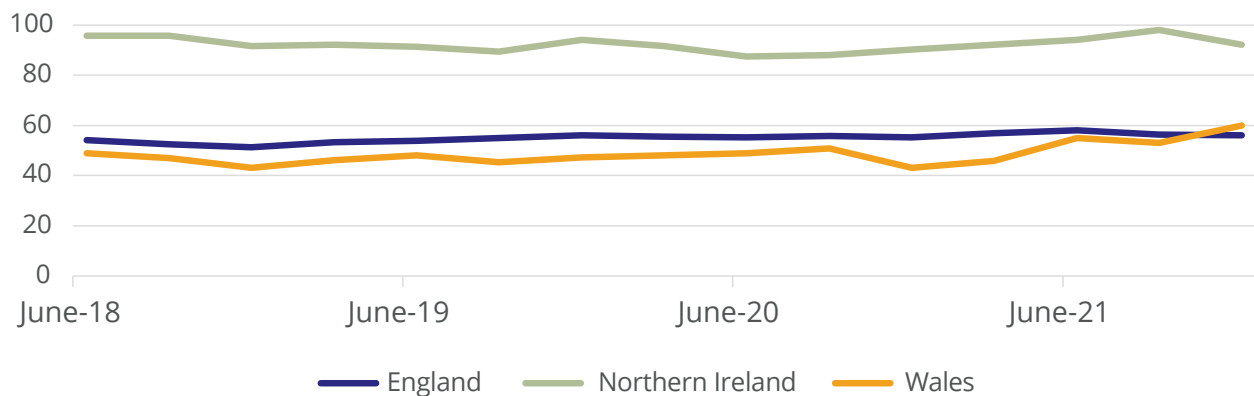


We also publish measures of the contribution the FSA and others in the food system make to achieving these outcomes. For example, we report on the percentage of Food Business Operators (FBOs) achieving FHRs ratings of five (meaning very good) and those receiving a rating below three (meaning below satisfactory). We also report on the percentage of meat FBOs who are rated as satisfactory or above for compliance and audit activity.

### Percentage of businesses achieving FHRs score five (very good)



## Percentage of meat businesses audited rated 'good'



These measures continue to represent a picture of the performance of the FSA and the food system as a whole and provide a useful baseline to measure progress against.

## Updated and new measures

We will develop new metrics and revise our performance reporting to fit this new strategy.

To effectively evaluate our strategy we our metric will go from 'end-to-end', so we have numbers for own our activities and outputs, for how the food system overall is doing and how those join together so we can assess our particular contribution:

- Developing and improving measures covering our core role in **food that is safe and is what it says it is**.
- Incorporating the right set of measures to understand progress in the area of **food that is healthier and more sustainable** (building on existing nutrition measures we use in Northern Ireland).
- Incorporating measures relevant to protecting wider consumer interests in food, such as food insecurity and affordability.
- Expanding the measures relating to how we are embedding our principles, for example measures of FSA service delivery such as user feedback, or how long it takes us to perform certain actions.
- Tracking the benefits we have delivered in areas covered by our strategy, for example what corporate plan milestones have we reached and what impact we can demonstrate for consumers (either as forecasts or retrospective evaluations).

Ultimately this strategy is all about delivering food you can trust for consumers. By using a robust and varied set of measures to track delivery and impact over the next five years, we will be able to adjust our approach where needed, deal with change, and ultimately be sure that everyone has food that is safe, is what it says it is, and is healthier and more sustainable.





