

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

### **1 The launch of Food Standards Scotland**

- 1.1 It's been a long journey, but on 1 April we reached our destination and successfully launched Food Standards Scotland (FSS). It was a 'soft' launch as intended (rather than a "hard landing") and we had some good media coverage on Vesting Day. I was interviewed for STV, and our Chair was on BBC Radio 4's Farmer's Weekly programme. We also gained strong coverage in the press – including The Herald and The Scotsman.
- 1.2 Our staff had been working very hard as Food Standards Agency in Scotland both to maintain the day-to-day business of the FSAS and to deliver and deal with the major change that setting up the new body involved. And they are now, as FSS staff, continuing to work at pace to establish the processes and procedures, and to begin to develop the policies, that will allow us to deliver on our promise to focus on Scotland's needs and circumstances. This has been a very successful change programme and it is worth recording how well the staff have done and to record my thanks to the staff for their contribution to the delivery of such a large scale change
- 1.3 We have had, on the whole, a smooth transition – we are working through a few issues, as are to be expected with a change programme of this size, but nothing that has impacted on our continuing ability to protect consumers. We aim to produce a status report by the end of the month on any issues relating to preparatory work done with Scottish Government (SG) that remain outstanding. This will help us develop an action plan for completing any relevant tasks.

### **2 New offices**

- 2.1 To complicate matters, and as the Board is aware, we have moved to new offices in the run-up to Vesting Day. This was through force of circumstances – the expiry of a lease – and not because of our new status. It has, however, besides presenting us with an additional layer of challenge, provided us with a smart new environment for FSS to operate from.

### **3 IT and Corporate Services transition**

- 3.1 We are in the final stages of completing the corporate services transition which has seen us separate FSAS from the FSA to create FSS. A significant amount of work has been done to transition the Information Technology (IT), Human Resources (HR), Finance and Procurement services. The technical work to set-up the systems and processes for FSS was part of the programme of work to

set us up.

### 3.2 Where we are today is:

- On IT - FSS is using the SCOTS network, supported by the SG's Information Services and Information Systems Division. All of the FSS workforce, field and office-based is on a single network and we can work and communicate on the same platform. All of our staff have a laptop and can connect remotely from meat plants or their homes. And we have provided and will support connectivity and infrastructure to 24 key meat plants across the country.
- On HR - FSS's payroll work will be done by the SG HR Shared Services on FSS's behalf, and we are working to develop more HR capacity in-house to support our developing organisation.
- On Finance - FSS is using SEAS, the SG's finance system. This arrangement is for the use of the system only – as FSS is not part of the SG, FSS has its own ledger and our finance team is based here in Aberdeen. The arrangement replicates that which Scottish Parliament has.
- On Procurement - FSS is buying this service from the Central Government Procurement Service and have been working with the Shared Service during the transition period to identify and separate contracts from the FSA. We are looking forward to working with our Procurement colleagues to procure new work for FSS which will help use deliver our strategy.

## 4 New website

- 4.1 Our FSS website, carrying our new brand, was up and running from Day 1, and is being enhanced and refined daily. We have been keeping an eye on usage of the website – from 1 April to 9 April, there were 18,049 page views, representing 5,837 website sessions from 4,435 users, with 55% of visitors going on to view at least one other page after the one they landed on. The most popular user group page was the one for consumers, and the most popular section was on food safety and standards (by far the biggest section of the site). We plan to look more closely at website usage over the next few weeks and going forward.

## 5 Budget and remit

- 5.1 The Budget (Scotland) Act 2015 received Royal Assent on 11 March 2015, confirming the financial provision for the Scottish Administration and certain bodies whose expenditure is payable out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund (SCF). The FSS resource budget of £15.7 million net was confirmed for 15/16 as part of this provision.
- 5.2 We have also agreed the terms of our remit with respect to diet and nutrition, and will today be asking the Board to note this, and to consider initial steps for

the fulfilment of our role.

- 5.3 FSS and FSA have agreed a memorandum of understanding, supported by a number of detailed protocols, to support partnership working to protect consumers across the UK. Catherine Brown, FSA CE, and I are co-signatories to the memorandum, which came into effect on 1 April. Following a useful discussion around EU and International work, Catherine Brown and I have also sent a joint letter to the European Commission, setting out the respective responsibilities of, and working arrangements between, our two organisations.

## 6 Operational delivery

- 6.1 We have brought in, from 1 April, a new charging system for official controls in meat plants. We have also adopted a new IT solution to record, manage and report on operational delivery. It allows our inspectors in meat plants to record data that fulfils regulatory requirements and provides a repository of data for management information, thus giving our finance team the data they need to pay staff and to charge businesses, and managers the information they need to deliver an effective service. Again this has been a significant challenge and a great achievement with a specification, tender, design, development and implementation achieved in 8 months.

## 7 Diet and Nutrition

- 7.1 [Eatwell everyday](http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/eatwell-everyday) is now on available for consumers on the FSS website [foodstandards.gov.scot](http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot). Eatwell everyday shows consumers meals and snacks which help them to have a healthy balanced diet over a week. The meals and snacks in eatwell everyday are based on foods consumers might recognise as part of what they eat at the moment and provide a starting point for making healthy changes to what they eat. Consumers can mix and match options for breakfast, lunch and dinner and make a shopping list for 2 or 4 people to help them plan.
- 7.2 [Supporting Healthy Choices](#) (SHC) sets out FSS and the SG ambitions to work collaboratively with the food and drink industry and the public sector to make it easier for the Scottish population to choose healthier food and drink options. There are 17 shared commitments for action aimed at retailers, manufacturers, out of home catering businesses, and the public sector including NHS Scotland and local authorities. In my meetings with stakeholders I am discussing SHC with them and reinforcing the importance of what we are looking to achieve.
- 7.3 FSS, with SG health colleagues, are continuing to work with the food and drink industry to gain sign up to the commitments within the framework with a number of meetings planned by the end of April.
- 7.4 [The influence of deprivation and the food environment on food and drink purchased by secondary school pupils beyond the school gate](#) is a report, published by FSS on its website, of research commissioned by FSA Scotland.

7.5 This project was commissioned to investigate the influence of food environment and area deprivation on food and drink purchased out of school by secondary (S2/S3) pupils at lunchtime. The project found that:

- it is not straightforward to determine how types of food and drink or outlet or demographic area contribute to overall diet; and
- the current Scottish policy and guidance e.g. Schools Act and Better Eating, Better Learning aimed at schools are appropriate and should continue to be implemented

## **8 European Commission proposals to relax specified risk material (SRM) controls in the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) Regulations (EC No. 999/2001)**

- 8.1 SRM is those tissues of cattle, sheep and goats that are most likely to carry BSE prion proteins which have been implicated in variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) in humans. These potentially infective materials are banned from the human food chain under the European TSE Regulations and must be removed in either a slaughterhouse or cutting plant.
- 8.2 In recent months, the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF) has voted in favour of two proposals to relax SRM controls and allow certain bovine tissue back into the food chain. The UK is not eligible to apply most of these changes until 2018 at the earliest.
- 8.3 The UK did not support either proposal, taking a more precautionary approach which was informed by the views of the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) TSE sub-group. The Scottish Government was supportive of this approach. Although the overall public health risk in negligible risk countries remains very low given the significant decline in BSE in recent years, and other surveillance and animal feed controls remaining in place, the UK would have preferred to see more robust discussion about the science and evidence that might underpin the Commission's proposals.
- 8.4 Both proposals are now subject to routine EU scrutiny procedures and if no objections are raised are expected to come into force later this year.

## **9 Shellfish**

- 9.1 FSS is responsible for the delivery of a range of Official Control monitoring activities with regard to live bivalve molluscs (LBMs) harvested in Scottish marine waters. This includes the annual classification of Scottish shellfish harvesting areas according to the levels of E. coli detected in LBM flesh sampled from the area. The final classification results for 2015/16 were published on 1st April 2015 following a process in which the industry were given the opportunity to appeal classifications awarded by FSS through the

submission of their own testing data. The data are then reviewed by an independent panel to determine the final classification award for each area.

- 9.2 180 areas were assessed for classification for 2015/16, including 37 new areas.
- 9.3 For the 143 areas which were already classified, the following changes were observed compared with 2014/15:
- 71 areas showed no change in classification
  - 21 had an improvement in classification
  - 51 had a decline in classification
- 9.4 In addition, 9 were declassified due to either a stand down in commercial activity at the site, or insufficient samples having been provided
- 9.5 The high risk biotoxin season started on 14 April, when we saw our first closure due to the presence of naturally occurring marine biotoxins in shellfish sampled from Lamlash Bay in Arran. The result was more than double the safe limit for Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning and was picked up in an area which is not currently being actively harvested. We have highlighted to the industry the need to be alert to the increased risk and take appropriate action.

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