

Chief Executives Report

1. Introduction

1.1 There has been a considerable amount of activity since the last meeting.

2. Engagements and meetings

2.1 In terms of engagements, in January Geoff Ogle attended the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers New Year Lunch, in February he attended the NFUS conference.

2.2 He held meetings with Food and Drink Federation Scotland and Quality Meat Scotland, and held regular catch-ups with the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health. He also attended a meeting with UK Accreditation Services regarding SAFER, and attended a Stakeholder Consultation workshop on National Food and Drink Charter.

3. Local Authority Audit Programme

3.1 FSS wrote to all 32 Scottish Local Authorities on 28 November formally requesting completion of a survey intended as a review of the current LA Food Establishment Database and the associated management information software landscape. All Authorities had responded by 08 January 2024 and work is on-going to analyse the responses which will be used both as an aide to performance monitoring and to inform the Scottish Authority Food Enforcement Rebuild (SAFER) project.

4. Review 2 of Regulation 2019/1793 on increased import controls of certain food and feed of non-animal origin

4.1 Regulation 2019/1793 sets temporary increases of official controls and emergency measures governing the entry into GB of specific high risk food and feed not of animal origin from certain countries. The majority of food and feed of non-animal origin can be imported into the UK without additional enhanced controls. However imports of specific high risk food and feed of non-animal origin from certain countries can only enter the UK through approved Border Control posts where increased specified official controls are carried out. A high risk product is food or feed that is either a known, or an emerging risk to public health. This may be due to the presence of pathogens, contaminants and toxins including aflatoxins.

4.2 The Regulation requires regular review of products subject to enhanced controls listed within its Annexes in order to take into account new information and non-compliance. This routine review of the Regulation has been delivered through the joint FSS and FSA Risk Analysis Process. Following public consultation, final recommendations were put to Ministers for decision. Amending current controls

requires separate Statutory Instruments in Scotland, England and Wales. *The Official Controls (Import of High Risk Food and Feed of Non-Animal Origin) (Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2024* will come into force on 7 March 2024. This instrument amends current controls by removing 13 products listed in the Annexes of the Regulation; 4 products will be subjected to reduced checks; 3 products will be subjected to increased controls; and 32 products will be introduced to the annexes to be controlled.

5. UK Wide Fairer Food Labelling Consultation

5.1 Following the Defra Secretary of State's announcement in January of plans to consult on animal welfare and country of origin labelling information, the UK Government then sought the agreement of the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive to consult on a UK-wide basis. Within a compressed timescale, in Scotland FSS and the Scottish Government collaborated with Defra to develop the consultation and provided advice to Scottish Ministers who in turn agreed that the consultation should include Scotland. Defra published the UK wide consultation on fairer food labelling on Tuesday 12 March 2024.

5.2 The consultation covers:

- proposals to extend existing mandatory method of production labelling, how to highlight imported products that do not meet UK animal welfare standards and to explore options for the production standards behind the label. In Scotland this falls under the policy remit of the Scottish Government Food and Drink Division.
- an exploration of whether new rules should be introduced on country of origin labelling, such as introducing mandatory labelling for minimally processed meats, how origin information is presented and whether origin information should be mandatory for certain foods in the out of home sector. In Scotland, Food Standards Scotland has policy responsibility for these areas.

5.3 The consultation will run for 8 weeks at the end of which all responses will be carefully considered before deciding on next steps.

The consultation is available on Defra's Citizen Space website which also gives details of how to respond: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/transforming-farm-animal-health-and-welfare-team/consultation-on-fairer-food-labelling/>

5.4 FSS has highlighted the consultation to our Scottish stakeholders, including the Local Authorities, and all interested parties who have signed up with FSS for labelling updates encouraging them to respond and to share the message with others who may have an interest in food labelling.

6. Publication of methods to assess the price of diets: a rapid literature review

6.1 Price and the ability to afford food are major deciding factors when we choose what to eat. To improve the Scottish diet, we need to understand how much a healthy diet costs and how this cost is calculated. In December 2023, we published a

[rapid literature review](#) produced for Food Standards Scotland by the University of Aberdeen. It explores methods used to estimate the price of diets, focussing on those used in high income countries. The report provides an overview of the current evidence base around affordability of diet, how this can be assessed, and the strengths and limitations of different methodologies.

7. Publication of opinion piece in the Press and Journal on ultra-processed foods

7.1 In December 2023, the Press and Journal published an opinion piece by our Senior Public Health Nutrition Advisor, Alana McDonald, titled "[‘Ultra-processed’ foods might not be what you think they are](#)". The article describes the key findings from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition’s position statement on [processed foods and health](#) that was published in July 2023, and re-iterates our current advice for a healthy balanced diet.

8. Children survey update

8.1 We currently have a national survey of dietary intake in children and young people aged 2-15 years, living in Scotland in the field. This survey will collect data from this population group for the first time in over a decade to gather comprehensive information on what children and young people in Scotland are eating and drinking; this will enable us to better support the provision of healthier food options. Over 15,000 letters were sent in January to invite randomly selected households to take part. We hope to have recruited 1700 children and young people by the end of March, with results due to be published in autumn 2024.

9. Modelling the impact of meat and dairy reductions

9.1 Climate Change Committee (CCC) has recommended that the SG “take low cost, low-regret actions to encourage a 20% shift away from all meat by 2030, rising to 35% by 2050, and a 20% shift from dairy products by 2030”. SG requested advice from FSS on the diet and health implications of these CCC recommendations in March 2023. To fulfil this request, FSS commissioned modelling work to establish the impact of reducing meat and dairy intakes in the population living in Scotland, including population sub-groups. This modelling has been carried out by the University of Edinburgh and our advice to Scottish Ministers was delivered on 26 February 2024. The final report was published on 7 March 2024: [Dietary intake | Food Standards Scotland](#). and FSS officials are meeting with Ministers in March and April 2024 to discuss the implications of the research.

10. Launch of Eating Out, Eating Well Framework pilot

10.1 The pilot of the Eating Out, Eating Well Framework and code of practice for children’s menus launched in February and will last for 6 months. Around 50 businesses have signed up to take part, with a mixture of different types of outlets, including both public and private sector. A contractor has been appointed to independently evaluate the pilot. This marks a significant milestone in the development of the framework following extensive industry engagement to develop

the achievable principles and actions by the sector to improve food provided in the out of home sector.

11. UK Government Response to the consultation on fortification of folic acid

11.1 On 17 January, the UK Government published [their response to the consultation](#) which ran in 2022 on amending The Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 and The Bread and Flour (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1998. The response confirms UK Government's intention to proceed with the proposals as set out in the 2022 consultation, to require the mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid, to help prevent neural tube defect-affected pregnancies.

11.2 The Public Health Nutrition division will be leading a monitoring group, restarting in early February 2024, which will establish how the policy will be monitored in the UK as a whole and in the devolved nations. The group will have oversight from an advisory group of members of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition.

12. Publication of consultation on HFSS promotions

12.1 On 27th February Scottish Government published its public consultation on the detail of proposed regulations to restrict promotions of food and drink high in fat, sugar or salt on the, which builds on previous public consultations and Ministerial engagement with business and health stakeholders. The [consultation document](#) has been published alongside a partial [Business Regulatory Impact Assessment](#).

12.2 The consultation will run for 12 weeks, closing on 21 May 2024, providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to comment on the detail of proposed regulations.

12.3 A joint publication from FSS and PHS '[Transforming our food environment: a spotlight on promotions](#)' was also published to coincide with the consultation which explores the promotion of foods high in fat, sugar or salt and describes the impact of these promotions on our health.

13. FIO-FOOD workshops

13.1 In December and February, the UK Research and Innovation funded project investigating the impacts of food insecurity in people living with obesity - FIOFOOD - held two stakeholder impact group workshops in Edinburgh and London. These were attended by Gillian Purdon and Heather Kelman. Heather presented an input on the *Policy perspective – Past and future strategies to promote a healthier and more sustainable food environment*. The outputs from the meetings will include policy recommendations in a White Paper that is expected to be published soon.

14. Reformulation for Health Showcase Event

14.1 Laura Wilson, Head of Public Health Nutrition, presented at an FDFS showcase event held at Dynamic Earth on 26 February, describing why reformulation

is an important contributor to improving the nation's diet. The event celebrated the success of the Reformulation for Health programme this year, including sharing of case studies of the businesses who have received grants provided through funding from FSS to improve the nutritional profile of bakery products.

15. Good Food Nation Conference

15.1 Gillian Purdon and Heather Kelman attended a Good Food Nation (GFN) conference on the 29 February 2024. The programme featured a conference address by Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and keynote address by Dr Corinna Hawkes, Director, Division of Food Systems and Food Safety, FAO. Heather Kelman gave a 5 minute presentation to challenge the audience to consider how the GFN Act could support improvements to dietary health outcomes. The conference explored the opportunities and challenges the GFN Act may bring to Scotland.

16. Border Target Operating Model – update

16.1 Under the new Border Target Operating Model (BTOM), health certification for medium risk animal products imported from the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries has been a requirement since 31 January 2024.

16.2 From January to April, random sample documentary checks will commence on medium risk EU/EFTA SPS consignments and be undertaken by DEFRA's Central Hub for animal products and HRFNAO. These checks will take place on consignments entering via all points of entry into Great Britain, including Scotland, but the consignments will not be held for inspection during this period and the checks themselves will be retrospective.

16.3 This is one element of a phased approach to the introduction of border controls – importers are already required to pre-notify authorities in GB using the IPAFFS system. One of the issues for Port Health Authorities remains access to the IPAFFS system (not all authorities currently have access and the issue is not unique to Scotland).

16.4 The introduction of documentary and risk-based identity and physical checks on medium risk animal products, plants, plant products and high risk food/feed of non-animal origin from the EU begins on 30 April.

16.5 In the meantime Defra are undertaking pilots with selected businesses as part of a "Trusted Trader" scheme. FSA and FSS anticipate being involved in the evaluation of this work to ensure that any changes made to how import controls are delivered in future maintain the integrity both of official certification, cold chain integrity, information exchange between competent authorities as well as full traceability. This includes a Certification Logistics Pilot due to begin on 31st January, to allow official certification for some products supplied by certain businesses to take place at the place of production rather than at the final EU point of dispatch to the UK. A further pilot on checks away from the border (the CAB module – proposed to

begin April 2024) will look at potential reduction/elimination of routine physical checks at Border Control Posts (BCPs). Defra intend that this will allow trusted traders to carry out routine identity and physical checks of imports at their own site in GB rather than at the BCP. FSA and FSS main interest is to ensure an appropriate level of official checks continues to be made to protect public health, and the emphasis in evaluation does not lose sight of public health prerogatives over business facilitation.

16.6 To facilitate delivery of the required legislative elements of the BTOM, a number of GB statutory instruments/instructions are in development – timelines are exceptionally tight, and the breadth of issues covered significant. One key issue for SG/FSS is how checks at west coast NI facing ports are to be facilitated (or not) as well as detail on how public health controls will be mediated in law through pilot phases.

16.7 There are also operational issues that FSS are considering in the round, including FSS access to IPAFFs – the GB pre-notification information management system relating to food and feed imports – where we are currently reliant on FSA due to resource constraints.

16.8 The following Cabinet Office Bulletin provides more detail on the BTOM: [Click to Download Bulletin](#)

17. Reviews of Regulation 2019/1793 on increased import controls for certain food and feed of non-animal origin

17.1 Regulation 2019/1793 sets temporary increases of official controls and emergency measures governing the entry into GB of specific high risk food and feed not of animal origin from certain countries. The majority of food and feed of non-animal origin can be imported into the UK without additional enhanced controls. However, imports of specific high risk food and feed of non-animal origin from certain countries can only enter the UK through approved Border Control posts where increased specified official controls are carried out. A high risk product is food or feed that is either a known, or an emerging risk to public health. This may be due to the presence of pathogens, contaminants and toxins including aflatoxins.

17.2 The Regulation requires regular review of products subject to enhanced controls listed within its Annexes at a frequency not exceeding six months in order to take into account new information and non-compliance. The reviews are delivered through the joint FSS and FSA Risk Analysis Process. Following public consultation, final recommendations are put to Ministers for decision. Amending the controls requires separate Statutory Instruments in Scotland, England and Wales.

Review 2

17.3 The second review of the imported food and feed commodities contained within the Annexes of Regulation 2019/1793 has now been completed. *The Official Controls (Import of High Risk Food and Feed of Non-Animal Origin) (Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2024* came into force on 7 March 2024. This instrument amends controls: 13 commodities are removed from the Annexes of the Regulation; 4 commodities are subject to reduced checks; 3 commodities are subject to

increased controls; and 32 commodities are introduced to the annexes to be controlled. Parallel legislation is now in force in England and Wales.

Review 3

17.4 In line with the statutory frequency of reviews, FSS and the FSA are now undertaking a third review of the Annexes of Regulation 2019/1793.

Recommendations have been developed and considered through a four-country working group in accordance with the Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene Common Framework. Separate, but parallel, public consultations were launched in Scotland, England and Wales on 14 March 2024 and will close on 25 April 2014 to seek stakeholder comments on proposed amendments. These recommended amendments involve 25 individual updates to the lists contained in Annexes I and II.

18. Operational Delivery – Resourcing Update

18.1 A number of actions have been taken to address the current resourcing issues, these include:

- RCVS Temporary Registration, alien certificate for veterinary roles and provision for an OV (Official Veterinarian) pay supplement;
- In-house OV training programme and a “Official Controls Veterinarian” SQA customised award;
- Support with onboarding of new recruits, visa & health surcharge costs etc;
- FSS Extra Mural Studies (EMS) week for vet students – UK and abroad;
- Inclusion of the OV qualification within the new SRUC Vet School curriculum;
- Regular attendance to Glasgow and Edinburgh Vet Schools, London Vet show, careers fairs and involvement in all UK vet resourcing forums/ work groups; and
- Maintenance of 10 locum OV contracts and use of temporary agency backfill where required.

18.2 Detailed below is a summary of the additional actions that are currently in progress:

- Overseas engagement – presentations at Vet Schools recognized by RCVS, and advertising with “Royal Colleges” to include testimonials / library being collated from existing FSS OVs;
- Succession planning for retiring locum OVs;
- Renew APHA Framework for which FSS Head Vet is a technical evaluator;
- Formal agreement to be set up with APHA, for mutual support as detailed within phase 2 of the Operational Delivery Contingency Plan;
- Continuing to explore options for a “recruitment agency” arrangement, to obtain suitable candidates, to then fully onboard and train; and
- In terms of staff retention, we are continuing to build in quality CPD (renewal of contract for HACCP 4 course delivery, attendance at relevant conferences etc.) and career progression avenues (e.g. deputy Vet Advisor).

18.3 A board session was held in February with SAMW members, at which time areas of strategic alignment and collaboration were discussed. Particular emphasis was placed on the newly formed Joint Efficiencies Action Group. This group consists of industry and FSS/FSA subject matter experts looking at areas where

improvements can be made, in the short to medium term, to mitigate the resourcing challenges. Two meetings of the group have now taken place with a third scheduled in for March 2024.

18.4 In terms of direct recruitment, a marketing campaign has also been launched to attract qualified veterinarians to work with us at FSS. The messaging highlights the benefits of working with us, such as fully paid training, pension and holiday entitlement. The activity includes:

- A [page on the website](#) which outlines the main requirements and benefits of working with us;
- A toolkit to share with partners who may be able to share the information with their audiences;
- Series of social media posts, making use of testimonials from existing OVs;
- An A5 leaflet which can be taken to career fairs and also downloaded from the website;
- Blog articles from current OVs; and
- A video, which is currently being edited, with FSS board member, Kate Richards, about her experience working in the public sector.

19. Role of Board

19.1 Following a request from the Chair of FBC, the table at Annex A, has been created to show the respective roles of the FSS Board, FBC and ARC.

20. Susan Jebb, FSA Chair has announced she is standing down—as the Chair when her term of office finishes on 30th June. I know this has been a difficult decision for Susan and we wish her well for the future. There is no doubt Susan will continue to play a leading role in tackling obesity across the UK and we look forward to continuing to work with Susan.

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