



Healthy, Safe, Sustainable: Driving Scotland's Food Future

Food Standards Scotland Strategy
for 2021–2026



Foreword from Chair of Food Standards Scotland



Ross Finnie
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ross Finnie".

I am delighted to introduce the new strategic direction for Food Standards Scotland (FSS) for the next five years - 2021-26. This Strategy acknowledges how the food environment, consumer interests and FSS's responsibilities have changed since we were established as Scotland's public sector food body in 2015.

FSS's focus is the interests of consumers in relation to food and animal feed, and we work independently of both industry and the Scottish Government, being accountable to the people of Scotland through the Scottish Parliament. Our key priorities are public health and consumer protection; taking action to address preventable foodborne illnesses and providing advice which promotes a healthy diet. FSS's work also plays an important role in helping Scotland become a more successful nation, by sustaining its reputation for food and drink in which consumers and export markets have confidence in the regulatory assurance provided on food and feed safety and authenticity.

Throughout our first 5 years we made great progress: strengthening the systems required to protect the food and animal feed chain; helping to improve the Scottish diet and developing the evidence base and capabilities needed to support the food interests of Scotland for the future. During this time the organisation also had to deal with major upheaval and uncertainty both before and after EU Exit.

This new Strategy aims to build on our achievements, while also recognising the need to adapt and respond to new challenges-particularly those resulting from EU Exit, COVID-19 and climate change. Our Mission Statement is to be: **Scotland's leading authority on food safety, standards and healthy eating; using data and evidence to provide assurance and advice that inspires consumer confidence and improves public health.** This is supported by a refreshed set of values and guiding principles which will help us to achieve our strategic outcomes, through the delivery of six new goals.

A key priority for our Strategy is to strengthen our influence over policies to improve Scotland's diet-which is undoubtedly one of the nation's most significant public health challenges. Despite considerable efforts

by FSS and across Government, there continues to be unacceptably high levels of overweight and obesity in Scotland. Two out of three Scots remain either overweight or obese, and we continue to buy too much discretionary food and drinks which tend to be both heavily promoted and less healthy. While the association between poor diet and health outcomes such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers has been established for some time, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus the adverse health consequences that can ensue for those who are over-weight and obese. It is therefore more important than ever that we place this issue at the forefront of our new Strategy.

Another important aspect of our new strategy is to take account of growing consumer interest in sustainability. Environmental policies and concerns over the impacts of food production on the environment and food availability are intrinsically linked to food safety, diet and health inequalities. This Strategy, therefore, places greater emphasis on these considerations and provides an opportunity for FSS to contribute to wider Scottish Government priorities for a sustainable food and drink industry and its commitments regarding climate change adaptation.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the issues and challenges we face, it is clear that FSS must continue to forge and maintain effective partnerships at governmental level. Scottish Government, local authorities, Public Health Scotland and the Food Standards Agency, will all be key partners that we will continue to work with to deliver our new Strategy .

I look forward to working with my fellow Board members; the staff; stakeholders; and consumers over the life of this Strategy to achieve our vision for **a safe, healthy and sustainable food environment that benefits and protects the health and well-being of everyone in Scotland.**

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We’re the public sector food body for Scotland. Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain in Scotland that can impact public health. We’re here to protect consumers in Scotland from food safety risks and promote healthy eating.

1. Our Role and Vision as Scotland's food body

We work across the entire food chain



Food Standards Scotland was established on 1st April 2015 as the new public sector food body for Scotland, to protect the health and wellbeing of consumers through three objectives set under the Food (Scotland) Act 2015. FSS has a unique role in government, working independently of Ministers and industry, to provide advice which is impartial, and based on robust science and data.

Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain which can impact on public health – aiming to protect consumers from food safety risks and promote healthy eating.

Our first Strategic Plan, published in 2016, was titled 'Shaping Scotland's Food Future', and set out how we would deliver our statutory functions as the new food body for Scotland. During our first five years, we delivered an extensive programme of work to strengthen the systems which are in place to protect the food and animal feed chain, improve the Scottish diet and develop the evidence base and capabilities needed to support the food interests of Scotland into the future.

This new strategy aims to build on the progress we have made, recognising the need for us to be able to

adapt and respond to a changing food environment and the diverse interests of our stakeholders and consumers, taking account of growing concerns around sustainability and climate change.

It also seeks to place a renewed emphasis on our ambition to improve the diet; helping to reduce levels of overweight and obesity in Scotland and the burden of diet related disease that inhibits the nation's wellbeing and prosperity. While this is a long-standing and complex public health challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the harmful impacts of excess body weight into sharper focus, highlighting the need for us to act urgently to improve Scotland's diet.

We cannot do this alone and must work with others that have statutory duties to improve public health and diet.

FSS will continue to put evidence first, acquiring data on what we eat and the risks to our food chain, as well as the social, ethical and environmental factors that influence the way it is produced, supplied and consumed. This will ensure we remain trusted and influential – providing advice which makes a difference, and supports improvements in the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland as our food environment continues to change.

Our vision

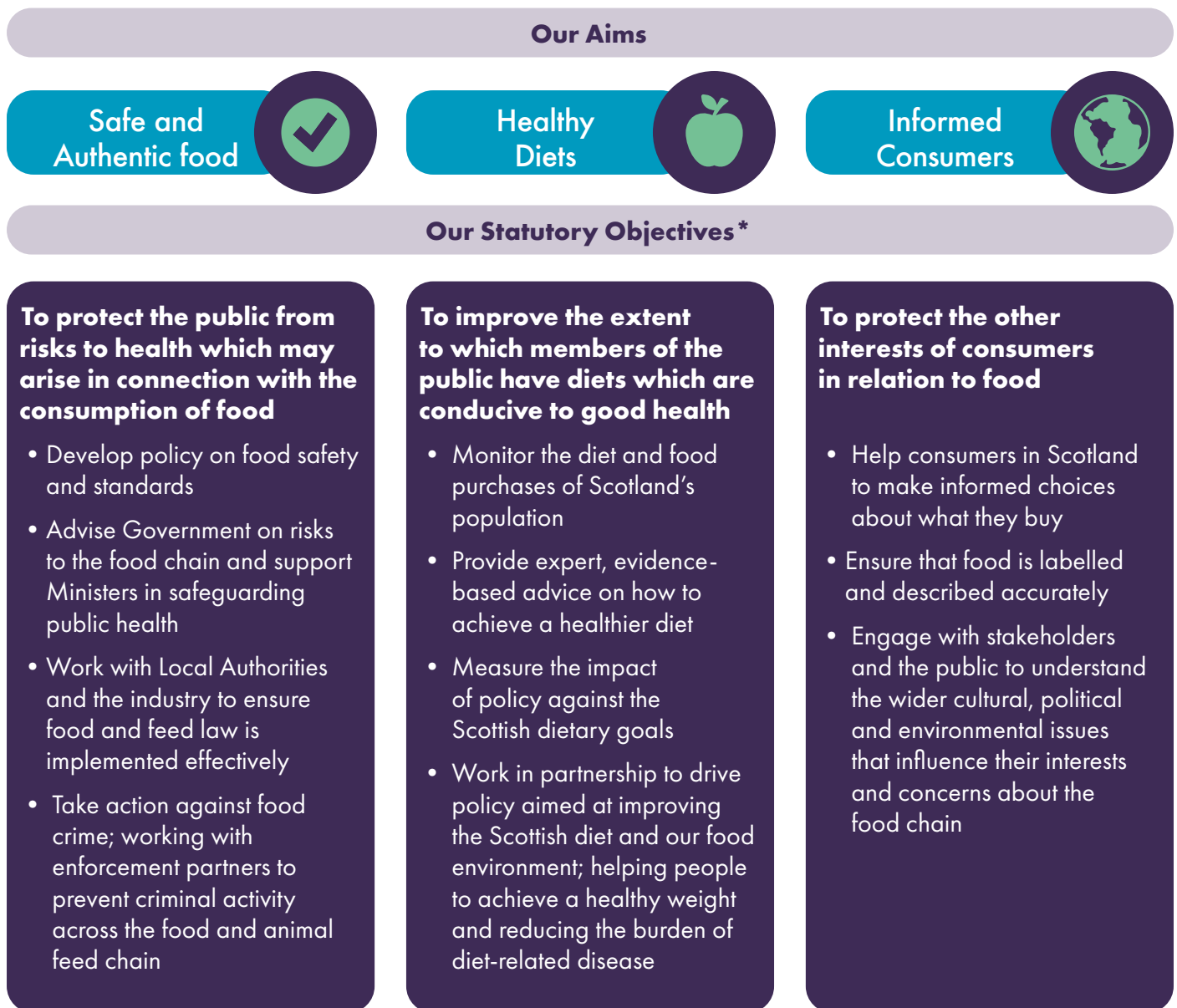
A safe, healthy and sustainable food environment that benefits and protects the health and well-being of everyone in Scotland.



Our Mission

To be Scotland’s leading authority on food safety, standards and healthy eating; using data and evidence to provide assurance and advice that inspires consumer confidence and improves public health.

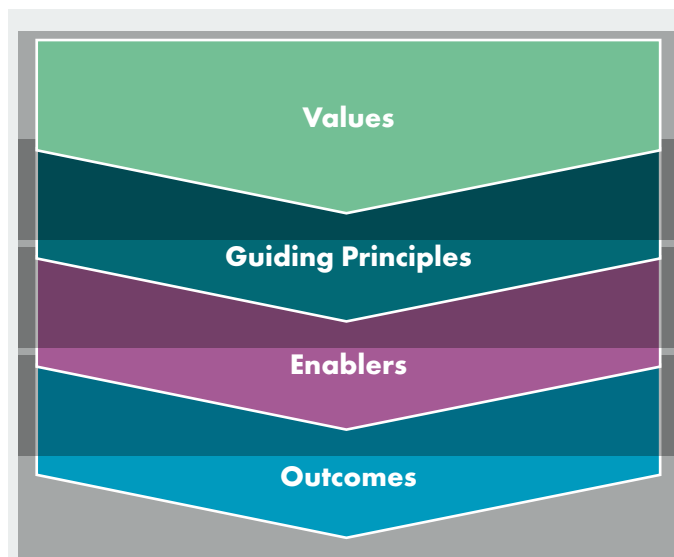
FSS’s key aims and statutory objectives are described in the diagram below, and these will continue to underpin all of the work we will do as we take forward our new strategy for 2021–26.



*FSS’s Statutory objectives are defined in the Food (Scotland) Act 2015

2. A New Strategy: Delivering our ambition for the future

Our ambition is to build on the achievements of our first five years, aligning all of our work to a set of core values and guiding principles that will help us to deliver the five key outcomes which underpin our vision and contribute to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes. This strategy describes how these values and guiding principles will frame our work over the next five years, in the context of an evolving food and health landscape.



FSS Outcomes for 2021–2026

-  Food is Safe and Authentic
-  Consumers Have Healthier Diets
-  Responsible Food Businesses are enabled to thrive
-  Consumers are empowered to make positive choices about food
-  FSS is trusted and influential



How our Outcomes Contribute to Scottish Government's National Performance Framework



We are healthy and active



We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment



We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy



We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone



We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination



We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally



We continue to adapt and keep pace in a changing food environment. Prioritising public health protection and promoting sustainability.



3. How we will deliver: Our values and guiding principles

We will deliver our strategy through the following set of values and guiding principles. These will underpin the approaches we will take to attain our mission and achieve our outcomes and vision for Scotland's food environment:

Our Values And Guiding Principles



Consumer Focussed

- Keep public health and consumer protection at the heart of what we do
- Ensure our actions are targeted, recognising the diversity of people in Scotland and taking account of health inequalities



Evidence Based

- Ensure our work is underpinned by robust science and data
- Maintain an understanding of the issues that matter most to consumers in Scotland



Fair and Proportionate

- Protect public health and support economic growth – promote compliance by regulating fairly, firmly and proportionately
- Establish trust, ensuring regulatory objectives are transparent and our actions are consistent and timely



Independent

- Preserve our independence, working at arms length from government and industry
- Influence UK policy development through robust risk analysis, recommending decisions which are in the best interests of consumers in Scotland



Inclusive and Open

- Respect the rights of every individual, organisation and business to have a say in the matters that affect them, and work collaboratively to achieve the greatest benefit for the people of Scotland
- Ensure transparency in our decision making, advice and recommendations, by publishing our evidence base and enabling those impacted to understand the issues

We will apply our values and guiding principles to:



- Connect with consumers in Scotland to understand their needs and influence change, promoting a positive food culture, safe food practices and a healthier diet.



- Exploit advances in data science and digitalisation to maximise the value of our data, and translate it in ways that enable others to use it.



- Advance and publicise the evidence base, collaborating with the scientific community through targeted research and the sharing of data and intelligence.



- Continue to embed the principles of our Regulatory Strategy, by helping businesses to achieve high standards and applying appropriate sanctions to address non-compliance.



- Build strong and influential relationships across the UK and internationally, gaining respect and learning from others.

We're here for everyone in Scotland, to make sure our food is safe, healthy and sustainable, so that our health and wellbeing are protected.



4. Adapting to a changing food environment

We will keep this strategy under on-going review, ensuring we are able to adapt to current challenges faced by consumers and businesses in a changing food environment.

The experience we have developed during our first five years provides a strong foundation for delivering this new strategy. However, it will be important to recognise that economic, political and consumer interests with respect to food are much broader than they were when FSS was established in 2015.

Leaving the EU has resulted in changes to the way UK food and feed industries operate, our trading arrangements with other countries, and the regulatory frameworks that FSS relies on to ensure risks to our food chain are controlled.

The COVID-19 pandemic has delivered a shock to our way of life, causing health, economic and societal impacts that are likely to affect Scotland for years to come. This includes disruptions to our food system, with the potential to introduce new risks and exacerbate health inequalities, which will be important to take account of when delivering this strategy.

Climate change also presents future challenges with respect to the security, nutritional quality and safety of our food supply chain. Whilst the full impacts are not yet fully understood, it is important that this new strategy sets a road map that will enable FSS to identify the risks to consumers and businesses, and support Scotland in building a safe, healthy and sustainable food environment for the future.



5. What we will deliver: Using data and evidence to address the challenges

Our evidence base ensures that FSS is the number one trusted, authoritative source of advice on diet and nutrition to support the development and implementation of policies aimed at achieving the Scottish dietary goals.

Improving Scotland's Diet

Scotland is faced with a significant burden of diet-related disease, but continues to have a diet that's too high in calories, fats, sugar and salt, and too low in fibre, and fruit and vegetables. Lack of progress towards achieving the Scottish dietary goals is a key challenge for Government and a committed multi-faceted approach is needed to drive change in this critical area.

FSS is the only government body in Scotland which collects and publishes a robust national picture of trends in diet and nutrition through our monitoring of purchase and estimated consumer intake. Our team of expert registered public health nutritionists employs state of the art tools which digitalise the collection of data on the dietary intakes and purchases of consumers and allow it to be analysed more effectively to report trends on the diet and health of the population.



Scotland has been consistently missing its dietary goals for over 17 years



2 out of 3

people are either overweight or obese

We will develop new ways of making our evidence and advice on diet more accessible to policy makers, influencers, educators and consumers; reaching those who are most affected by poor dietary outcomes by enabling positive changes to the food environment and consumer behaviours.

Our keystone situation report '[The Scottish Diet – it needs to change](#)', combines our monitoring data with evidence on the impacts of diet related disease. It highlights the scale of the problem and the urgent need for action to promote a healthier food environment in Scotland and support positive dietary behaviours. The data presented in this report enabled us to make robust recommendations to Ministers and influenced the development of [Scottish Government's Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan](#). It also provides a useful reference point to support health professionals, the food industry, the media and consumers in understanding the public health challenges, and the role that everyone has to play in improving the nation's diet.



Our evidence-based healthy eating advice helps consumers eat well and supports healthier living. Helping us eat a healthy and balanced diet with more fibre fruit and vegetables.

Under this new strategy, we will expand our monitoring programme to explore wider impacts on diet for example the contribution made by alcohol to calorie intake. This will provide a more comprehensive evidence base on dietary trends which can be analysed alongside epidemiological data to identify the policy interventions needed to improve the diet, support healthy weight and reduce the burden of diet related disease. Through research we will also draw on experience from other countries, and use our monitoring data to evaluate policies and raise public awareness of their effectiveness.

For impact, we must ensure our reports are widely publicised and that the findings and data are accessible to government, influencers, educators and consumers. By working together with partners including Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and the food and drink industry we will influence policy and drive changes to the food environment which are practical and achievable.

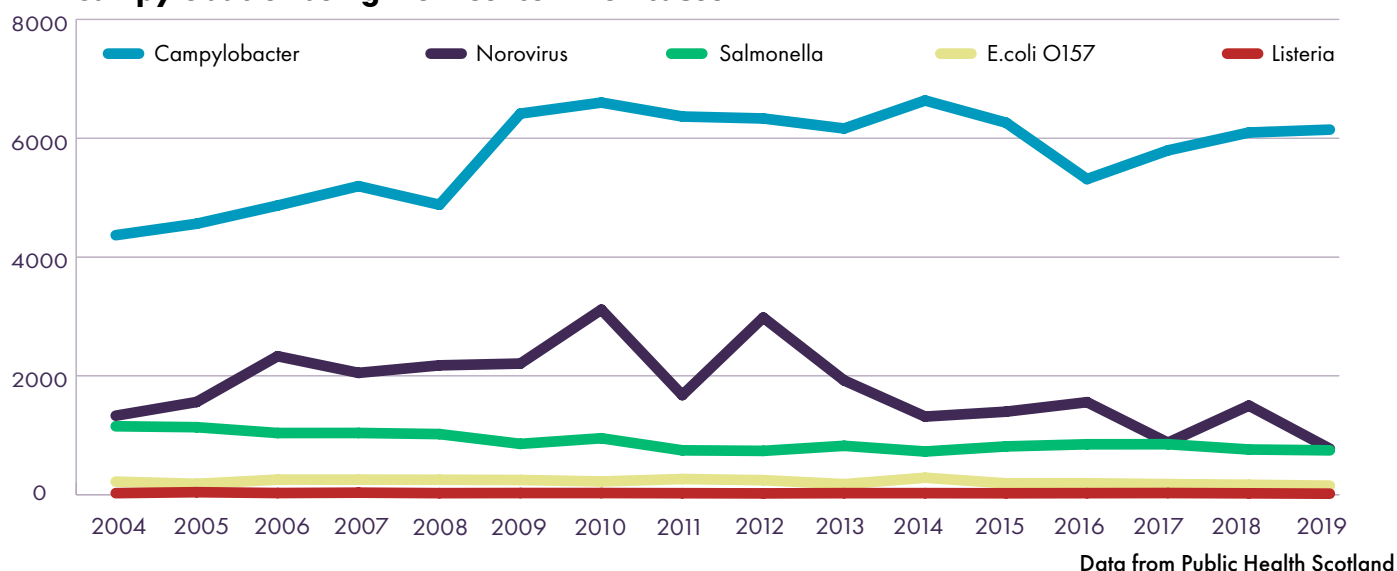


Tackling Foodborne illness

Helping Scottish businesses and consumers to manage food safety risks will always be a key focus of our work. Foodborne illness has continued to have a significant impact on public health, and Campylobacter is the most common cause, with around 6,500 cases reported in Scotland each year. As Campylobacter infection is under-reported, it is

estimated that approximately 54,000 people in our population are effected. Our work with Public Health Scotland has shown that 14% of Campylobacter cases in Scotland require admission to hospital, with those in older age groups and more deprived areas of Scotland being at increased risk of severe illness.

Reported cases of foodborne illness have remained relatively consistent over the past 15 years, with Campylobacter being the most common cause



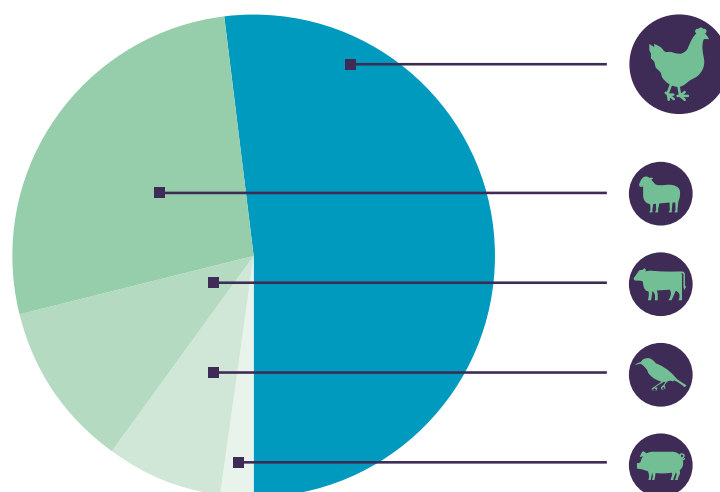
Reducing foodborne illness caused by Shiga-toxin producing E. coli (STEC) will also continue to be a priority for FSS. Compared with Campylobacter, STEC is responsible for a significantly lower number of reported cases each year than Campylobacter, however, it can result in much more severe illness.

Rates of STEC infection are highest in children, and although it is thought to be most commonly transmitted via environmental sources, it has been implicated in a number of serious outbreaks of foodborne illness in Scotland.

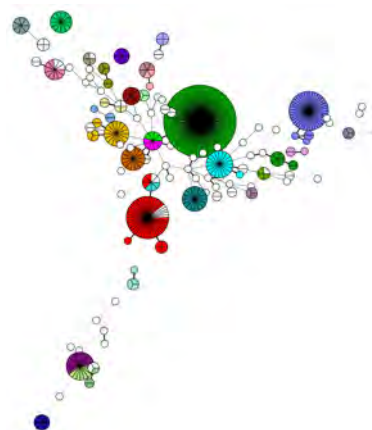
Advances in data science have transformed methods for identifying the sources and transmission routes for foodborne illness through the advent of Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS). We have learned from research and outbreak investigations that our ability

to manage and interpret the complex data sets which are generated by genomic sequencing will become increasingly important in understanding how to reduce foodborne illness in the future.

WGS has allowed us to compare the types of *Campylobacter* found in human infections with those isolated from animals. This has provided evidence that chicken is the most important source



WGS has also helped us to understand the complexity of STEC infection in Scotland – providing evidence to support our policy for managing STEC risks in food



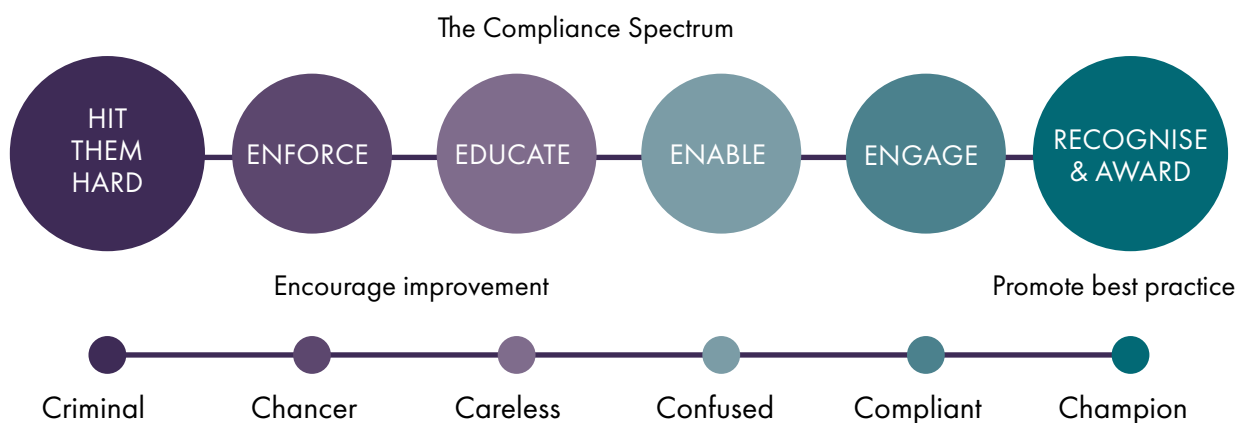
We will make better use of epidemiological and genomic sequencing data to identify where we can make the greatest impact in reducing the burden of foodborne illness: targeting interventions which control transmission and protect the population groups that are most vulnerable

Tailoring regulatory approaches to improve compliance

The analysis of data on business compliance and new evidence-based delivery models will underpin the future development of our [regulatory strategy](#) which outlines our approach to regulatory decision making, based on the compliance spectrum model shown below. This provides a framework for tailoring enforcement, intervention and engagement approaches in ways that effectively identify and dissuade non-compliance, while providing incentives and rewards for businesses which achieve sustained compliance with food and feed law.

During our first five years, we have focussed efforts on developing systems that enable us to collect and analyse FSS and Local Authority compliance records for food and feed businesses across Scotland and understand the patterns of compliance. The implementation of new data driven regulatory approaches will be a priority for our new strategy, as we take responsibility for a new centralised model for delivering official controls on animal feed and work with our Local Authorities to improve the consistency of food law enforcement in Scotland.

We will enhance the collection, analysis and reporting of data on business compliance – helping enforcement authorities to tailor interventions to the needs of different sectors.



We work with local authorities, ensuring businesses comply with food law.





Identifying risks to the food chain

Since 2015, we have also gained significant insights from trends in food incidents, both in terms of the types of products and profile of businesses that tend to be associated with food safety risks. Our food crime unit also gathers intelligence on areas of the food chain that are most vulnerable to fraud through collaboration with agencies across Scotland and the rest of the UK. The evidence suggests that smaller businesses manufacturing perishable foods and high value products with particular Scottish provenance can be particularly vulnerable to risks, and our experience has highlighted the need for us to target education and technical support to these sectors. Our investigative work has also extended outwith Scotland, through our role in networks for tackling international food crime activities, and our development of horizon scanning and surveillance capabilities, which have helped us to identify global risks to the food supply chain, and assess how these are likely to impact on Scottish businesses and consumers.

We will continue to develop our horizon scanning and surveillance capabilities to ensure we are able to predict and identify risks, including those emerging from changes to global food trade and the regulations that are in place to protect our supply chains.

Understanding behaviours

Understanding what influences human behaviour plays an integral role in ensuring our work aligns with the needs of consumers and food businesses and is capable of driving positive change. Social Science research will become increasingly important as we seek to identify how changes resulting from EU Exit and the COVID-19 pandemic are affecting attitudes and actions around food. A strong social research evidence base will also be essential in underpinning our risk analysis capability, helping us to assess how changes to food supply chains and UK policy development will impact on the people of Scotland.

We will strengthen our use of social sciences to understand how the changing food environment affects attitudes and behaviours and ensure UK policies take full account of consumer interests in Scotland.



Keeping pace with Scotland's food interests

FSS's third statutory function is to 'protect the other interests of consumers in relation to food', and it will be important for this strategy to take account of how these interests are being affected by the changing food environment. Effective communication strategies which are capable of reaching all parts of Scottish society will be essential to ensure we are able to keep pace with consumer opinions, and that our work reflects the issues that matter most to them.

We will explore new ways of engaging with the people of Scotland to ensure we understand their concerns and interests and how changes to our food system are impacting on diet and health inequalities.

Our role in sustainability

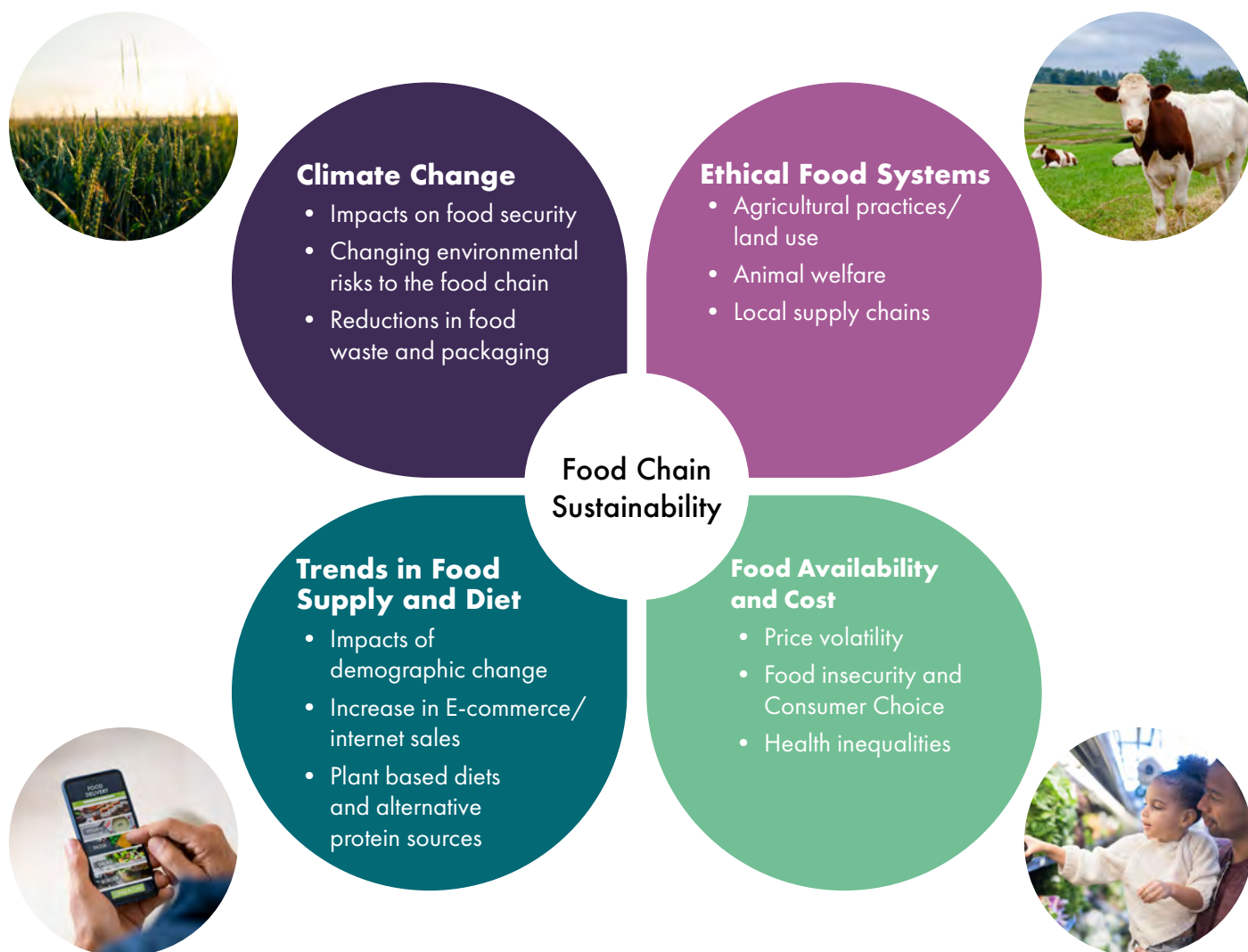
The concept of sustainability has become increasingly important to the people of Scotland, and is an area where consumers and stakeholders have indicated that FSS has a role to play. The established definition of sustainability is to ensure development "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹ With regard to food, sustainability is a multi-faceted concept comprising a wide range of environmental, social, ethical and economic issues, many of which have an influence on dietary choices, risks to our food chain and public health.

FSS will ensure this strategy is delivered sustainably, taking account of environmental and societal impacts in all of our work. Where appropriate, we will also contribute to Scottish Government priorities for a sustainable food and drink industry in Scotland, and our collective commitments regarding climate change adaptation.



¹ G. Bruntland et al. (1987) Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future.

Linking our strategy to wider policy on food sustainability



We will deliver this strategy in the context of wider environmental, food and health policies and consumer interests relating to sustainability.

6. Our partnerships: Working together to achieve shared goals

FSS cannot deliver this strategy alone, and our success will rely on effective collaborations with our key partners both nationally and internationally. Leaving the EU has required us to re-define ways of working with the Food Standards Agency and UK Government to ensure common frameworks are in place for developing policy and implementing food law. Changes to our trading arrangements and systems for gathering intelligence on the food chain will also require us to build different relationships with the EU Commission and bolster our links with food and public health bodies globally in order that we have a good understanding of the risks that may be associated with new supply chains and are able to learn from the experiences of other countries how these risks can be managed.

Within Scotland, the Local Authority enforcement community will continue to be our most important delivery partnership. It will be critical to take full account of the significant resource challenges faced by Local Authorities; working closely with them to develop resilient and sustainable regulatory approaches which will support a safe and healthy food environment for the future.

Through this strategy we aim to foster effective collaborative working at every stage of the food supply chain, and our partnerships with food and feed businesses and trade bodies will also have a key role to play in ensuring we understand the challenges faced by the industry and that our food safety and dietary health policies are achievable.



**We will keep working
with our partners
across Scotland and
beyond to achieve
shared goals.**





It will also be important to recognise the opportunities that will arise through forthcoming changes to the delivery of public health and consumer protection in Scotland. We have particularly welcomed the establishment, in April 2020, of Public Health Scotland, which aims to provide leadership to enable and support local and national bodies in working together to improve health and wellbeing in communities. A key focus is to deliver collaborative action on [Scotland's public health priorities](#), one of which is a **Scotland where we eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active**. Through effective partnership with Public Health Scotland, we will be able to contribute our expertise in public health nutrition and our robust evidence base to support

strategies at national, regional and local levels for enabling actions aimed at improving dietary outcomes.

The new Consumer Scotland Act has been another positive step, signalling the development of a new dedicated consumer authority which will complement FSS's work in representing the interests of the Scottish public in relation to food. Establishing a strong relationship with Consumer Scotland will provide a further means of extending our reach and ensuring our advice is appropriately communicated to those who have most to benefit from it.

7. Understanding the risks

It will be critical to keep this strategy under on-going review to enable us to keep pace with change and re-direct resources where current public health priorities and consumer interests require us to do so.

Working in such a dynamic environment will require FSS to be flexible and outcome-focussed in order to navigate the significant public health, political and environmental challenges that lie ahead. Our key enablers – our expertise, our delivery models, our use of science, data and evidence, and our partnerships will be critical to our success.

In light of our experience in dealing with the significant changes that are taking place across our food system and the uncertainties we continue to face, it is also important for us to recognise the risks that will affect our ability to deliver this strategy over the next five years. These are described below, and serve to demonstrate the importance of being able to adapt, and take account of the external factors which will have the greatest influence over our work.

Our Enablers

Adaptability to change

Our expertise

Our ways of working

Data and Digitalisation

Evidence and Understanding

Sustainable delivery models

Key Risks to Delivery

COVID-19

New risks to the food chain and diversion of regulatory resources to support public health response

EU EXIT

Constitutional affairs - trade agreements and future relationships with the EU and UK Government

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AND E-COMMERCE

Ensuring regulation and assurance keeps pace with new products and the expansion of online food markets

MISINFORMATION

Promoting FSS as the expert voice and gaining the trust of consumers over unreliable sources of information on diet and health, recognising the particular challenges associated with social media

PUBLIC SECTOR RESOURCING

Increasing pressures on Local Authorities and FSS result in a delivery model which lacks the resilience needed to meet future challenges

8. FSS strategy for 2021–2026: Our goals for the next five years

Our new strategy defines six goals that will help us to achieve our mission and deliver against our five key outcomes: **Food is Safe and Authentic**, **Consumers have Healthier Diets**, **Responsible Food Businesses are Enabled to Thrive**, **Consumers are Empowered to Make Positive Choices About Food** and **FSS is Trusted and Influential**. Under each goal, we have identified four priority activities which will form the basis of our Corporate Delivery Plan, which will be published alongside this strategy. The Corporate Plan will detail the importance of these activities and how we will deliver them over the first three years of our strategy. As an outcome-focussed food body, we will also publish indicators for monitoring our progress, ensuring our work remains aligned with Scottish Government’s national performance framework.

FSS Outcomes for 2021–2026

-  Food is Safe and Authentic
-  Consumers Have Healthier Diets
-  Responsible Food Businesses are enabled to thrive
-  Consumers are empowered to make positive choices about food
-  FSS is trusted and influential

When delivering our goals, we will apply our guiding principle to recognise the needs of people in Scotland and take account of health inequalities wherever possible, ensuring the diversity in our society is considered in all aspects of FSS’s work. We will do this by fulfilling our obligation to use the Scottish Health Inequalities Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty process to demonstrate how our policies and decisions impact on communities and individuals and mitigate against adverse impacts.



FSS Goals for 2021–2026

Goal 1: A food safety and standards assurance system that commands international respect and consumer confidence, supporting the Scottish economy beyond EU Exit.

Outcomes: Food is safe and authentic, responsible food business are enabled to thrive, FSS is trusted and influential.

- Work collaboratively across the UK and apply robust risk analysis processes to ensure the interests of Scottish consumers continue to be protected.
- Ensure products imported from other countries are safe and meet the high standards expected by Scottish consumers.
- Develop capability and capacity needed to ensure a robust system of official controls which are effective in detecting risks to the food chain that arise following EU Exit.
- Implement assurance systems which protect the interests of Scottish consumers and exporting businesses requiring certification that products meet the standards of countries to which they are being exported.

Goal 2: A regulatory system that engages with businesses to educate and enable compliance, rewards best practice and applies appropriate sanctions when laws are broken.

Outcomes: Food is safe and authentic, responsible food business are enabled to thrive, FSS is trusted and influential.

- Lead and support partners responsible for delivering food law in Scotland in implementing a fair, consistent and effective system of regulation.
- Develop evidence-based regulatory approaches which are tailored to address the needs of different sectors and improve business compliance levels.
- Work with stakeholders to develop and implement more efficient and sustainable approaches for delivering official controls and regulatory assurance over food and feed law, including a new national model for animal feed in Scotland.
- Develop a national framework that provides the scope and high level principles for any future funding of official controls.

Goal 3: A research and data science capability which enables us to detect risks, monitor public health trends and consumer behaviours and translate evidence into action.

Outcomes: Food is safe and authentic, consumers have healthier diets, responsible food business are enabled to thrive, consumers are empowered to make positive choices about food, FSS is trusted and influential.

- Develop and embed an enhanced data science and analytics capability, employing common standards and secure systems which translate and present FSS data in a way that enables it to be used effectively.
- Implement a new research strategy which takes account of the changing food environment and consumer behaviours, promoting collaboration and ensuring FSS evidence needs are clearly defined and communicated throughout the science community.
- Strengthen FSS's evidence base on diet and health by monitoring trends in food purchasing, intakes and insights on behaviours which impact on dietary choices and food practices using state of the art monitoring tools, social science, and market research.
- Develop our evidence base on food safety and food authenticity through improved horizon scanning and surveillance strategies which are capable of identifying emerging risks.

Goal 4: A food environment which empowers consumers to make safe, healthy, and sustainable choices.

Outcomes: Consumers have Healthier Diets, Responsible food businesses are enabled to thrive, consumers are empowered to make positive choices about food, FSS is trusted and influential.

- Engage with the public, businesses, local authorities, and interest groups to develop a new consumer information scheme which allows the people of Scotland to make informed choices about where they purchase food based on compliance with food law.
- Improve the transparency of labelling on food and drink, supporting businesses in providing accurate food safety, nutritional and allergen information.
- Drive and influence strategies for improving access to healthy and sustainable food and drink for the people of Scotland, drawing on evidence from international best practice and forming partnerships which facilitate positive action.
- Continue to raise awareness of the risks of food crime, ensuring consumers and those working in the food and drink sector understand how to recognise and report it.

Goal 5: Be respected as an authority on food protection and public health nutrition, promoting change through impactful relationships within and beyond Scotland that enable us to influence, learn and collaborate.

Outcomes: FSS is trusted and influential.

- Consolidate FSS’s role as the primary source of evidence on diet in Scotland, drawing on our unique expertise and data-driven approaches to influence and inform policy development.
- Build on FSS’s reputation as Scotland’s food safety authority, working collaboratively to reduce the burden of foodborne illness and contributing expertise to support wider food and environmental policy.
- Provide a trusted platform for Scottish enforcement authorities and food businesses to submit information and access evidence-based advice which supports compliance with food and feed law.
- Establish FSS within key UK and international fora relating to public health, food safety and food crime, working in partnership to promote Scottish interests and share learning.

Goal 6: Engage with all parts of society in Scotland; understanding the issues that matter to consumers and providing information that is tailored to their needs.

Outcomes: Consumers are empowered to make positive choices about food, FSS is trusted and influential, consumers have healthier diets.

- Use the best available data and methods to strengthen insights on behaviours, attitudes and the wider food interests of the Scottish population.
- Integrate evidence from public health research and demographic segmentation to ensure advice on foodborne illness reduction and dietary health improvement is targeted to the appropriate population groups for maximum benefit.
- Communicate advice using appropriate messaging through a range of channels including mass media, social/digital platforms and consumer engagement to reach the intended audience and sustain impact and understanding.
- Work with partners to support food education initiatives and strategies for improving diet and health which make the best use of our evidence and are tailored to the needs of communities across Scotland.

9. Maintaining organisational excellence

In addition to delivering our six strategic goals, it will be important for FSS to continue to operate effectively as a public body. This means being able to demonstrate that our work contributes to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and budget priorities, that we are efficient and provide value for money, and that we comply with the legal obligations that govern our ways of working and ensure accountability.

FSS is also a growing organisation, and we will be embarking on this new strategy with a much larger workforce, bringing fresh skills and expertise that will support us in delivering new functions when we leave the EU and adapting to the uncertainties that lie ahead. Investing in people and skills will therefore be critical to our success in maintaining organisational excellence when we move into the new food landscape.

GOVERNANCE

- Ensure the use of robust, peer reviewed science and evidence, and transparent risk analysis processes which clearly explain uncertainties, risks and benefits
- Implement internal control systems with appropriate levels of assurance, overseen by an audit and risk committee
- Ensure our working arrangements with key partners remain effective as the food and regulatory landscape changes

PEOPLE AND SKILLS

- Implement a people strategy and internal values which support the development and retention of a skilled, collaborative and motivated workforce
- Review FSS responses to the Scottish Government People Survey, engaging with staff to recognise success and address issues
- Deliver effective internal communications across the FSS workforce, to promote engagement and understanding of the needs of individuals, regardless of their role and working pattern

RESOURCING

- Ensure resourcing is aligned to strategic priorities and managed using effective accounting systems
- Charge for regulatory services in a proportionate and transparent manner
- Improve delivery through sustainable ways of working which promote equality and best use of resources

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Hold no less than four open board meetings annually, with regular reporting from the Audit and Risk Committee
- Publish performance metrics for measuring progress with the six strategic goals defined in this document
- Lay an annual report of FSS's activities, accounts and performance before the Scottish Parliament





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