

Our Ref: MC2020/00118

9th June 2020



As Chair of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) I am aware of the concerns that many have raised about food standards in the UK after the end of the EU transition period.

I am writing to explain the FSA's role in protecting the consumer interest in relation to food standards. Our approach and role have been set out at a series of public Board meeting discussions on EU Exit in 2018 and 2019 and in published papers, and I thought it might be helpful to summarise the position.

The FSA Board fulfils its statutory duties by putting the interests of the consumer first, and by ensuring that our policy and advice on food standards are underpinned by rigorous, solid systems and processes, sound data and evidence, and clear governance; and by operating openly and transparently. As a non-ministerial government department and independent public body, the decisions we make on behalf of consumers are and will continue to be based purely on the latest science and evidence, and not on wider political or other pressures.

At the end of the transition period, the FSA will take over the functions currently carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Commission, particularly in the area of food and feed risk assessment, which assesses the safety of particular food products or product preparations. The process we have publicly debated, adopted and published, follows best practice in risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication, as set out by Codex Alimentarius, which is recognised under the World Trade Organisation's Sanitary and Phytosanitary agreement as the international global standards-setting body on food. In line with this best practice, we have developed

Floors 6 & 7, Clive House
70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX
T: 020 7276 8288
E: heather.hancock@food.gov.uk

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

[food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings)



For information on the FSA's Privacy Policy, click [here](#).

For further information on how we handle your personal data please click [here](#) or enter: <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/privacy-notice-private-office-correspondence> into your web browser.

a new UK process for authorising regulated products, such as additives for food and feed and novel foods. It is this risk analysis that would be applied to any consideration of the rules around chemical washes of meat, for example.

Our risk management advice will continue to be underpinned by comprehensive analysis of the evidence in accordance with international best practice, including the conduct of risk assessments and gathering information on other legitimate factors – which means that our role will be broader than that currently performed by EFSA on food safety. These will vary according to the product or method being considered but will generally include:

- public health, safety and wellbeing
- wider consumer interests
- consumer habits, perceptions, acceptability and preferences, which might include animal welfare concerns, or those about environmental impacts
- economic impact
- technical and feasibility considerations

We will continue to work collaboratively across the four countries of the UK, and with other government departments with an interest in food and feed safety.

The FSA will publish its risk assessments and its risk management advice to Ministers, who would then decide whether to accept this advice. If any change to existing regulations or authorisations was proposed to happen, statutory instruments would then have to be laid in Parliament to change the current rules.

This information is detailed in FSA Board papers from September 2018 (FSA 18-09-09), December 2018 (FSA 18-12-11), March 2019 (FSA 19-03-08) and January 2020 (FSA 20-01-14).

We have expanded our resources in order to do this work. We have increased the scientific capacity of our Science, Evidence and Research Directorate which now stands at over 100 scientific posts, of which 50 are in the FSA Risk Assessment Unit: a doubling in size since 2017. We have also expanded the roles of our independent

Floors 6 & 7, Clive House
70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX
T: 020 7276 8288
E: heather.hancock@food.gov.uk

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

[food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings)



Scientific Advisory Committees. These have been strengthened by recruiting new experts and establishing three new joint expert groups to help us ensure the best scientific evidence for UK food and feed risk assessments. We have recruited almost 50 more independent scientists to serve on these Committees and their expert groups.

Over the last three years, we have also improved our surveillance arrangements to use a variety of data and modern predictive analytics tools to identify and evaluate food risks in imported food. This approach will allow us to target sampling and analysis where it is most needed.

If you have any questions about our work to protect public health or consumers' wider interests, or any of the issues raised in this letter, I would be happy to discuss these with you, or provide further information.

Yours sincerely,
Heather

Mrs H.J. Hancock DL LVO

Floors 6 & 7, Clive House
70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX
T: 020 7276 8288
E: heather.hancock@food.gov.uk

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

[food.gov.uk/ratings](https://www.food.gov.uk/ratings)



For information on the FSA's Privacy Policy, click [here](#).

For further information on how we handle your personal data please click [here](#) or enter: <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/privacy-notice-private-office-correspondence> into your web browser.