

## FINALISING THE FSS STRATEGY AND CORPORATE PLAN

### 1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 This paper is for discussion and decision.
- 1.2 FSS has been developing its first Strategy and Corporate Plan. Following consumer and stakeholder engagement, and a period of consultation, we are now in a position to finalise these documents, in light of the feedback and comments received.
- 1.3 The Board is asked to:
  - **note** that there were 18 responses to the consultation on FSS's draft Strategy and Corporate Plan
  - **agree** its responses to the questions set out in Paragraph 3.14
  - **note** that the Executive will update the documents in light of some of the more detailed comments received through the consultation.
  - **note** that final versions will be circulated to Board members before publication.

### 2 Background

- 2.1 The Board has discussed the development of FSS's first Strategy and Corporate Plan at its meetings in June and September 2015, and most recently in January this year. Board members also attended the stakeholder meeting in January, and received feedback from the consumer panels held in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Coatbridge.
- 2.2 After the January Board meeting, we launched a written consultation (Annex A), which closed on 4 March. Eighteen responses were received, from a wide range of organisations. Responses to the consultation were broadly supportive of the values and principles proposed for FSS, and for the strategic outcomes that we seek to achieve.
- 2.3 This paper summarises key points of feedback from the consultation to bring to the Board's attention, and seeks the Board's responses to some specific questions to enable us to finalise the FSS Strategy and Corporate Plan.

### 3 Discussion

#### Cross-Cutting Issues

- 3.1 Respondents to the consultation generally agreed that the Strategy and Corporate Plan are clear that FSS is putting the consumer first. It was noted that what this looks like in practise will be determined by how well we 'live' the values and principles, ensuring that we align what we do and how we do it, and making sure that we engage with consumers in genuine and meaningful ways.

3.2 There were a number of comments about the word ‘consumers’ in the context of FSS engaging people and communities in our work, and our contribution to the wider aims to make Scotland a more successful country. It was suggested that ‘consumers’ may be a rather narrow definition, and respondents suggested that we might rather refer to ‘people in Scotland’ or ‘the population’. This same issue also arose at the recent UK-wide ‘Our Food Futures’<sup>1</sup> event that FSS participated in, and that was informed by deliberative research with people across the UK, including in Scotland. There was a strong sense at that event that the word ‘consumers’ is narrow and doesn’t reflect the wider interests and relationships that people have with food at all stages of production and consumption. The Food (Scotland) Act 2015 clearly establishes our role in the context of protecting consumers, but **does the Board wish to reflect the comments about ‘consumers’, and talk more broadly about ‘people’ in the Strategy and Corporate Plan, to recognise that our relationships with food go beyond being consumers?**

3.3 Some respondents were keen to see greater reference to sustainability in relation to food, for example, around issues such as food waste, sustainable production and consumption of food, and a focus on encouraging sustainable healthy diets. Whilst this is not expressly referenced in the 2015 Act, wide-ranging issues around sustainable production and consumption of food are likely to fit within the ‘other interests of consumers’ in relation to food, and indeed are central to the ‘Our Food Futures’ work that we are involved with. The Corporate Plan refers to our intention to develop dietary guidelines for Scotland, where we will aim to widen the scope of advice to the public on food, to take a more holistic approach to food consumption that encompasses wider considerations such as the social and environmental impacts of diets. **Does the Board wish to make clearer reference in the Strategy and Corporate Plan of the wider societal and environmental aspects around food, diet and health as part of the ‘other interests of consumers’, and FSS’s role in these, involving working in partnership with others?**

3.4 Some respondents also asked whether we should make greater reference to alcohol, as our Vision is ‘*....to create a food and drink environment that benefits, protects and is trusted by consumers*’. For example, whether FSS should exert more influence around mandatory labelling of products containing alcohol. Where we have a regulatory role in relation to alcohol e.g. in relation to safe and hygienic production and to ingredient labelling, then clearly we must ensure we fulfil this. Our incident prevention and response work also covers drinks, where we play an important role in protecting people from incidents involving both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks that may pose a safety risk or are misleadingly described or fraudulent, such as counterfeit drinks.

3.5 There was support for our wish to work in partnership with other bodies, with a number of respondents expressing their enthusiasm to work with us on areas of shared interest. In the context of partnerships, it was suggested that the documents could give greater recognition to the role that local authorities will play in helping us to achieve these outcomes for the people of Scotland, as well

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/ourfoodfuture>

as actions that FSS could take to support and protect the role of local authorities. **Does the Board wish to include a more explicit reference in the Strategy and Corporate Plan to the importance of our relationship with local authorities to help us achieve our vision?**

## Values and Principles

- 3.6 There was general agreement to our proposed Values and Principles, and that these will help us to protect consumers interests, noting the point made in paragraph 3.1 above that how we 'live' and implement these will be key to us meeting the expectations that the Strategy sets out. Principle 8.2c currently reads: '*Our work contributes to narrowing inequalities in Scotland*'. There was support for our focus on reducing inequalities, and some respondents suggested we could be more specific about whether our focus is on narrowing health inequalities, or health and social inequalities. **Does the Board wish to be more specific on inequalities, or retain the original broader wording?**
- 3.7 Some additional principles were proposed: making explicit reference to the responsibility that consumers have themselves in the home, and our role in helping them to meet these responsibilities; enshrining sustainable local environmental health services for consumer protection; creating a demand for healthy food and making this the easier choice; inclusion of reference to consumers wider interests, such as sustainability issues (see paragraph 3.3 above). **Does the Board wish to include any additional Principles?**

## Strategic Outcomes and Key Activities

- 3.8 There was support for the six strategic outcomes, and general agreement that the activities identified in the Corporate Plan are the things that stakeholders expect us to be doing to help us achieve the outcomes. One response did not support our work to explore non-voluntary measures in relation to diet and health. There were some suggestions for FSS to have a clear role in relation to food security and insecurity, and that to help reduce inequalities, to be clear about how we intend to target work towards people affected by food poverty.
- 3.9 There was reciprocal support for our wish to work in partnership with others, alongside the need to recognise that there will be limits to what FSS can ultimately achieve, as there are many dependencies on others. Comments were made stressing of the importance of our partnerships with local authorities, and their environmental health services in particular, and FSS's role in supporting the future sustainability of these services.
- 3.10 There were some detailed comments about some of the key activities in the Corporate Plan that the Executive will take into account in finalising the document.
- 3.11 The consumer panels held in January raised some questions about the wording of Outcome 2 – *food is authentic* – and Outcome 4 – *responsible food businesses flourish*.

3.12 The consumer panels didn't find it easy to understand what we mean by 'food is authentic' so we asked for views in the consultation. Of the respondents who commented on this question, a minority preferred the original wording, whilst the majority preferred the alternatives we suggested: *food is accurately described and consumers know what they are eating*, with there being slightly more support for the second of these new options. Some 'hybrids' were suggested: *food is accurately described, so consumers know what they are eating* and *food is authentic and consumer information is accurate*. **The Board is asked to decide its preferred wording for Outcome 2.**

3.13 For Outcome 4, the consumer panels told us that it wasn't clear what we mean by 'responsible'. The panels felt that this should be about more than food safety if it is to reflect our wider remit, and that it should be more than compliance with legislative requirements. In the consultation, we asked if respondents preferred the original wording of '*responsible food businesses flourish*', or '*responsible food businesses flourish when they do the right things for consumers*'. The majority of respondents who commented preferred the new wording, and one respondent suggested '*responsible food businesses flourish when they do the right things*', to reflect that a well-run food business benefits other groups as well as consumers. **The Board is asked to decide its preferred wording for Outcome 4.**

3.14 In summary, to enable the Executive to finalise the Strategy and Corporate Plan in light of the consultation responses, the Board is asked to respond to these questions:

- a) *Does the Board wish to reflect the comments about 'consumers', and talk more broadly about 'people' in the Strategy and Corporate Plan, to recognise that our relationships with food go beyond being consumers?* (Paragraph 3.2)
- b) *Does the Board wish to make clearer reference in the Strategy and Corporate Plan of the wider societal and environmental aspects around food, diet and health as part of the 'other interests of consumers', and FSS's role in these, involving working in partnership with others?* (Paragraph 3.3)
- c) *Does the Board wish to include a more explicit reference in the Strategy and Corporate Plan to the importance of our relationship with local authorities to help us achieve our vision?* (Paragraph 3.5)
- d) *Does the Board wish to be more specific on inequalities, or retain the original broader wording?* (Paragraph 3.6)
- e) *Does the Board wish to include any additional Principles?* (Paragraph 3.7)
- f) *The Board is asked to decide its preferred wording for Outcome 2.* (Paragraph 3.12)
- g) *The Board is asked to decide its preferred wording for Outcome 4.* (Paragraph 3.13)

#### 4 Next Steps

4.1 The Executive will update the draft Strategy and Corporate Plan in light of the Board's views at this meeting, and taking into consideration the more detailed comments submitted through consultation responses. These final versions will be circulated to Board members before publication.

#### 5 Conclusion/Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- **note** that there were 18 responses to the consultation on FSS's draft Strategy and Corporate Plan
- **agree** its responses to the questions set out in Paragraph 3.14
- **note** that the Executive will update the documents in light of some of the more detailed comments received through the consultation.
- **note** that final versions will be circulated to Board members before publication.

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**ANNEX A**

Append consultation version of the Strategy and Corporate Plan.