

## Chief Executive's Report

### 1 COVID-19

1.1 FSS has continued to support Scottish Government (SG) teams including Resilience, Food and Drink; and Scottish Ministers, and working with Defra, Food Standards Agency (FSA) and food retailers in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the new lockdown rules, including the tighter restrictions on takeaways which came into effect on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

### 2. Meetings in Brief

2.1 During December 2020, meetings included, Defra, SG, retailers, stakeholders including Quality Meat Scotland, Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation

2.2 In January 2021, meetings were mainly on EU Exit, mostly related to fisheries issues, COVID-19 and issues around food supply. In relation to fish hubs, we are working hard with the industry to fix problems that are not related to what we are doing and what is happening earlier in the supply chain which is creating problems.

### 3. EU Exit

3.1 The UK has left the EU and the transition period ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 which, as the Board is aware, means we have left the Single Market and Customs Union. We have updated our website to provide information on the requirements for businesses, including the new requirements for [exports and imports](#) and we have provided answers to commonly asked questions about legislative changes. The main issue has been the impact of non-tariff barriers on smaller businesses in particular. The Executive is now focusing on the April and July import control changes being introduced by UKG.

3.3 In January 2021, Ian McWatt, Deputy Chief Executive wrote a [blog](#) to help answer some frequently asked questions about the Export Health Certificate process.

### 5. Senior Appointments

5.1 Professor David Gally was appointed as the new FSS Chief Scientific Adviser in December 2020. He is the Personal Chair in Microbial Genetics at The Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh. David will be responsible for providing expert advice on the development of FSS's science and evidence strategy, providing assurance and governance over its procedures for commissioning and evaluating research, risk analysis and the communication of science and public health advice.

5.2 Professor Gally brings more than 20 years of leadership and scientific research experience with a focus on foodborne infections, and has contributed to more than a hundred academic publications.

## 6. Communications and Marketing

### 6.1 FSS Festive Food Safety Campaign 2020

6.1.1 On the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020, we launched our annual festive food safety campaign. The Communications & Marketing, Food Safety and Nutrition teams worked together to bring this campaign to life.

6.1.2 The campaign was promoted across social media channels, digital and press channels and featured Allan Stewart as the pantomime dame Aunty May, and focused on the importance of planning ahead, encouraging Scottish consumers to pay close attention to food labelling and in particular, the difference between 'use by' and 'best before' dates. More details about the campaign are available [here](#).

6.1.3 The creative for the campaign was based on three short videos with Aunty May planning and preparing her Christmas dinner for the first time, as well as a number of light-hearted but informative infographics highlighting the key food safety messages.

6.1.4 As the campaign was social media-focused, we shared 47 posts across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter with a call to action to visit the FSS webpage. As a result we saw 1,000 page views on the campaign landing page, a 24% increase on the 2019 festive campaign. The average time spent on the landing page was impressively more than 5 minutes, demonstrating visitors were engaged with the information, advice and content. The social media activity resulted in 323,754 impressions ('opportunities to see'), 15,935 engagements (interactions with the posts, such as 'clicking' for more info) and 254 shares. In total there were 15,152 full video views.

6.1.5 A press release was also issued and published in The National and other local and trade publications resulting in a reach of 175,468 unique users.

## 7. Nutrition Science and Policy

### 7.1 FSS launches Vitamin D campaign

7.1.1 On the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 we launched our digital campaign encouraging the people of Scotland to take a daily vitamin D supplement this winter.

7.1.2 None of us will be too surprised to hear that Scotland isn't the sunniest place on Earth, and that we only get enough of the right kind of sunlight for our bodies to make vitamin D between April and September. This means that for roughly half the year, between October and March, it is not possible for our bodies to make vitamin D from sunlight.

7.1.3 You may not know that a [recent consumer poll](#) found that more than half of respondents in Scotland **never** take a vitamin D supplement. The most common reason for not taking a vitamin D supplement was being unaware of the advice. Our campaign aims to address that, and ultimately help people to stay healthy this winter. Vitamin D is really important for keeping our bones and muscles healthy, so a daily 10 microgram supplement is recommended for most adults and children over 1 year old.

7.1.4 The FSS Communications & Marketing and Nutrition branches, together with feedback from Scottish Government (SG) and Public Health Scotland (PHS), collaborated to create a series of eye-catching social media adverts. The campaign will build on the recent FSS social media campaign and other work by SG, FSS and PHS to raise awareness of vitamin D. We also published a consumer friendly [blog](#), which helps to answer frequently asked questions and you can find out about why we should take vitamin D, how much, and who in particular should take it.



7.1.5 A social media advertising campaign was launched to coincide with the publication of the vitamin D blog. This resulted in our messaging making 2,843,315 impressions (the number of times a post appears on social media) across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The campaign gained a reach (the number of unique users who were shown a post) of 507,900, resulting in 12,822 link clicks through to the blog from 11 January to 29 January.

7.1.6 The Communications & Marketing team also shared some organic content on social media, posts which were not paid to be promoted, gaining 60,821 impressions and 1,125 engagements (the number of times a post was interacted with, commented on, shared or liked). As a result of these activities, the blog article has been viewed on the FSS website 12,464 times, with the majority of this traffic (around 75%) coming from Facebook, mainly viewed on mobile. The page accounts for nearly 10% of all page views since 11 January, and is the second most viewed page site on the page during this time. We are continually monitoring how channels are performing and will optimise those which are performing well, which is standard practice for a campaign.

## 8. Corporate Services

### 8.1 FSS People Survey 2020

8.1 The People Survey took place during October 2020 and provided an opportunity for colleagues to share feedback, celebrate our successes in the past year and comment on where improvements can be made. The response rate was 85% which gives us confidence in the results and we will need to identify agency level issues alongside specific issues coming up from particular areas. The level of engagement for was 70%; which is 4% higher than the Civil Service average. It was great to see improvements in field operations which are significant in all three areas and range from 65-71%. The Head

Office results tended to reflect findings from last year's survey with some movement in particular areas, which has kept scores pretty similar.

8.2 Teamwork and collaboration also scored highly, with most staff reporting that their team colleagues can be relied upon when things get difficult. Broadly speaking, staff find that they work well together with their team to improve the services that FSS provides.

8.3 We continue to be in the Civil Service High Performing bracket, but it also means we cannot be complacent. In light of how we are changing as an organisation in terms of structure and governance, we'll need to ensure we don't lose sight of the engagement.

## **8.2 FSS Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20**

8.2.1 The FSS Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20 was published on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and you can find out more about how we've performed during the past financial year [here](#).

## **9. Private Office**

### **9.1 Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland Memorandum of Understanding**

9.1.1 The Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the principles for the working relationship between both organisations and the principles that will be followed in the course of day to day working relationships.

9.1.2 The project to revise the MoU, began in in September 2019 and followed the principles of joint working practised by FSA and FSS. A project team, consisting of FSA and FSS officials, worked together to develop new content and significantly revise previous content in their areas of expertise.

9.1.3 The largest amount of new content is the two sections and protocols on food crime and the updated risk analysis process respectively. These have been added because food crime is a new area of work established since the MoU was first signed in 2015 and the updated risk analysis approach is to be implemented now the transition period has ended.

9.1.4 Significant revisions have also been made in a number of other areas. These have been undertaken to reflect post EU-transition period changes - international matters, working-level agreements and the MoU review process - as well as to more accurately reflect current working practices - incidents, science and evidence and data and information sharing.

9.1.5 The Covid-19 pandemic meant the project to revise MoU was put on hold for a number of months last year. As a result the original project time line had to be revised. However, thanks to the significant amount of effort put in by all those involved, the work was completed on time for the December 2020 deadline. The revised MoU has been agreed and is available on both the [FSA](#) and [FSS](#) websites.

## 10. FSS British Sign Language (BSL) Update

10.1 The FSS BSL Steering Group has been working on the delivery of its first BSL plan (2021-2024) outlining the specific actions FSS plan to carry out to improve accessibility of our information and advice. The draft plan has evolved and further consultation with BSL users and the Deaf community was undertaken at an online engagement event (December 2020) to seek their views on the plan. The feedback received has informed the plan and the final version will be published by the end of February 2021. The steering group will continue to engage with BSL users throughout the plan's implementation and lifetime to ensure it meets their requirements and supports the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2017-2023.

For queries contact :

Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive

[Geoff.Ogle@fss.scot](mailto:Geoff.Ogle@fss.scot)

17<sup>th</sup> February 2021