

Cutting Plant and Cold Store Review

1 Purpose of the paper

1.1 This paper provides an update on the Cutting Plant and Cold Store (CPCS) review project within the Regulatory Strategy Programme (RSP) and seeks Board approval to action the decision made at Regulatory Strategy Programme Board (RSPB) to close this project and transfer all outstanding recommendations to business as usual (BAU).

1.2 The Board is asked to:

Note the proposal to close off this project and transfer responsibility of the 8 outstanding recommendations to BAU.

Confirm the Board is content with the proposed approach.

1.3 For reference, a summary of each recommendation is provided in [Annex A](#).

1.4 The original CPCS recommendations were agreed in October 2018 at the joint Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) board meeting: [FSS Board Meeting - 17 October 2018 | Food Standards Scotland](#)

2 Strategic aims

2.1 The aims of this project are linked to the FSS Strategy 2021-2026. Given the scope and breadth of this work stream, the transformational impact on the regulatory landscape in Scotland and subsequently on FSS functions, it spans all 6 of our goals and 5 strategic outcomes.

3 Background

3.1 On 1st February 2018, FSS and FSA announced a UK-wide review of CPCS following high-profile incidents in several food businesses across the UK which identified some areas for concern, particularly in relation to industry practices on traceability, durability and authenticity.

3.2 The aims were to improve levels of public confidence in the safety and authenticity of UK meat and identify potential improvements in the way the sector is regulated.

3.3 As part of the review both FSS and FSA issued evidence gathering surveys to local authorities and food businesses to gain further insight, and six workshops were held across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland with industry to jointly develop recommendations and consider how to implement them.

3.4 The project delivery timeline was extended due to a number of delays experienced in delivering the individual recommendations, including changing of project leads, EU Exit and pausing of work to reprioritise for COVID in March 2020.

4 Successes

4.1 Through successful delivery of a number of the recommendations, the work carried out through this review has resulted in significant improvements to meat industry practices for both FSS/FSA and industry.

4.1.1 For FSS:

- Improved controls and procedures in CPCS and provision of assurance that FSS' has an adequate framework in place for governance, risk management and control;
- Better coordination and communication between FSS and LAs, with updated procedures for assuring follow up of actions following an incident;
- A centralised data base was developed to hold FSS staff qualifications and training records and a Competency Matrix was developed for staff responsible for delivery of Official Controls;
- Roles and responsibilities now clearly defined and standards set for timely and adequate enforcement action. This has been further improved with the implementation of the Official Control Verification (OCV)¹ system.

4.1.2 For industry:

- Updated traceability guidance for Food Business Operators (FBOs) published in March 2019 and FSS now conducting targeted audits on traceability controls;
- Approvals process now been digitally enabled.

4.1.3 For both FSS/FSA and industry:

- Improvements made to information sharing initiatives between industry and regulator, improving the relationship and helping to identify and resolve industry issues early, potentially avoiding the need for formal enforcement action;
- Inspection and audit activity are now interlinked under the OCV system that has been implemented across Scotland.

¹ <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-and-industry/safety-and-regulation/local-authority-approvals/official-controls-verification-ocv>

5 Outstanding recommendations

5.1 To date, there are 8 recommendations which have not been fully delivered. These include 4 recommendations for FSS/FSA and 4 recommendations for industry.

5.2 The current status of each of the recommendations is shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: Current Status of Recommendations

Status	Total	Recommendations
N/A to FSS ²	1	1
Complete and no further action (NFA) required	6	3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 17
Completed from RS perspective and transitioned to BAU	4	2, 5, 13, 16
Started but not yet delivered	7	8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19
Not started	1	7

5.3 FSS has attempted to push forward the industry recommendations in Scotland, however the meat industry has communicated that it is facing significant challenges at present and businesses do not have the resources and/or finance available to deliver on these recommendations. As these are recommendations and not legal requirements, it is difficult for FSS to require that these recommendations are delivered; we can only encourage the industry to deliver them.

5.4 The remaining FSS/FSA recommendations have not yet been delivered because of delays as a result of the EU exit and some recommendations placed on hold because of the COVID pandemic. In addition to this there have been 3 different FSS Project Leads (PLs) overseeing the progress of the 19 recommendations throughout the duration of the project which has hindered delivery due to continuous pauses on the project.

6 Discussion

6.1 This was a joint project with FSA. FSA has officially closed the project after updating their board in January 2020 on the status of the recommendations. FSA agreed that no further CPCS updates were required by the Board and all outstanding recommendations relevant to FSA would be taken forward as either BAU or as part of the FSA Operational Transformation Programme (OTP), a long term, fundamental change programme. FSS maintained the project with the goal of delivering on the final recommendations, however EU Exit and COVID have hindered progress.

² Recommendation 1 was not applicable to FSS as when the CPCS review was launched FSS already had systems in place to fulfil the requirements: FSS approvals were already incorporated into a unified team within Operations Delivery.

- 6.2 It was agreed at the FSS Regulatory Strategy Programme Board meeting on 02 February 2022 that FSS should take a similar approach and look to close off our elements of the project as we are currently at risk of this project running on indefinitely with minimal further progress likely and with no benefit to FSS or consumers.
- 6.3 Each relevant outstanding recommendation has been, or is in the process of being transitioned to BAU and taken forward by the relevant FSS branch (as per [Annex A](#)) as part of their core business activity.

7 Risks and issues

- 7.1 **Delays in progression of outstanding recommendations:** Despite moving the 8 outstanding recommendations to BAU, there is still a risk that they may not be progressed at the desired pace if not of sufficient priority within FSS among other pressing work.

Outstanding recommendations may be referred to the FSS Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for consideration of relative risk and priority against other new emerging work and priorities and a decision made as to whether or not they are included in the FSS corporate plan going forward.

Delays in delivering the outstanding recommendations is unlikely to result in increased risk to consumers as the majority of the recommendations have already been delivered and the system of controls modernised. In addition, FSS will liaise with FSA on the joint recommendations on an annual basis so that we continue to keep track of any related progress for audit purposes.

These recommendations are not backed up by legislative requirements and any potential progress and benefits obtained may be limited, even if progressed after transfer to BAU, especially while the meat industry continues to face challenges (both financial and staffing levels) due to COVID and EU exit, which will reduce their capacity to engage in delivering these recommendations.

- 7.2 **Consequences of time delays and de-escalation of CPCS recommendations:** Delivery of many of these recommendations has been in progress for a significant period of time with work on some recommendations deprioritised due to the COVID pandemic and the relatively low risk of the outstanding actions.

This delay in delivering the outstanding recommendations could potentially result in criticism of FSS however, the level of consumer and media awareness of the project is low and FSS would be unlikely to be criticised for re-prioritising the outstanding recommendations. It is also the case that our food crime capability has improved significantly since the incidents that triggered this review were reported during 2017 and early 2018. The findings of this review do not indicate that current meat industry practices present a systemic risk to public health, simply that the overall system of assurance and regulation required modernisation. Therefore the risk to consumers and subsequent potential for reputation risk for FSS remains low despite the progression of the recommendations taking longer than planned and it

is therefore appropriate to re assess the priority of outstanding actions from the review.

8 Equality Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty

8.1 This project does not have any current impact on equality matters.

9 Conclusion/Recommendations

9.1 The Board is asked to:

Note the proposal to close off this project and transfer responsibility of the 8 outstanding recommendations to BAU.

Confirm the Board is content with the proposed approach.

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Date: 30th May 2022

Annex A – Recommendations summary

Completed recommendations	Status	Progress summary	Proposed action
1. Integrate the current FSA approvals activity into a single, unified team within FSA Operations Group	N/A for FSS	This recommendation was not applicable to FSS as FSS approvals are already incorporated into a unified team within Operations Delivery.	N/A
2. Reassess the FSA’s Major incident plan to align with other elements of the Official Controls framework, in relation to effective coordination and communication with LAs and responsibility for assuring delivery of incident follow-up actions	Completed from Reg Strat perspective - moved to BAU	<p>Improvement of FSS processes and procedures and how FSS co-ordinate and communicate with local authorities including introduction and use of CLIO and provision of access to CLIO and training for LAs.</p> <p>In 2017/18 a review of FSS incident management processes was carried out and a new Incident Management Framework & Incident communications plan was developed and approved by the Board.</p> <p>The efficacy of recalls project also has achieved the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Guidance on Food Traceability, Withdrawals and Recalls within the UK Food Industry’ which explains what the law requires, how to comply with the law and also includes best practice guidance. 2. Creation and development of root cause analysis report form, best practice, and e-learning package. FSS now requests that LAs/FBOs send a root cause analysis form for key incidents. <p>Additionally, within the recent re-structuring there is now a support function within the Incidents team analysing the RCA data and create feedback loop to enable FBO/LA to</p>	NFA required by Reg Strat as this has been taken up as BAU by SFCIU

		<p>learn from previous incidents. This will feed into FSS’s Incident Prevention Strategy.</p> <p>CLG paper was completed at the end of 2020 on a continuous improvement mechanism for Lessons Learned following incident reviews/exercises to ensure any follow up actions for FSS are closed out.</p>	
<p>3. Updating the Agencies’ Intervention approach to clarify roles and responsibilities and set standards for timely and adequate enforcement action.</p>	Complete	<p>The Official Control Verification (OCV) system has already been implemented in Approvals and Audits for Cutting Plants across Scotland.</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities of officers are clearly set out.</p> <p>FSS veterinary management team and a number of authorised officers carrying out inspections in cutting plants have received the relevant training on OCV</p> <p>This new approach requires planning in advance the number of visits required to verify the entire FBO Food Safety Management System (FSMS) within each inspection cycle. It is based on a gap analysis methodology to identify any deficiencies in a FSMS.</p> <p>The SMOC is currently under review to reflect the implementation of the OCV system. The OCV system allows for timely and adequate enforcement action to be taken when necessary</p>	NFA required
<p>4. Update procedures for Authorised Officers responsible for Approvals, enforcement, inspections and audit of cutting plants and cold stores</p>	Complete	<p>Updated recommendations forwarded to FSS Operations March 2020.</p> <p>Additionally the FSS internal audit of the approval of establishments under veterinary control awarded a substantial assurance opinion as the framework of</p>	NFA required

		governance, risk management and control is adequate and effective.	
5. Industry should encourage Food Businesses to participate in the information sharing initiative, which 2 Sisters Food Group have trialled with the Agencies	Completed from Reg Strat perspective – moved to BAU	<p>FSS Operations are having regular meetings with the main Food Groups that operate in Scotland.</p> <p>Issues discussed at these meetings include: export issues, staffing levels, stock, customer complaints, etc. There was also an exercise done to compare their identified compliance issues against what FSS is finding and enforcing.</p> <p>These meetings have been incorporated into business as usual so they will continue to happen on a regular basis for the foreseeable future.</p>	NFA required by Reg Strat as this has been taken forward as BAU by Operations Delivery
6. Commission further work to assess the role of agents and brokers of meat and the controls applied at this part of the food distribution network.	Complete	<p>The recommendation was delivered through research which was FSA led. Link to final report - Project update - FS301071: Behaviour and Compliance - Motivators and Economic incentive drivers in the UK Meat Industry (A25960214)</p>	NFA required
9. Cold Store and Cutting Plant operators should review their current traceability records to ensure comprehensive supply chain information is available for audit on request by the Competent Authority	Complete	<p>FSA/FSS best practice traceability guidelines published March 2019:</p> <p>Guidance on Food Traceability, Withdrawals and Recalls within the UK Food Industry</p> <p>Food Businesses adopting proposed best practice will satisfy requirements of this recommendation. FSS will be conducting themed audits on traceability in the future assessing food businesses operations against the standards on the guidance.</p>	NFA required

<p>10. Integrate FSA inspection and audit activity to improve coordination and consistency of delivery and provide improved level of assurance</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Inspection and audit activity are interlinked under the current Official Controls Verification (OCV) system that has been implemented across Scotland. An assessment of the documented Food Safety Management System (FSMS) is conducted in advance of any inspection. The outcomes of any inspections carried out throughout the year feed into the outcome at the final of the inspection cycle for each FBO.</p>	<p>NFA required</p>
<p>13. Develop centralised Agency databases to hold staff qualifications and training records, training materials and review and update existing training material to incorporate inspection and audit requirements for Cutting Plants and Cold Stores.</p>	<p>Completed from Reg Strat perspective – moved to BAU</p>	<p>Reg. Strategy Programme - ITAE 3.3 - RR13 (revised #2) (A23219729) Reg. Strategy Programme - CPCS - PID RR13 (A23414971)</p> <p>HR undertook a project to gather evidence of all qualifications held by Ops Field staff in order to keep a record of them centrally.</p>	<p>NFA required by Reg Strat as this is now being undertaken routinely by HR</p>
<p>16. Digitally enable the Agencies' approval process to facilitate more customer interactions to be completed, submitted and tracked as part of a more on-line case management system.</p>	<p>Completed from Reg Strat perspective - moved to BAU</p>	<p>Online form developed using Survey123 software. The form has been developed with input from the Veterinary team and it has now been approved for uploading to FSS website.</p> <p>The form will allow the FBO to enter their information, and also to provide the ability to upload documents relating to the approval application. These can then be downloaded and sent to the veterinary team for review – the approval is a manual process, but there is the ability to link the form to a dashboard for reporting, and also to update the form with the outcome of the approval process and to potentially link with ODITs (OWS replacement).</p> <p>Meeting with Phil Hindell and Ops Management took place on 12th October 2021 and it was agreed that no further work is required at this stage. Availability for FBOs to track the approval process so they know at which state of the process</p>	<p>NFA required by Reg Strat as this has been taken forward as BAU by Operations Delivery</p>

		they are at any given time to be reconsidered in the future if necessary. That would be dealt with as BAU	
17. Develop a standard competency matrix for all job roles with responsibility for delivering Official Controls to underpin recruitment, performance management/internal monitoring, training, contract specifications and development of any future accreditation approach. As a minimum all such staff would be required to have HACCP Level 4 certification	Complete	Reg. Strategy Programme - ITAE 3.3 - RR17 (A23082420) Reg. Strategy Programme - CPCS - PID RR17 (A23282149)	NFA required

Outstanding Recommendation	To be actioned by	Current Status	Transition to team	Proposal
7. Invite a small, representative number of LAs to participate in a trial to evaluate the use of single organisation to deliver all Official Controls in a geographic location.	FSS/FSA	Not started	Enforcement Delivery	Take forward as BAU – will also require a commitment from FSS to provide adequate resource to support this work
8. Test the value in mapping the British Retail Consortium (BRC) Directory open information to the Agencies' data on establishments and of the Agencies' officials making use of information in BRC Global Standards (GS) audit reports as part of official controls at cutting plants.	FSS/FSA	On hold (due to COVID)	Regulatory Strategy Programme	To be considered as part of the Regulatory Assurance transformational workstream
11. Industry representative bodies to assume responsibility for the Meat Industry Guide as set out in EU regulations and to further ensure it reflects requirements of the Manual for Official Controls. Further work is required to clarify the regulatory input and oversight.	FSS/FSA	On hold (Industry unable to progress due to concerns re resource)	Operational Delivery	To be taken forward as BAU by FSA/FSS Operational Delivery to advise industry to push for industry trade bodies taking responsibility for the Meat Industry Guide.

12. Update, organise and index guidance and legislation for hygiene and standards inspections using the Agencies' repositories, prioritising any required updates to guidance on durability, labelling and traceability.	FSS/FSA	Started but not progressed	Regulatory Policy	Take forward as BAU (in collaboration with FSA for UK wide approach)
14. Demonstrating greater transparency from industry by making management and assurance information available to regulators (for example, information from DNA testing programmes in relation to authenticity).	Industry	On hold (Industry unable to progress due to concerns re resource)	Operational Delivery	To be taken forward as BAU and picked up at technical meetings with the meat industry (e.g. Scottish Meat Industry Forum)
15. Ensuring at least one member of staff (directly employed or contracted) should be trained to HACCP Level 4 with all other food handlers trained to Level 2 as a minimum.	Industry	On hold (Industry unable to progress due to concerns re resource)	Operational Delivery	To be taken forward as BAU and picked up at technical meetings with the meat industry (e.g. Scottish Meat Industry Forum)
18. Introducing CCTV at critical points within cutting plants and cold stores even though there is currently no legislative requirement for them to do so.	Industry	On hold (Industry unable to progress due to concerns re resource)	Operational Delivery	To be taken forward as BAU and picked up at technical meetings with the meat industry (e.g. Scottish Meat Industry Forum)
19. Work with industry, Defra and the devolved administrations to introduce a more standardised approach to the wording of durability on product labels and require food businesses throughout the meat supply chain to adopt that approach. If legislation is required, we will work with industry and Defra to develop the legislation to mandate this requirement.	FSS/FSA	Started but not progressed	Regulatory Policy (Labelling and Standards Team)	Take forward as BAU. Note - progression of this work is dependent on a steer from UK Government on when they will undertake a review of food information requirements.