

**Memorandum of Understanding  
between the  
Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland**



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# Memorandum of Understanding:

## Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the working relationship between the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and the principles that the FSA and FSS will follow in the course of day-to-day working relationships.

The MoU recognises and upholds the Memorandum of Understanding and Supplementary Agreements Between the United Kingdom Government, the Scottish ministers, the Welsh ministers and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee, referred to as the 'Devolution MoU' which will have primacy over the MoU between the FSA and FSS in all matters of interpretation and effect.

This MoU serves as an agreement between FSS and the FSA on matters relating to food and feed for which the FSA is the relevant UK Government department. It is underpinned by five relevant protocols which set out in more detail operational considerations of how the bodies will work together. This agreement has been drafted to allow the protocols identified within it to be amended over time to reflect future trends, needs and external drivers of change.

This MoU does not create any rights, liabilities, or legal obligations which would have binding effect in law and nothing in the MoU constitutes, or is intended to have the effect of constituting, a binding legal agreement between the Parties. The MoU shall not be the basis of any legal claim or action taken by or against any of them.

The principles underpinning this MoU are:

- **Effectiveness:** Ensuring that interests of consumers are protected in all parts of the UK. Mutual respect for obligations: Ensuring that both the FSA and FSS are able to discharge their respective responsibilities as competent authorities.
- **Efficiency:** Ensuring that public money is spent efficiently through the encouragement of joint working between the FSA and FSS, wherever appropriate.
- **Reciprocity:** Ensuring that arrangements for sharing information and resources are fully reciprocal, unless otherwise agreed.
- **Cordiality:** Ensuring that officials of the FSA and FSS at all levels maintain positive relationships with their counterparts based on shared aims and mutual understanding of the differing political environments within which each body operates.
- **Transparency:** Where possible, the FSA and FSS will share information openly to ensure effective joint working practices.

The FSA and FSS recognise that each has a contribution to make to an effective food and feed safety regime in the United Kingdom (UK), whilst recognising that their policy, priorities and objectives may not always be identical.

The FSA and FSS agree to:

- Co-operate and work closely to ensure that consumers across the UK remain protected.
- Co-operate in the management and communication of food and feed incidents that may pose a risk to consumers, including food and feed standards incidents.
- Co-operate and collaborate with regards to science and evidence gathering to ensure there is a coherent evidence base across the UK to underpin policy development and support incident handling.
- Identify and share outputs from horizon scanning, intelligence gathering, incidents and other

food and feed data sources.

- Share and discuss initiatives to identify opportunities to collaborate during policy and strategy development.
- Facilitate appropriate food and feed safety and standards control measures where food products pose, or may pose, a risk to consumers.
- Co-operate and work collaboratively to ensure that, when working internationally, the UK position is arrived at in a way that takes account of the interests of all parts of the UK and respects devolution.
- Work collaboratively to reduce the impact of food crime across the UK and investigate jointly where necessary and appropriate.
- Work collaboratively on risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.
- Pay any significant costs for services provided by one body to another providing those costs have been agreed in advance by both bodies.
- Work together to meet the commitments made under the Common Framework for Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene.

## Engagement and liaison

- The FSA and FSS agree to co-operate and closely collaborate at all levels across both organisations to ensure that consumers in Scotland, the rest of the UK and more widely remain protected.
- The senior officials responsible for all sections of the MoU, and the executive, will meet at least once a quarter (or more frequently if required).
- “Senior officials” refers to the director or head of each area; in the case of ‘executive’, it refers to the chief executive officer of each organisation.
- The location of senior officials’ meetings will alternate between England and Scotland (or otherwise, as agreed by both the FSA and FSS senior officials. This includes the option of a virtual meeting).
- The FSA chair and FSS chair will meet at least quarterly, in locations agreed by both chairs, including the option of a virtual meeting.

## Incident handling and resilience

- Both the FSA and FSS agree to ensure they have the capability and capacity to handle food and feed incidents and that they will work in partnership and share resources as necessary to ensure the robust detection, response, recovery and prevention to all food and feed incidents (for ‘incidents’ read ‘incidents and outbreaks’).
- Incident management will take place on a four-country basis to ensure common principles of approach, whilst recognising the need for flexibility to respond locally based on devolved government / industry requirements.
- Both bodies agree to ensure that the other is notified, at the earliest possible opportunity, of the details of actual or potential food or feed incidents. This includes those identified through horizon scanning activities and receipt and management signals.
- Both bodies agree to arrange necessary incident management data sharing arrangements as soon as practical. This includes providing each organisation access to the other’s internal databases where necessary and possible and within the technical ability of each organisation, and where not, sharing incident reports.
- Details of the management of, and communications associated with, food incidents and alerts are contained in the ‘Protocol on Incident Handling’ (Annex A) and ‘Communications Protocol’ (Annex E). Both bodies agree to follow the guidance set out in the protocols.

- Both bodies agree to co-operate and work collaboratively with each other to ensure a robust response to all food and feed safety incidents and, where necessary, to review such incidents and complete 'lessons learnt' exercises.
- In UK-wide incidents, being led by either FSS or the FSA, both agree to ensure representatives from both organisations are involved in any established incident response teams and the development of risk management decisions and communications/briefings/guidance from the outset, where possible.
- Where food or feed products pose (or may pose) a risk to consumers, both the FSA and FSS agree to facilitate appropriate food or feed control measures, and, where necessary, to do so in line with the guidance contained in the 'Protocol on Incident Handling' (in Annex A).
- To ensure Incident Management Plans (IMP) are robust the FSA and FSS will ensure staff are aware of and familiar with each other's IMPs and liaise on emergency exercises to test the integrity and effectiveness of incident response plans. The emphasis of the resilience exercises will be to test the arrangements set out in the incident handling protocol to provide assurance that there is effective co-ordination between the FSA and FSS, and to provide assurance that consumer safety in the UK has not been compromised.

## **Data and information sharing**

- The 'Data Sharing Protocol' (Annex B) sets out the mechanisms to ensure food and feed safety and standards intelligence, data and information are shared promptly, efficiently, and in a way that complies with legislation. Both the FSA and FSS agree to follow the guidance set out in the protocol to ensure the free flow of food and feed data, information, knowledge and intelligence between the two organisations.
- Further information on how the FSA and FSS will work collaboratively to share data and intelligence generated through research and surveillance activities, risk assessment and horizon scanning activities is provided in the 'Science and Evidence Protocol' (Annex C), 'Food Crime Protocol' (Annex F) and 'Risk Analysis Protocol' (Annex G).

## **Collaboration on science, evidence and advice**

- The FSA and FSS will co-operate and collaborate on collecting, developing and sharing scientific research, surveillance and the analysis of evidence in line with the guidance contained in the 'Science and Evidence Protocol' (Annex C). Furthermore, both bodies agree to encourage close working relationships and strong co-ordination and collaboration between the FSA and FSS staff.
- Further information on the collaborative working arrangements for undertaking risk assessment and analysing other forms of evidence needed to inform the risk management responsibilities of either or both parties is provided in the 'Risk Analysis Protocol' (Annex G).

## **Common Frameworks**

The UK Common Framework on Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene (FFSH) is an agreement between the UK Government and devolved governments to work together in developing food and feed safety policy approaches.

- The Provisional FFSH Framework which has been agreed by ministers in each of the four UK nations, comprises of two agreements - a Concordat and Framework Outline Agreement and its delivery is facilitated by this MoU.
- The FFSH Framework scope describes the policy areas subject to its terms and is narrower in

scope relative to the issues covered by this MoU. For the areas both in scope of this MoU and the FFSH Framework, the Framework underpins FSA-FSS collective working arrangements.

- Certain MoU sections are out of scope of the FFSH Framework but are still areas where the FSA and FSS wish to follow formal collaborative working approaches. Such areas are covered in the MoU to allow greater flexibility for frequent review and revision.
- This MoU does not cover the Food Compositional Standards and Labelling (FCSL) and Nutrition-related Labelling, Composition and Standards (NLCS) Common Frameworks. These policy areas are covered by arrangements between the four nations that are covered in the respective Common Framework Outline Agreements.

## Policy development

- Both the FSA and FSS commit to share and discuss policy initiatives at an early stage to help identify priorities, scope for joint working and areas where agreed approaches may have to be tailored to meet and respect devolved considerations. This collaboration should not be limited to national and assimilated EU legislation and could include, for example, sharing intelligence aimed at safeguarding consumers' interests.
- Where either organisation intends to initiate a change or review in policy approach (thus creating a potential divergence), it will notify the other of its intentions at the earliest possible opportunity. For matters within scope of the FFSH Framework, this will be undertaken in accordance with the agreed four-country governance processes managing divergence contained therein.
- In working together, both bodies will take into account the differing remits in the four countries, such as the fact that departmental responsibility for food labelling, composition standards and nutrition advice varies across the UK.
- The FSA will involve FSS directly and as fully as possible in order to fulfil the UK's international obligations. This includes international engagement on food and feed safety and hygiene standards with the EU and in wider international fora such as Codex and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as well as bilateral discussions (see Annex D for more information). Close collaboration between the FSA and FSS will also be needed to support areas where the UK has taken the lead at the international level (see Annex D).

## Operational delivery

The FSA and FSS agree to share best practice and expertise to ensure official controls are sufficiently robust, and to make certain that consumers' interests with regard to food safety and standards in Scotland, across the UK, and more widely, remain protected, within the remit of EU and UK legislation. This includes taking into account capability and capacity where the FSA and FSS directly provide resource for the delivery of controls.

In particular, the FSA and FSS agree to collaborate in the following ways:

1. Include and share information with respect to charges and fees for Official Controls, Technical Portfolio work and events, and provide technical support when required on ongoing or emerging issues affecting both organisations.
2. Mutually consult each other during the development of Manuals for Official Controls.
3. Meet regularly (at least annually) to discuss and share information produced in the areas of business planning, risk management and performance management.
4. Meet regularly to share approvals and audits 'lessons learnt'.
5. Collaborate with regard to the MoU for Earned Recognition Feed Hygiene and Medicated Feed between the FSA, Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), FSS and The Agricultural

Industries Confederation (AIC).

## **International matters**

- The FSA and FSS agree to collaborate where possible on international matters to enable the free flow of information and seek to ensure that UK positions and lines take into account Scottish interests.
- In doing so, they will not only follow the established processes for interdepartmental liaison on matters of international relations laid out in The Memorandum of Understanding and Supplementary Agreements on Devolution, but also the general guidance setting out the roles and responsibilities of the FSA and FSS in Annex D.

## **Communications**

- Both bodies agree to work with each other on a whole raft of communication subjects, not just to ensure a 'no surprise approach' to external communications but also to share, co-operate, and collaborate on incidents, campaigns, policy initiatives and issues of mutual interest, and to ensure consistent messaging to consumers and stakeholders. Details of how both bodies will work together are set out in the 'Communications Protocol' (Annex E).

## **Food crime**

- The FSA and FSS are committed to assisting each other in the fight against food crime and, in doing so, demonstrate their understanding of the importance of collaborative working to protect the general public. Both organisations will recognise the clear lines of jurisdiction that are present within the UK and dictate how food crime investigations are led. Further information on how the FSA and FSS will work together in this area can be found in the 'Food Crime protocol' (Annex F).

## **Risk Analysis and Risk Management**

- The risk analysis process provides for a four-nation model to support delivery of food and animal feed safety risk management recommendations for the UK Government and devolved administrations in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, that are effective for the UK as a whole, or for individual countries as needed.
- The risk analysis process underpins the FFSH Framework. It can also be applied as appropriate to areas that are out of the Framework's scope, for example in the provision of food safety advice to the public.
- Both bodies will undertake risk analysis functions in accordance with the principles, guidelines and working arrangements set out in the 'Risk Analysis protocol' (Annex G).

## **Costs**

- When cost-sharing or re-charging is required, the mechanism for this will be discussed and agreed upon through a Working Level Agreement (WLA) or similar between the parties before the work begins.
- Examples include research and surveillance, and services which are commissioned to support the delivery of legal competent authority functions across the UK which are shared by both bodies.

- When one body incurs significant cost(s) to provide goods or services which benefit the other, the benefitting body will contribute to the costs associated with these goods or services, provided they have been agreed in advance by both parties. Whether or not a cost is significant is to be agreed between representatives of both organisations.
- Each body will be expected to cover minor costs associated with collaborative activities between the two organisations.

## Dispute resolution

Where disputes do arise, they should be managed with adherence to the following principles:

1. Commitment to evidence-based approaches to resolution.
2. Transparency.
3. Timely resolution.
4. Compliance with process.

Where officials are unable to reach agreement on an issue, the following dispute resolution process will be followed:

1. Depending on the issue in question, officials will raise the issue to either a senior officials' group overseeing four-nation working, or to the relevant director or head of department for resolution.
2. Should it not be possible to resolve an issue at senior official or director / head of department level the dispute will be raised for discussion or agreement between the chief executive officers and/or the respective chairs of each board.
3. In the event that a dispute is raised, devolution teams in both the FSA and FSS should be kept informed.

## Working Level Agreements (WLAs)

- The FSA and FSS agree to supplement this MoU with WLAs when both bodies agree that their relationship would be enhanced through greater collaboration in areas not covered by the MoU and associated protocols.
- A list of current WLAs will be set out in Annex H of this MoU and reviews of this MoU and associated protocols should include a review of WLAs.

## MoU review

Whilst this MoU includes matters out of the scope of the FFSH Common Framework, the FSA and FSS will include the MoU within regular joint Framework reviews.

The review process will involve:

1. The joint FSA and FSS Frameworks Management Group (FMG) will commission section leads to review the MoU on an annual basis.
2. Section leads will consider the MoU content with a view to establishing if existing aspects of the MoU require amendment or new content should be added to the MoU.
3. The FMG will collate suggested changes and send the revised MoU to the FSA and FSS CEOs for final approval and sign-off.



## Terms of agreement

These arrangements are to work within:

- the legal framework for devolution;
- the UK and Scottish Government's obligations under international law and treaties; and
- the 2013 MoU on Devolution, the Memorandum on Europe and associated protocols and any agreements that amend or supersede it.

Date: 07/08/2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Pettifer'.

Katie Pettifer, Chief Executive Officer, Food Standards Agency

Date: 18/08/2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey M Ogle'.

Geoffrey M Ogle, Chief Executive Officer, Food Standards Scotland

# Memorandum of Understanding:

## Annex A - Incident handling protocol

### 1. Purpose and scope

The FSA and FSS undertake to ensure the greatest achievable protection to consumers, across the full geographical scope of the UK, from any food or feed incident. This will be achieved through agreed protocols for management of such incidents.

This protocol provides guidance on the respective roles and responsibilities of the FSA and FSS in relation to:

- The management of routine and non-routine incidents with actual or potential impact within the jurisdiction of both the FSA and FSS.
- Development and updating of detailed Incident Management Plans (IMP). For the purposes of this document, IMP refers to all IMPs and Incident Management Frameworks (IMFs) in use by the FSA and FSS. The FSA's IMP outlines their communications processes, and FSS have a separate Incident Communications Plan (ICP).
- Maintenance of relationships and collective resilience.
- Sharing information relating to ongoing incidents, signal detection, and all other information relating to the effective prevention, detection, management and recovery of incidents with information and data sharing agreements in place.

### 2. General principles

Incidents have the potential to have an impact on any individual nation within the UK or any combination of two or more. For the purposes of this protocol, only two jurisdictions are distinguished: that of the FSA (which covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and that of FSS (which covers Scotland).

The scope of any individual incident will therefore be classified as FSA, FSS or UK-wide. UK-wide incidents include those potentially affecting the FSA and FSS as well as any incident with impact beyond the UK, or any incident involving a radiological hazard.

Radiological incidents will be led by the FSA, with the FSA being responsible for the provision of policy and technical expertise to support the response, including provision of risk assessment advice. Where appropriate in Scotland, such incidents will be led by FSS and the FSA will continue to provide technical expertise and risk assessment advice as requested.

The FSA and FSS will maintain and share compatible IMPs and ICPs.

Each organisation will consult the other ahead of any change to its respective IMPs or / ICP.

The FSA and FSS will maintain mutual assistance and resilience capability through:

- Ongoing liaison between officials in a way that maintains mutual understanding. This will be achieved using the four nation FFSH Common Framework, as set out in section 4.
- Reviews of selected incidents with a view to improving procedures and recognising good practice.
- Participation and collaboration in UK emergency exercises, including radiological exercises,

run on behalf of other government departments including the Ministry of Defence, Department of Business and Trade (DBT), and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

- Information and resource sharing in response to changing demands as required.
- Sharing training where applicable and ensuring that Standard Operating Procedures are compatible.

### **3. Specific provisions**

The IMPs of the FSA and FSS will incorporate:

- Incident definitions.
- Alerting, Activation, Escalation and Closure.
- Procedures for incident management, including risk assessment, risk management, decision making and internal and external communications. In FSS, the specific internal and external communications protocols are referenced in the separate ICP.

### **4. Responsibilities between the FSA and FSS on management of incidents**

Incidents that originate in England, Wales or Northern Ireland will be led by the FSA. If an incident is initially led by the FSA and escalates to incorporate Scotland (i.e. it becomes a UK-wide incident), then the FSA will continue to lead the incident, unless it is mutually agreed that it is more appropriate for FSS to lead (for example, when the implicated Food Business Operator (FBO) is discovered to be in Scotland). Incidents that originate in Scotland will be led by FSS.

If an incident originates in Scotland or is initially led by FSS and escalates to a UK-wide incident, FSS will continue to lead the incident, unless it is mutually agreed that it is more appropriate for the FSA to lead (for example, when the implicated FBO is discovered to be in England).

When leading UK-wide incidents, both the FSA and FSS agree to involve the respective organisations in all response team meetings (operational and strategic), discussions, decisions and communications from the outset.

Information about in-country incidents will be shared on a regular basis. Where an incident is deemed to be UK-wide, all relevant FSA and FSS officials should be notified without delay.

### **5. Communication and information management**

As set out in the 'Data Sharing Protocol' (Annex B), the FSA and FSS agree that all information sharing must be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). Both bodies shall be responsible for ensuring individual compliance with all articles and principles of the above legislation at all times. The terms on how this will be achieved are set out in a separate information sharing agreement regarding incidents and food crime.

The FSA and FSS will communicate as quickly as possible any information required to ensure that both organisations can perform their respective responsibilities relating to management of UK-wide, FSA-only, or FSS-only incidents. This may not just include incidents information but may also include outputs from the FSA Receipt and Management functions or information related to food crime.

Both organisations will share up to date organisation charts and staff contact details or after significant changes, including contacts for out of hours assistance and support.

Both organisations will also share unique, cross-referenced FSA or FSS reference numbers for each incident, where relevant.

The FSA and FSS will work under a four-nation process to draft, issue and publish food alerts as appropriate to each organisations' jurisdiction. The FSA and FSS will also share relevant food alerts and consult on any other areas on incident reporting and any incident management performance information.

The FSA and FSS will notify each other with sufficient notice of any planned communications with ministers, Local Authorities, the public, or wider industry, regarding an incident, to ensure dual drafting of coordinated communications in a timely manner.

The FSA and FSS will be independently responsible for ensuring that email addresses supplied by each body to the other for purposes of inter-agency communication are appropriately secure for that purpose.

Responsibility for the storage and retention of records of incidents that each organisation is involved in will rest with each organisation independently.

The FSA and FSS will ensure provisions for a secure collaborative forum to share specific information for the duration of any incident, (for example, incident situation reports, distribution lists, press releases etc.) as necessary. The extent, nature and format of such information sharing should be determined by incident managers on a case-by-case basis, according to the nature of the incident.

These provisions will include ensuring that the FSA and FSS have access to relevant information systems, by means of a shared platform.

## **6. Four-nation collaboration**

The FSA and FSS will continue to work on a four-nation level, with formal quarterly meetings, attended by Incidents and Resilience Team leaders. These meetings will be run according to the Terms of Reference for 4 Nations Team Leaders' Strategy Meetings, which includes the tactical and strategic consequences of incidents detection, management, recovery, prevention and minimising divergence.

Further operational meetings will take place on a weekly basis. Additional meetings will be held as needed, in line with the FSA and FSS IMPs.

The FSA and FSS should arrange liaison meetings and collaborate in incident exercises as necessary. These will take place in line with the requirements set out in the 'Engagement and Liaison' and 'Incident Handling and Resilience' sections. Regular meetings will ensure that officials handling incidents are familiar with the relevant organisational arrangements and know their respective counterparts.

The four-nation approach acknowledges the implications of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The FSA and FSS agree to work together to ensure that consumer safety and confidence are not compromised by impacts of the protocol and related regulatory changes.

The general principles for FSA and FSS collaboration on international engagement are set out in the 'International Protocol' (Annex D).

The FSA and FSS will collectively co-operate on international stakeholder engagement planning in

relation to incidents prevention, detection, response and recovery. This engagement includes the negotiation of international MoUs, when applicable, and engagement with the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN). The FSA and FSS will jointly consider potential international data sharing issues.

The FSA and FSS are Emergency Contact Points for INFOSAN. FSS will be an INFOSAN Focal Point. Both organisations agree to undertake the responsibilities those roles entail, as outlined in the INFOSAN Member's Guide.

The FSA will be the UK contact point for the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The FSA will notify FSS of any RASFF notification relevant to Scotland as soon as possible.

The FSA and FSS will co-operate when participating in international meetings regarding food incidents. Where either organisation cannot attend such a meeting, the FSA and FSS agree to meet beforehand to ensure that both parties agree on the UK's position. Both organisations will provide updates after any international meeting and will keep each other updated on any ad-hoc international engagement.

## **Memorandum of Understanding:**

### **Annex B - Data sharing protocol**

#### **7. Purpose and scope**

- The FSA and FSS acknowledge that in order for both bodies to operate effectively, each should provide the other with as full and open as possible access to food and feed safety and standards intelligence, data, knowledge and information.
- This protocol will provide guidance as to how the FSA and FSS will share information and data and sets out the roles and responsibilities of each body.
- The principles outlined apply to transfers of information in both directions.
- This protocol contains agreement on how historical information on FSA activities in Scotland will be handled.
- This protocol reflects the ethos of the Information Commissioner's Code of Practice on Data Sharing.

#### **8. General principles**

In all data sharing activities, both bodies will have due regard to relevant provisions on data governance and ethics, data protection, confidentiality, intellectual property and information security.

Both the FSA and FSS agree to provide any information reasonably requested by the other body; provided that it:

- is lawful;
- is accurate;
- is practicable;
- would not involve disproportionate cost; and
- is available in a reasonably accessible format.

Where any of the above provisos is not met, resolution will be sought on a case-by-case basis.

#### **9. Sharing personal and/or special category data**

Where the data contains personal data, it will only be shared where there is a lawful basis under Article 6 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) for doing so.

Each party agree that all sharing under this MoU must be compliant with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). In particular, both parties acknowledge the need to comply with the seven key principles set out in Article 5(1) of the UK GDPR. These key principles are listed:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency.
- Purpose limitation.
- Data minimisation.
- Accuracy.
- Storage limitation.
- Integrity and confidentiality (security).
- Accountability.

If the FSA or FSS becomes aware of any actual or potential Data Security Breach, it should inform the other body immediately (no later than 12 hours from the time of discovery) by emailing the FSA Data Protection team at: [informationmanagement@food.gov.uk](mailto:informationmanagement@food.gov.uk) and for FSS Data Protection Team at: [dataprotection@fss.scot](mailto:dataprotection@fss.scot).

Where there is a joint controllership, the single point of contact will notify data subjects and the Information Commissioner's Office of the security breach depending on the severity of the data that is lost or compromised. Where personal data is being processed for the prevention or detection of a crime, Schedule 2 Part 1 of DPA 2018 provides exemption for the communication of the data breach to affected individuals.

The FSA and FSS agree to treat any data shared with appropriate discretion.

In particular, both bodies accept that:

- it is for the body providing the information to state what, if any, restrictions there should be upon its usage;
- unless legally prohibited from doing so, each body will treat information which it receives in accordance with the restrictions which are specified as to its usage;
- the body that is in receipt of the information may be subject to a legal obligation to disclose the information in certain circumstances, for example, where it receives a request under access to information legislation (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 / Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 / Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and the UK GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018). In cases where it is proposed to release information, the originator must be consulted, as soon as practicable, allowing sufficient time to respond, about the appropriateness of disclosing information. Where the originator of the information is a Minister of the Crown or a department of the Government of the United Kingdom, and the information is held in confidence, the final decision as to whether there is a lawful bases/ legal obligation to disclose the information will rest with the originator but, in any other case, the final decision will rest with the body to whom the request has been made;
- some information will be subject to statutory or other restrictions which may mean restrictions on the category of persons who may have access to the material (for example, to ensure the Official Secrets Act 1989 and the UK GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 are not breached).
- where personal data is shared, a data sharing agreement will be drawn up setting out the respective responsibilities for compliance with UK GDPR regulations in relation to the sharing in question. A list of data sharing agreements in development and operation at the time this MoU was finalised is included in this Annex.

Each body will ensure that the information it supplies to the other is subject to appropriate safeguards. In particular, both parties agree to ensure they have measures in place that meet the minimum UK Government security standards and that disposal of information at the end of retention periods will follow the latest advice from CPNI (Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure) and NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre).

## **10. Specific provisions**

### **Business and historically significant information**

The FSA will make business and historically significant information available to FSS (subject to the general principle set out in section 5 above). In the first instance any request for information should be

channelled through the Information & Knowledge Management Team via their mailbox [Informationmanagement@food.gov.uk](mailto:Informationmanagement@food.gov.uk) who will cascade the request to the relevant information asset owner for action.

Data and reports from historic FSA funded science and evidence gathering activities are open access and published on the FSA website.

Where an FSA-funded science and evidence gathering project is underway or complete, but no data or outputs have been published, a request from FSS should be made to the FSA Director of Science, Evidence and Research to access the data. The FSA director will take into account the provisions referred to in section 5 when making available the information.

### **Local authority data**

The FSA will grant web access rights to FSS to use the FSA's Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) platform to publish FSS's Food Hygiene Information Systems (FHIS) results. The full cost of granting and amending access and providing IT support will be met by FSS (subject to agreed terms to be set out in a separate Service Level Agreement). The FSA may require a proportionate financial contribution to the maintenance of the FHRS system.

FSS will provide anonymised data from FSS's Scottish National Database (SND) and Scottish Food Sampling Database (SFSD) systems to the FSA where appropriate and as requested, in line with FSS data sharing agreement with Scottish Local Authorities.

### **Operational data**

On request, the FSA will provide relevant Operational and Human Resources data in an agreed format to FSS, the cost of which will be borne by the Scottish Government.

On request, FSS will provide reports and analysis on Scottish operations data to the FSA, and the FSA will provide reports and analysis on non-Scottish operations data to FSS. The full cost of providing these reports and analysis will be met by the requesting body, subject to agreement in advance.

### **Data standards and systems development**

The FSA and FSS will keep each other informed of potential development of information systems and data standards with a view to avoiding unnecessary incompatibilities between data sets retained by either body.

A process has been put in place to ensure that FSS is consulted on proposed amendments to the FSA Manual of Official Controls and notified when new versions are published.

The FSA and FSS will each adopt the FAIR Data Principles to promote the maximum use of research data either published jointly or separately, to make the data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable.

### **Reporting requirements on official controls**

Where co-ordination in relation to the production of a UK plan is required for third country audit purposes by Defra, the FSA and FSS will liaise as appropriate. Defra are now responsible for the production of such plans. FSS will ensure that its statutory obligations on behalf of Scottish ministers to



facilitate and maintain the areas of the Multi-Annual National Control Plan for which it is responsible will be properly discharged to allow Defra to discharge its responsibilities on behalf of UK ministers.

## **Freedom of Information (FOI) / Communication of historical information on FSA activities in Scotland**

The FSA and FSS will consider any FOI requests and queries received which involve both bodies. This may also include historical activities of the FSA in Scotland. Both bodies will then discuss and decide who should lead the response to the request. Each organisation will provide information to the other to enable a response to FOI requests in a timely manner.

## **Dispute resolution**

Where either the FSA or FSS decide that it is not possible to provide data to the other body because:

- it is impracticable;
- it is not lawful;
- it would involve a disproportionate cost; and/or
- the information is not available in an accessible format.
- the providing body will explain to the requesting body as to why the data cannot be provided.

Disputes concerning the provision of data will be resolved through the dispute resolution process outlined in the body of this MoU.

## **Data sharing agreements**

The Data Sharing agreements listed below are active documents, agreed on and utilised by relevant teams across both organisations:

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.	Data Sharing Agreement between FSA National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) and Incidents and Resilience Unit (IRU) and FSS Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit (SFCIU)	Information relating to criminal convictions or offences.
2.	Terms and conditions of use and access to the UK Regulated Products Applications Service by FSA and FSS	Information related to regulated products applications for assessment and authorisation, made to the appropriate authority of the four administrations of the UK.
3.	Conditions of use and the handling of information in the Risk Analysis Tracker Digital Platform by FSA and FSS	Sets out conditions for use and the handling of information in the Risk Analysis Tracker digital platform by the FSA and FSS.
4.	Conditions of use and the handling of information in the Evidence Package Tracker digital platform by FSA and FSS	To collate and store evidence packages containing risk assessments and reports on 'other legitimate factors' such as economic impact and consumer perception.

## **Memorandum of Understanding:**

### **Annex C - Science and evidence protocol**

#### **11. Purpose and scope**

The FSA and FSS undertake to collaborate on their respective activities relating to the commissioning, analysis, and publication of scientific research, surveillance and other forms of evidence needed to support their work. Both parties will promote co-operation in the development of new requirements for research and surveillance and ensure that opportunities for collaboration and joint funding are identified and exploited wherever possible. The FSA and FSS will also seek to share evidence and the outputs of research across all areas that are relevant to the remits of both parties.

This collaboration will cover all science and evidence relating to the natural, physical and analytical disciplines (social sciences, economics, statistics and data science), and will ensure co-operation in each of the areas of work set out below. Section 9 provides further detail on working arrangements needed to support these areas of work.

- Sharing the development, implementation and review of the science governance and assurance strategies of each organisation.
- Developing requirements for research and other evidence-gathering activities.
- Sharing the outputs of research, surveillance and horizon scanning activities relevant to the remits of both organisations.
- Collaborating and engaging with other research funders and the wider scientific community in the UK and internationally.
- Referring issues to Scientific Advisory Committees and their sub-groups and joint expert groups.
- Undertaking risk assessment functions in line with the approaches described in the 'Risk Analysis Protocol' (Annex G).

#### **12. General principles**

In all of these areas, the FSA and FSS will ensure:

- That there are processes and cultures in place within both organisations which promote information sharing and collaboration in the planning and development of new science activities;
- That their plans for commissioning science activities, and any data, evidence and information generated by these activities, are shared with the other organisation in an open and timely manner;
- That approaches for identifying and commissioning of new science activities, and the analysis of evidence required to support the functions of both organisations, are mutually supportive and take full account of the interests of both parties.

When undertaking these activities, both parties will have due regard for the relevant provisions on data governance and ethics, data protection, confidentiality, intellectual property and information security. These provisions are outlined in detail within the 'Data Sharing Protocol' in Annex B.

### 13. Specific provisions

#### **Detail on specific considerations relating to scientific collaborations and mechanisms for commissioning research and sharing evidence.**

The FSA and FSS will share information on all of their activities relating to the identification, prioritisation, planning and commissioning of new scientific research and other evidence-gathering activities. Where appropriate, both parties will also co-operate in any administrative procedures required to support these activities such as tendering and evaluation/peer review.

This covers all evidence gathering and analytical functions undertaken within the FSA and FSS in addition to activities commissioned externally including: research, surveillance, monitoring, secondary analysis, and data-gathering. It also includes the provision of science expertise and capabilities which are required to support the delivery of statutory competent authority functions which are shared by the FSA and FSS including the designation of official control and national reference laboratories, support for centres of excellence, fellowships, studentships, secondments etc.), and participation in work to be undertaken by either organisation jointly with, or through, other funders.

The FSA and FSS will engage on the development of their respective evidence prioritisation cycles and on ad hoc proposals for new research, surveillance and monitoring projects. This will be done according to timescales and processes that allow each body to comment on ideas and priorities for new work planned by the other, to identify:

- existing data that is capable of addressing evidence needs;
- opportunities for collaboration, co-ordination or joint funding;
- scope to refine specifications and approaches to new work based on the knowledge and expertise of both organisations; and
- appropriate procedures for commissioning new evidence needs.

The FSA and FSS will similarly consult and collaborate to identify opportunities for co-ordinating their food and feed surveillance and monitoring programmes, sampling strategies, and horizon scanning activities to ensure effective use of resources and adequate coverage of UK-wide interests.

#### **Sharing the outputs of research and other evidence gathering activities**

Wherever possible, the FSA and FSS will collaborate to ensure a consistent, UK-wide approach to the synthesis, evaluation and review of evidence generated by research, surveillance and horizon scanning activities undertaken by either organisation.

The FSA and FSS will always consider mechanisms for sharing data and evidence when planning new research, surveillance and horizon scanning activities, and will ensure provisions are in place which support the secure exchange of information throughout the delivery of these activities.

Wherever possible, the FSA and FSS will collaborate to ensure a consistent, UK-wide approach to the synthesis, evaluation and review of evidence generated by research, surveillance and horizon scanning activities undertaken by either organisation.

The FSA and FSS will ensure provisions for a secure collaborative forum to share specific information for the duration of any incident, (for example, incident situation reports, distribution lists, press releases etc.) as necessary. The extent, nature and format of such information sharing should be determined by incident managers on a case-by-case basis, according to the nature of the incident.

The FSA and FSS will always consider mechanisms for sharing the data and evidence when planning new data and evidence-gathering activities.

#### **14. Accessing Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) and Joint Expert Groups**

These provisions apply to the SACs for which the FSA is sole or lead sponsor and leads the Secretariat (as set out below), and any Joint Expert Groups which have been convened from these Committees to support specific areas of work, as described in the Risk Analysis guidelines. They will also apply to any new SACs set up to provide advice to UK food authorities for which the FSA becomes sole or lead sponsor and leads the Secretariat:

- Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF).
- Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP).
- Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF).
- Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT).

For regulated products, two Joint Expert Groups (JEGs) are in place to take on the bulk of this work:

- Food contact materials.
- Food additives, enzymes and other regulated products.

These are joint expert groups of COT and ACMSF which is consistent with the existing remits of those parent committees. ACNFP will provide advice on approvals of novel foods and Genetically Modified food and feed.

These provisions do not apply to the FSA's Advisory Committee for Social Sciences (ACSS) and the Science Council. The ACSS provides expert strategic advice to the FSA on its use of the social sciences including new and emerging methods, processes and systems to interrogate data, to deliver the FSA's objectives. The function of the Science Council is to advise the FSA on the FSA's use of science to deliver FSA objectives, and as such is not directly applicable to any other body. Notwithstanding, the ACSS and Science Council Secretariats will ensure regular communication with FSS on its work programme and outputs as appropriate.

SAC Secretariats will share all meeting invites with FSS and information relating to:

- committee agendas, forward work plans and new agenda items;
- recruitment and reappointments; and
- tailored Reviews of SACs.

FSS may nominate an observer to attend SAC meetings. There will be occasions where FSS scientists will be required to support the secretariat in the drafting of papers and to present at meetings on issues that are specific to Scotland, or on any UK risk analysis work to which they have contributed in collaboration with the FSA.

Where FSS wishes to refer an issue to the relevant SAC for inclusion on its work plan:

- The Secretariat and FSS will discuss the approach, scheduling and priority, with the aim of ensuring that such issues have a fair allocation of Committee time and resource, within the overall work plan of the Committee.

- FSS will be responsible for drafting and presenting relevant papers and will do so in consultation with the Secretariat to ensure that these are consistent with the Committee's remit, its approach to defining new Committee tasks, and to the presentation and assurance of work and the agreed timescale.
- FSS will be responsible for SAC costs that relate to any meetings specifically held to consider issues that only affect Scotland.

Reciprocal arrangements will be agreed in the event that FSS establishes any SACs or other expert advisory mechanisms in areas of interest to the FSA.

## **15. Designation and management of laboratory services to support legal obligations with regard to the delivery of Official Controls on Food and Feed**

As Competent Authorities for the delivery of food and feed official controls in the UK, the FSA and FSS are responsible for the designation and oversight of laboratory services needed to carry out analyses, tests and diagnoses on samples taken for this purpose, and for designating National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) in the UK, including those that support the authorisation of food and feed products.

The FSA and FSS will also jointly designate official control laboratories (OCLs) across the UK to facilitate co-ordination and access to scientific services for all food and feed enforcement functions. Both parties will also co-operate on arrangements for auditing OCLs to ensure the reliability and consistency of analytical and diagnostic tests and results.

## **16. Working arrangements**

Three levels of working arrangements will support implementation and review of this 'Science and Evidence Protocol':

- The FSA and FSS science and risk assessment teams will maintain regular contact at working level in each of the six areas outlined in section 11 above, and in accordance with procedures outlined in the 'Risk Analysis Protocol' (Annex G).
- The FSA and FSS senior science leads will meet quarterly to review cross-cutting strategic and governance matters. These meetings will:
  1. share forward planning of research, surveillance and horizon scanning activities to be taken forward by each organisation;
  2. review the operation of the MoU 'Science and Evidence Protocol' across the six areas outlined in section 11 above;
  3. identify any amendments that need to be made to the protocol and the updating of WLAs listed in Annex H and ensure these are undertaken during the annual MoU review process (see 'MoU Review' section in the body of the MoU); and
  4. agree actions and the resolution of issues raised at working level.

When in post, FSA and FSS Chief Scientific Advisors will meet biannually to discuss strategic issues around science collaboration and governance.

If either FSS or the FSA wishes to commission scientific services from the other body in support of work falling within its own areas of responsibility, then the two bodies will discuss and agree in advance the arrangements for this in a separate agreement (for example, a Service Level Agreement

or WLA). Such arrangements will also cover services procured by either organisation to support risk assessment functions (any such WLAs will be listed in Annex H).

The FSA and FSS will keep each other apprised regarding forthcoming social science and consumer research and offer to work jointly on areas of mutual interest. Where a research project may involve respondents from within each organisations geographical area, the rationale for this should be discussed at an early planning stage and agreement reached as to whether this is appropriate or not between the FSA's Head of Social Science and FSS's Head of Social Science.

## **Memorandum of Understanding:**

### **Annex D - International protocol**

#### **17. Purpose and scope**

UK representation at international level and international trade are reserved matters. However, there are exceptions to these reservations, which include the implementation of international obligations, as well as public health controls in relation to the import and export of food and feed. Food and feed imports will, where necessary be subject to agreed risk analysis processes (Annex G) in line with UK Common Frameworks, alongside the principles outlined in this section.

The FSA and FSS therefore acknowledge a shared interest in international policy matters, where the development of international policy, positions or objectives falls into our respective remits. This protocol will enable good working relationships and strong collaboration between FSA and FSS staff on international matters.

#### **18. General principles**

The FSA and FSS agree to:

- share information on relevant international activities as appropriate in an open and timely manner;
- develop collaborative or mutually supportive approaches to the development of international policy, objectives, and positions; and
- ensure the interests of stakeholders and administrations across the UK are taken into account when arriving at an agreed UK position.

#### **19. Specific provisions**

##### **International policy development and liaison**

The FSA will involve FSS directly and as fully as possible in discussions about the formulation of the UK Government's policy positions as they relate to food safety matters on reserved international issues such as Codex international standards and engagement with the WTO, including those which touch on devolved matters (and non-devolved matters, particularly where there may be a distinctive impact in Scotland). Where the matter is devolved (e.g. the development of food safety standards for imported food which may affect future trade discussions), the FSA and FSS will work collaboratively and in line with agreed risk analysis processes where appropriate (see Annex G).

The FSA will co-ordinate the agreement of UK food and feed positions and lines with FSS, allowing for consultation in respective countries to take place.

Where expertise on an issue lies predominately within Scotland, subject to agreement by the lead UK Government department, the FSA agree that FSS will provide UK representation. The role of FSS will be to support and advance the UK negotiating position.

The FSA will work collaboratively with FSS to develop third country Memoranda of Understanding where the FSA is the UK Government lead. Where either the FSA or FSS seek to develop any formal relationships with institutions within third countries, they will actively inform and seek input where appropriate from each other at an early stage in order to ensure parties are fully sighted.

International liaison for individual policy areas is undertaken across both FSS and the FSA as part of their core work. More details of how FSS and the FSA have agreed to work together in these areas can be found in the following annexes:

- Annex A: Incident Handling Protocol.
- Annex C: Science and Evidence Protocol.
- Annex F: Food Crime Protocol.
- Annex G: Risk Analysis Protocol.

Central international co-ordination leads within the FSA and FSS will meet at least once every quarter to share international information, take stock of emerging and developing international issues, and discuss areas that may require further collaborative working.

## **Free Trade Agreements**

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) has overall responsibility for UK free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations. However, Defra leads on FTA Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) chapter negotiations.

Engagement with the FSA on trade negotiations is led by DBT and Defra. DBT and Defra engage separately with Scottish Government and FSS on trade negotiations through the dedicated devolved administration trade engagement groups. FSS and the FSA may liaise on technical matters related to negotiations where requested by DBT / Defra and in line with UK Government arrangements for seeking views from devolved administrations and in accordance with relevant security protocols.

When requested by DBT, the FSA and FSS trade policy advice teams will work collaboratively to provide joint advice to inform UK Government Section 42 reports on new FTAs, in line with agreed timescales.

## **International inspection visits**

Defra is the first point of contact for the authorities in destination countries for inward inspection visits of either national food control systems or audits against established country/commodity- specific export approval requirements. Upon receipt of such requests, Defra will lead the co-ordination of these visits, contacting the relevant Central Competent Authorities (CCAs) to seek their support as required. In the FSA, the Imports and Exports Strategy lead is responsible for co-ordinating the FSA and local authority involvement in such inward inspections, liaising with policy leads and devolved nations as appropriate. In FSS, the international assurance lead will co-ordinate FSS and local authority input to this process. The teams will liaise as required to co-ordinate requests on a case-by-case basis.

Outward inspections required to assess other third country Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regimes and provide assurance on other third country imports entering the UK are co-ordinated (across UK Government) by Defra's UK Office for Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Trade Assurance (UK Office for SPSTA). The UK Office for SPSTA is responsible in the UK for market access and in-country verification audit co-ordination, commissioning risk and intelligence assessments, establishment listing, and food and feed of animal origin legislation. Defra rely on FSS and the FSA, who collaborate closely, to support and challenge this work when it applies to food and feed.

Generally, the FSA leads provide expertise and advice on third country audits for food and feed, but opportunities are provided to FSS to participate where it is appropriate to do so.



## **Listing of UK establishments eligible for export of Products of Animal Origin (POAO)**

Both the FSA and FSS will continue to liaise regarding any activity required at a UK level, where required by third countries and confirmed by Defra, with regards the listing of establishments and classified shellfish areas for export purposes.

The listing of UK establishments eligible to export POAO is the responsibility of Defra. For exports of meat to certain non-EU countries, export approval inspections and regular ongoing export compliance audits by the FSA and FSS are required. Defra are responsible for making recommendations of export approval and listing/de-listing to such non-EU countries based on recommendations from the FSA and FSS. In the FSA, the Imports and Exports Strategy team lead is responsible for co-ordinating the FSA input from across the agency into this process. FSS have the same responsibility for co-ordinating input to Defra for the premises they are responsible for.

Defra is responsible for maintaining the UK list of approved exporters of POAO to the EU and updating the UK's EU TRACES listings. The FSA and FSS currently notify the Defra Third Country Listing Team of any updates to the published lists of UK approved food establishments to enable them to make the appropriate updates to their EU list.

## **Codex Alimentarius Commission (CODEX)**

Defra is the UK Contact Point for CODEX and some CODEX Committees. The FSA represents the UK at the following CODEX Committees on food and feed matters:

- Food hygiene.
- Food additives.
- Contaminants in foods.
- Methods of analysis and sampling.
- Food import and export inspection and certification systems.

Information on the CODEX forward work programme, including details of upcoming meetings and papers, is available from the CODEX website.

The quarterly meetings between FSS and the FSA to discuss international matters provides opportunity for a forward look and to share any issues arising.

The FSA will seek to provide opportunities for FSS to contribute in relevant Codex committee meetings and electronic working groups (EWGs) as part of the UK delegation, where it is appropriate to do so.

## **World Health Organisation (WHO)**

As UK INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points, Focal Points and INFOSAN members, the FSA and FSS engage directly with the joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of INFOSAN. Outside of INFOSAN engagement, the FSA engagement with the WHO is undertaken through the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). FSS will engage with the DHSC through Scottish Government Health Directorates with regard to Scottish issues that may require WHO representation.

## **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**

Defra is the National Notification Authority (NNA) for the WTO SPS Committee while the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is the NNA for the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee. The FSA and FSS trade policy advice teams co-ordinate any measures that are required to be notified to

the relevant WTO Committee on their behalf by the NNA, liaising with devolved WTO SPS/TBT teams as appropriate. The FSA and FSS will work together to ensure that Defra and DIT are briefed and supported as necessary to defend FSA and FSS interests at the WTO.

## **European Union (EU)**

The FSA and FSS will seek to work collaboratively on UK-EU related matters and exchange relevant information in a timely manner, in line with cross-government handling and information sharing protocols and UK Government arrangements for seeking views from the devolved administrations.

The FSA and FSS are involved in cross-government co-ordination arrangements that facilitate our ability to engage with the EU via Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) governance structures. The FSA and FSS interests primarily relate to SPS and TBT matters. Defra are the UK lead department for the SPS Trade Specialised Committee, and DBT are the lead UK department for the TBT Trade Specialised Committee.

The FSA and FSS EU leads will meet regularly and upon request to discuss and share information on relevant UK-EU issues that are raised via TCA governance structures and associated technical discussions, and our respective involvement and interests.

## **EU and international dispute resolution**

Where a dispute relating to international liaison arises that is not within the remit of this MoU's dispute resolution process, the FSA and FSS agree to abide by the dispute resolution process as set out in the Concordat on International Relations between the UK Government and Scottish Government ministers.

## **Memorandum of Understanding:**

### **Annex E - Communications protocol**

#### **20. Guiding principles for communications**

The FSA and FSS will ensure consumers and stakeholders, including the media, across the UK receive consistent, evidenced and factually correct information via their respective communications strategies and channels, in their respective countries of responsibility.

The communication teams in both organisations will work together closely to deliver this information, co-operating where appropriate to reach out to audiences in the most effective way. In particular, we will ensure each organisation works in a timely manner with the other, ensuring full visibility of assets and materials.

Materials should be shared at least two working days before the planned publication or dissemination, even in draft form. In exceptional circumstances where time is limited, each organisation must take responsibility for ensuring the other is made aware of potential communications at the earliest possible opportunity.

Where there is divergence of policy, strategy or organisational approach, the FSA and FSS communications teams will work together to ensure the differences are clearly understood and articulated, and the potential impact on the other organisation is considered in communications handling.

The FSA and FSS will respect the jurisdiction of each organisation in the development and delivery of communications priorities that support each organisation's respective objectives. This will include consideration of media buying, branding, media relations and research (as expanded upon below).

In their communications with one another, the FSA and FSS will be open, transparent, helpful, collaborative, timely and proactive in alerting the other to communications issues which may impact their organisation. The communication teams will meet on a regular and frequent basis and the Director of Communication (FSA) and Head of Communication and Marketing (FSS) will also discuss relevant issues on an ongoing basis.

In all communications, both organisations will be mindful of the fact that there are two food regulatory bodies in the UK and will ensure that this is clear to the public and stakeholders.

The FSA and FSS will ensure both organisations are involved in the development of any required co-ordinated communications from the outset.

#### **21. Media and communication**

The FSA and FSS will collaborate on communications, particularly involving each other in the development of planned press material (such as releases and statements), and digital content, web stories and social media, where there is common interest to both organisations and the public that they serve.

Where there is a four-nation approach to media / communications, the FSA and FSS will work together in the development of any communication products and share internally with respective Communications teams prior to sending on to senior management for input and approval.

The FSA and FSS will ensure that the other body receives:

- drafts of any planned publications with specific implications for either organisation in advance, wherever this is possible;
- drafts of any announcements including press releases and web stories with specific implications for either body, with as much notice as is practicable, before they are released to the media; and
- early notice of any press engagement that could potentially impact, or which might be better handled by, the other organisation to allow as much time as possible for preparedness.

The FSA and FSS will respect the confidentiality of any documents shared in advance of publication and will not cause the content of those documents to be made public ahead of the planned publication date.

While the FSA and FSS will endeavour to produce consistent communications, should the need arise, both bodies reserve the right to tailor messaging for use in Scotland by FSS and in the rest of the UK by the FSA, whilst having due regard for the potential impact of differential messaging on each other and the public.

The FSA will issue communications to the media in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including national news outlets. In cases where there is a communications issue of UK-wide interest, but which is generated in Scotland and where FSS is the lead authority, FSS will issue communications to the Scottish media and national news outlets to ensure that the Scottish public is fully informed of Scotland-specific issues and advice. The FSA and FSS commit not to issue communications to the same news outlets on the same issues. In these cases, both the FSA and FSS will share key messages, lines to take and Q&A with each other to ensure consistency of messaging. The FSA and FSS reserve the right to use their own spokespeople for their own media but will ensure they are briefed according to the agreed communications plan.

## **22. Marketing campaigns and media buying**

The FSA and FSS will advise one another at an early planning stage of the development of relevant marketing campaigns in their respective geographical areas. Each organisation will have the opportunity to discuss running those campaigns on a case-by-case basis in their own locale should there be shared objectives as appropriate. Any financial contribution to joint campaign development and delivery will be agreed at the outset. The lead organisation will keep the other body apprised of development and provide sight of materials but will ultimately retain control over creative output and strategy regardless of any financial contribution from the other body.

Should it be agreed that the FSA and FSS will run the same campaign, all related campaign materials, whether physical or online, must be jointly branded and/or branded FSS in Scotland and the FSA in the rest of the UK, as agreed at the time.

When planning and buying media for campaigns, crossover into the other organisation's geographical area should be avoided, with media agencies being briefed on this requirement as a matter of course. Where there will be unavoidable crossover, for example via social media channels and some digital TV channels, the organisation buying the media must advise the other body as early as possible. This extends to partnerships marketing activity, where, for example, UK-wide organisations and bodies may use materials in the other organisation's locale.

## **23. Social media and alerts**

The FSA and FSS maintain separate social media channels but, where there is a rationale for joint social media activity, for example during a UK wide incident or product recall, this should be discussed and agreed at as early a stage as practicable.

Allergy and Food Alerts will be issued by each organisation according to the incident handling protocols set out in Annex A. Templates and approaches for these should be agreed as part of the Efficacy of Recalls project to ensure consistency of communications approach across the UK and to avoid confusion amongst the public.

FSS will use the FSA's APIs (Application Programming Interface) for Allergy and Food Alerts for FSA-led incidents where there is distribution to Scotland.

## **24. Branding and publications**

Where publications, reports and other communications materials are to be jointly developed, consideration must be given at an early stage of dual branding, including overall 'look and feel' and use of brand colours, fonts etc, as well as the use and positioning of both organisation's logos. This will ensure joint publications are clearly distinguishable as being from both the FSA and FSS and adhere to both organisations' brand guidelines as far as practicable. Templates for such instances should be developed and signed off by both organisations to ensure a consistent approach.

In such cases, any cost-sharing and the percentage split between both organisations will be agreed at the outset of a project.

## **25. Stakeholder communications**

The FSA and FSS will communicate with stakeholders within their jurisdiction regarding matters of joint and separate interest. Where one organisation will be communicating with UK-wide bodies or stakeholders, it should apprise the other in advance of planned engagement, providing adequate notice to allow for input or participation where appropriate. Subsequently, discussion points, outcomes or decisions should be shared from such meetings to ensure transparency and mutual understanding.

## **26. Digital and websites**

Each organisation will allow the other to link to pages and sections on each other's websites.

Digital assets, such as interactives, education resources and training tools, remain the property of the organisation which developed them. However, sharing and rebranding of those assets for use by the other organisation should be considered on a case-by-case basis, with financial contribution agreed as appropriate to offset development and resource costs.

Joint digital projects should be considered at an early planning stage where doing so will be to the benefit of consumers across the UK. The organisation which proposes the activity will generally be the lead organisation and will retain control over the process and outputs, with input from the other organisation to ensure these are mutually agreeable and beneficial. This will be discussed and agreed at the outset.

FHRS and FHIS data should be searchable on both FSS and the FSA websites.

## **27. Incident communications**

Details of specific communications protocols related to the management of incidents are contained in the 'Incident Handling protocol' in Annex A.

## **28. Risk communications**

Details of specific risk communications protocols related to the risk analysis process are contained in the 'Protocol on Analysis' in Annex G.

## **29. Regular meetings**

The FSA and FSS communications teams will meet on a monthly basis to review ongoing projects, share updates and identify areas for collaboration. Additionally, the heads of division for both organisations will meet fortnightly to discuss strategic priorities, address emerging issues and ensure alignment at a senior level.

## **30. Evaluation metrics and continuous improvement**

To ensure the effectiveness of joint communications activities, particularly in the context of incidents, the FSA and FSS will establish a process for regular evaluation. This will involve reviewing the timeliness, consistency, reach and clarity of joint messaging and assessing how effectively the communications protocol supports collaboration.

## **Memorandum of Understanding:**

### **Annex F - Food crime protocol**

#### **31. Introduction**

The FSA and FSS have similar responsibilities to prevent and detect food crime. Both work to a similar definition of food crime as “serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains that affects its authenticity and integrity”.

Fraud offences are prescribed within statute and common law effective in each jurisdiction.

#### **32. Current arrangements for the investigation of food crime**

The FSA and FSS apply established National Intelligence Model (NIM) principles to identify threats, assess risks from a law enforcement perspective, and deploy resources to meet demand.

#### **33. Intelligence**

The FSA and FSS will separately manage information and intelligence and lawfully share intelligence for law enforcement purposes.

Both bodies commit to continue regular intelligence sharing to promote collaborative working to protect the public and have worked together to produce a strategic assessment on food crime across the United Kingdom.

Both bodies will continue to work with other countries independently where specific enquiries require it.

#### **34. Operating model**

Each body prepares their control strategy, identifying their tactical priorities and intelligence gathering requirements. Such strategies develop from the strategic assessments. They are independently prepared, likely to be complimentary and will be shared to promote interoperability.

The FSA and FSS will work to jointly lead on Operation OPSON (a Europol and Interpol joint operation targeting fake and substandard food and beverages) and this offers a model for cross border collaboration between the two units within the UK.

#### **35. Tasking**

The FSA and FSS food crime units have an established Tactical Tasking and Co-ordination Group (TTCG) structure in line with NIM that meets their respective needs. TTCG drives tactical activity and the tactical assessments prepared ahead of each meeting measure progress against identified tactical priorities as set out in the respective control strategies. Those strategies are derived from strategic assessments. The suite of tactical tasking documents will be mutually shared when published.

Strategic documents are shared appropriately in the course of preparation to ensure that each unit is maximising the intelligence capture ahead of finalisation of such documents.

Colleagues are invited appropriately to respective TTCG meetings. This will promote interoperability and enable opportunities for specific joint tasking, particularly in Border regions.

The sharing of such tactical documents enables each unit to identify areas of common interest. This MoU strongly recommends that officers proactively engage with respective departments in such circumstances to share good practice and intelligence, and work together (and with other agencies where appropriate) to jointly develop and deliver consistent strategies to protect the public and disrupt such criminality.

### **36. Investigations**

Each body has investigation capacity and capability. They will continue to lead on their own investigations.

It is recommended that at the outset of any new investigation, the lead officer in charge of that investigation considers the potential for evidence to be gathered in either jurisdiction. They will also consider, based on known facts and intelligence at that time, the potential for that investigation to recover evidence of criminality in another jurisdiction e.g., Scotland or one of the other three countries.

That lead officer will record considerations and decision making as to how to progress that and in any event, it is recommended that early consultation takes place with colleagues in the FSA and FSS food crime units to discuss and agree how to progress such enquiries. This will promote joint working, maximise recovery of evidence in an expeditious manner, and demonstrate an audit trail of decision making in the event of investigations becoming complex.

Where joint investigations are run there will be a GOLD structure with an officer in overall command of the investigation. That will ensure clarity around jurisdictional issues and ensure evidence is lawfully and expeditiously preserved and secured and address disclosure requirements from the outset.

### **37. Existing MoUs with national partners**

The FSA and FSS food crime units have established existing MoUs with relevant Local Authority partners e.g., Society of Chief Environmental Health Officers in Scotland, and Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each unit will continue to consolidate those existing relationships and look to develop new ones with relevant national partners. This MoU will compliment such agreements, and inform new ones, rather than replace them.

### **38. Relationships**

The independence of each agency is reflected in their involvement in established national and international forums and groups. This includes public sector partners, other law enforcement and business. The FSA and FSS food crime units will continue to so engage as they independently see fit, and will look to mutually and appropriately share the developments from those engagements.

Both units will continue to work with international partners through the new arrangements that will develop. Ensuring a single point of contact (SPOC) from each organisation maintains the independence of their unit/agency in such forums. The Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit (SFCIU) currently has adopted the Chair of the Global Alliance on Food Crime and will continue so to do, whilst the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) remain a key member thereof.

The MoU agrees that both units will look to affirm good practice, deliver UK-wide, intelligence-led, proactive joint working and identify and share that through the year in line with TTCG meetings when officers attend the partner by invitation.



### **39. Horizon Scanning**

Both units to collaborate to produce on joint horizon scanning report to be considered at each agency's TTCG processes.

### **40. Food Crime Prevention**

Enabling effective and efficient analysis through established joint working practice, which will inform proactive prevention activity to protect consumers and assist food businesses to reduce their vulnerability to food crime.

## **Memorandum of Understanding:**

### **Annex G- Risk analysis protocol**

#### **41. General principles**

Risk analysis is the process by which the FSA and FSS assess, manage and communicate food and animal feed safety risks. Key high-level principles for the process are that:

- risk analysis comprises risk assessment, risk management and risk communication;
- risk assessment and risk management functions should be separate;
- the risk analysis process is open and transparent. We will publish our risk management advice and the evidence and analysis on which that advice is based;
- advice and recommendations presented to Ministers will be risk, science and evidence- based and independent;
- the risk analysis process has the capacity to provide for four-nation working and deliver, where appropriate to do so, unified food and feed safety risk management recommendations for the UK;
- for changes in areas of retained EU law, which are in scope of the FFSH Framework, ministers in all four nations will be made aware of any differences in advice and be given the opportunity to challenge this.
- for changes in areas of retained EU law, implementation of risk management recommendations through legislation will not take place until there has been communication at official level on a four-nation basis.

Both bodies agree to close working relationships and strong co-ordination and collaboration between the FSA and FSS staff involved in risk analysis. There will be cross departmental and devolved administration engagement throughout the risk analysis process to ensure all relevant issues and interests of other government departments with responsibilities for food and agriculture, health and trade are taken into account.

Both bodies agree to follow the Food and Feed Safety Risk Analysis Guidelines. These guidelines are stored on internal SharePoint and should be checked quarterly to confirm whether any amendments are required. Should changes to guidelines occur, Risk Analysis teams in both the FSA and FSS are responsible for communicating and agreeing these.

Applications for the authorisation of a regulated food or feed product or process in GB are made using a regulated products application service which is managed by the FSA on behalf of both the FSA and FSS. The FSA officials will share relevant information with FSS Regulated Products team in line in with the data sharing protocol at section 10 where reasonably required. Authorisation procedures will follow detailed statutory requirements and any guidance agreed jointly. Decision making should follow the principles set out for risk analysis and the FFSH Framework.

#### **42. Risk assessment**

Risk assessment involves using a scientific approach to identify hazards and estimate the potential risk to human and/or animal health. This includes evaluating the likely exposure to risks from food and other relevant sources.

The FSA and FSS will collaborate on risk assessments in areas of agreed FSA expertise where there is a foreseeable UK-wide impact. In doing this, FSS will notify the FSA with regard to any issues,

evidence or analysis specific to Scotland, with the aim of ensuring that assessments properly reflect the situation in Scotland, as far as the evidence and resource capacity allows.

The FSA will be responsible for any risk assessments within its remit that apply exclusively in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

FSS will generally be responsible for any risk assessments within its remit that apply exclusively in Scotland, depending on the circumstances and expertise required, FSS will either:

- undertake risk assessment in-house;
- collaborate with the FSA risk assessors; or
- request risk assessments from specialist scientists within the FSA in areas where this expertise does not exist within FSS.

FSS will ensure the FSA is notified at the earliest opportunity when it requires support from the FSA on risk assessments that apply in Scotland. The FSA will advise on any resource implications associated with the type of support requested and whether it is possible to be provided by the FSA scientists or will require FSS to seek alternative sources of expertise.

Where alternative sources of expertise are required, the FSA will work with FSS to identify appropriate external resources.

The FSA and FSS will undertake risk assessments according to agreed protocols including procedures outlined in the Food and Feed Safety Risk Analysis Guidelines. The FSA and FSS will collaborate on any updates to these protocols to ensure methodologies applied for undertaking risk assessment are consistent and in line with international standards.

The FSA and FSS will also work collaboratively in evidencing other legitimate factors related to consumers' wider interests in relation to food, as circumstances may require, in accordance with the arrangements set out above.

### **43. Risk management**

Risk management is the consideration of potential measures to either prevent or control the risk. It takes into account the findings of risk assessment and other legitimate factors related to consumers' wider interests in relation to food to identify an appropriate response.

Co-ordination and collaboration between the FSA and FSS staff involved in risk management will be through agreed forums/groups that will facilitate:

- prioritisation and triage of issues in the process;
- working level discussion on specific and/or routine issues, building on existing good policy practice across the four nations with the aim of agreeing and delivering a collective approach;
- Senior Civil Service level discussion between the FSA, FSS and with other government departments from across the UK on developing risk management recommendations for non-routine issues and assurance on routine matters.

### **44. Risk communication**

Risk communication is the exchange of information and opinions throughout the risk analysis process between risk assessors, risk managers, consumers, industry, the academic community and other

interested parties. It includes understanding the concerns of consumers and other stakeholders, the publication of risk assessment findings and other supporting evidence, and the distribution of final advice.

Risk communication is integrated throughout the risk analysis process.

The FSA and FSS agree to share the plans and details of any relevant communications associated with risk analysis as soon as possible. This includes communication across science, policy and communications teams as issues progress through the risk analysis process, and early sharing of the associated developing communications plans around the publication of information/outputs for issues progressing through the risk analysis process and risk management advice and recommendations.

The FSA and FSS are committed to consulting on and publishing the risk management advice we provide to others, and the analysis and evidence on which that advice is based.

**Memorandum of Understanding:**  
**Annex H - Working level agreements**

**FSA Radiological Support for FSS**