

Finalising the new FSS Strategy 2026 - 31

1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 Over the 18 months, work has progressed in developing Food Standards Scotland's (FSS) strategy for 2026-31.
- 1.2 Our previous strategies were focused on both what FSS are here to do and detailed how we were going to deliver. Although a reasonable approach, our previous strategies were de-railed by external events such as EU Exit and the pandemic. It was therefore agreed by the 26 March 2025 Board that our new strategy would be focused on the purpose of FSS and our operating environment and utilise annual delivery plans to detail how we are going to deliver our functions over the next 5 years. This would ultimately allow FSS to flex to any unforeseen events.
- 1.3 A draft strategy was developed during the first half of 2025 and this was drafted as a result of on an assessment of where FSS stands against the [WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030](#), several facilitated sessions with our Heads of Divisions, liaison with our Board Champion, sessions with Education Scotland and the National Health Service and discussions with the Board.
- 1.4 The draft strategy was titled 'FSS Strategy – A safe, authentic and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust' and 8-week public consultation was undertaken between 04 August and 14 September 2025. On the 28 October 2025, Board members had the opportunity to review the consultation feedback and provide further input into the content of the new strategy.
- 1.5 We have finalised the strategy document in light of feedback and comments received through the consultation process and are now seeking approval from the Board for its publication. The final Strategy document is provided at **Annex A**.
- 1.6 The Board is asked to:
 - Approve the finalised Strategy and our proposal to launch the new strategy at the 11 February 2026 Board.
 - Note plans to promote and implement the new FSS strategy during 2026 and beyond.
 - Note that FSS will build a suite of annual delivery plans in support of the new strategy from 01/04/26 onwards.

2 Strategic aims

- 2.1 Due to the strategic nature of the Strategy this covers all 5 FSS Strategic Outcomes.

3 Background

- 3.1 FSS came into being in April 2015 and we developed our first 5-year strategy (2016 – 21). Then on 19 May 2021 we published our [Strategy for 2021-26](#) which set out our vision and described how we would meet our statutory objectives over the five year period, building on the progress we have made since FSS was established in 2015.
- 3.2 We also published our [2021 – 24 Corporate Plan](#) which described how we would turn the ambitions of our strategy into actions. Then in May 2024 we published our new [2024 – 26 Corporate Plan](#) which describes how we are continuing to deliver, and our focus, for the remaining two years of the Strategy.
- 3.3 In 2024 the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) and FSS representatives attended events relating to the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) and the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum (IHFAF). The feedback from these events helped shape thoughts and ideas for the strategy moving forward.

4 Strategy development work to date

- 4.1 In August 2024 the FSS Board Chair and FSS CEO undertook an assessment of where FSS stands against the [WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030](#). The reasoning behind the assessment was to review the World Health Organisation (WHO) model of what a good food nation strategy should look like, then assess where FSS aligns against the WHO's strategic objectives. This resulted in a reasonable strategic first pass at identifying (and prioritising) areas our next strategy could be focused on.
- 4.2 On the 31 October 2024 the Heads of Division participated in a facilitated workshop to review the above initial assessment. The workshop focused on reviewing and providing feedback on this assessment and populating the document further in terms of evidence and actions.
- 4.3 The Head of Corporate Services and Head of Corporate Support Branch have also liaised with our Board Champion ahead of drafting our strategy framework. Early discussions highlighted that Education Scotland, and the National Health Service (NHS) are also running a similar timeline with producing their new strategies. It was agreed establishing a working group with representatives from all parties would be beneficial in sharing lessons learned, approaches and challenges in our strategy development and delivery. This group met February 2025 with a further meeting held 25 August 2025.
- 4.4 The FSS Board agreed the FSS Strategy Framework 26 May 2025 and provided feedback for consideration, this included a 'difference we make' section which was developed further to include a section on 'targeting priorities that make a difference'. The feedback received regarding 'our values' and specific inclusion of climate change and sustainability in the external operating environment was also considered and included.

4.5 Additional engagement sessions and events with the Heads of Division have continued to further develop the strategy content, including identifying the priorities for FSS over the strategy period. Priorities identified were:

4.5.1 Public health and consumer protection

4.5.2 Evolving and reforming the regulatory landscape

4.5.3 Providing an effective public service for the people of Scotland

4.6 The development of FSS's new strategy for 2026-31 was discussed with the Board at several meetings during 2024 and 2025 and the views provided has certainly helped to shape our final draft.

4.7 FSS launched an 8-week public consultation between 04 August and 14 September 2025, seeking views from consumers and stakeholders on sixteen questions (11 multiple choice and 5 open questions). 46 online responses and 6 offline responses were received from a diverse group of stakeholders, including Local Authorities, food industry, public health experts, academics, Non-Government Organisations (NGO), and the public. A summary of the highlights can be found in **Annex B**. Several feedback themes were also identified after analysis of the results, and these were:

- **Ultra-Processed Foods Concern:** Limited focus on ultra-processed foods despite their significant impact on public health was noted by stakeholders.
- **Food Labelling Transparency:** Calls for clearer and more accessible food labelling, especially for people with dietary restrictions or disabilities.
- **Engagement of Marginalised Communities:** Need to better engage marginalised groups and address socio-economic barriers to healthy eating was highlighted.
- **Implementation Details:** Respondents requested detailed plans for strategy implementation, including timelines, resources, and accountability.

4.8 In light of the feedback, the Strategy was updated, and the Board agreed these changes at the 28 October 2025 Board. The feedback will also be considered when we develop our annual delivery plans.

5 Monitoring the successful delivery of our 3 priorities within the Strategy

5.1 Given the current operating environment, it is important that we remain reactive and responsive. As agreed the detail on how we are going to deliver on our 3 priorities will be defined in annual delivery plans (although deliverables may span multiple years) and progress towards achieving our priorities will be measured via Strategic Indicators.

5.2 To ensure our strategic priorities are effectively delivered, the delivery plans will be directly aligned to each of the three core priorities outlined in our strategy, rather than be Division-specific. These plans will translate high-level ambitions into

tangible actions (that are within our control to deliver upon), with clear milestones, timelines, and ownership.

- 5.3 Regular performance reviews, progress reporting, and feedback mechanisms will be embedded within our governance framework to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness. This structured approach will enable us to demonstrate how our strategic priorities are being delivered in practice, providing assurance to the Finance and Business Committee, the Board and ultimately will inform future decision-making.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 We are seeking approval for the content presented in the final draft of the Strategy document at **Annex A**. Provided the Board is content to sign off the content, we will work with publishers and our Comms and Marketing team to enhance the style and graphics of the document prior to launching our new Strategy in February 2025.
- 6.2 As has been previously agreed, we will not be getting the strategy document designed professionally by a graphic designer. This is in line with the 'HTML first' approach being taken with the new website, which aims to increase accessibility and visibility of what we publish (see the [children's meat and dairy report](#) as an example). However, a PDF version of the final Word document will be available for download.
- 6.3 The Strategy will be hosted directly on our new website allowing readers to navigate through content. The final version will be shared with Board members before publication.
- 6.4 To comply with restrictions leading up to the Scottish Parliament election scheduled for May 2026, we plan that the formal launch of our new strategy to be on the day of the 11 February 2026 Board. At the February meeting, we will present our first annual delivery plan to support the new strategy, along with the revised strategic risk register which will underpin its delivery.
- 6.5 To promote the new strategy we will:
- Design and print a 2-page leaflet which outlines the key priorities. This can be taken to events and meetings, as well as be shared by email/online.
 - Design and print roll-up banners to be used at events
 - Host a webinar for stakeholders
 - Share posts on social media
 - Video content of the Chair and Chief Executive
 - Translate it into British Sign Language
 - Have an 'Easy Read' version (i.e. an accessible document which simplifies complex words and phrases and uses supporting pictures and icons. It will also explain any technical language in a clear way so that everyone can understand it.)
 - Share it with stakeholders by email
 - Share with MSPs and Scottish MPs by email

- Share a press release, and identify opportunities for proactive media engagement

6.6 Our revised detailed timeline can be found in **Annex C**.

7 Equality Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty

7.1 We are in the process of undertaking an EQIA and considering the FSD implications of the Strategy on the People of Scotland. The EQIA has been reviewed by the SG Mainstreaming Unit, who have provided feedback and their comments are being considered and reflected in the draft version. The FSD assessment has been a whole organisation approach with significant input from Public Health and Nutrition colleagues and will also be sent to the SG Mainstreaming Unit for an opinion before finalising. This work is expected to be completed by the end of December 2025.

8 Conclusion

8.1 This new strategy builds on the strong foundations laid since our establishment in 2015 and sets out our vision for a food system that is safe, authentic and healthier - and above all, one that Scotland can trust. It reflects our continued independence from government and industry, our direct accountability to the Scottish Parliament, and our commitment to transparency, fairness and evidence-based decision making.

8.2 The consultation process has served to demonstrate the level of public interest in FSS, and broad support from our stakeholders for our proposed direction of travel. Board sign off will enable us to focus on plans for promoting the strategy and engaging with others on our plans to take it forward.

8.3 The Board is asked to:

- Approve the finalised Strategy and our proposal to launch the new strategy at the 11 February 2026 Board.
- Note plans to promote and implement the new FSS strategy during 2026 and beyond.
- Note that FSS will build a suite of annual delivery plans in support of the new strategy from 01/04/26 onwards.

Please direct queries to:

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Annex A – FSS Strategy 2026-31

Annex B – the highlights from the stakeholder and public consultation

