

FSS Strategy 2026 - 31

1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 This paper is to advise the Board of the progress to date on producing the 2026 – 31 Food Standards Scotland (FSS) Strategy (the Strategy) and to canvas views on the content to date (**Annex A**). It should be noted that the narrative and diagrams in the Strategy remain work in progress and will be refined as work progresses.
- 1.2 The Board is asked to:
 - **Discuss and provide a view** on our draft strategy ahead of moving to public consultation 01/08/25.
 - **Discuss and provide a view** on the questions raised in **section 5**.

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.
- 3.4 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 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 scheduled 09 July 2025.
- 4.4 Since the 26 March 2025 Board FSS Executive members have met and further considered the framework for delivering our core responsibilities and external influencing factors that may impact across term of our strategy. FSS also used the well-established Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA) model which helped develop thoughts and focused minds for the 'Navigating a complex operating environment' section of the Strategy.
- 4.5 Over the past few months there has been further engagement and sessions with the Heads of Division to further develop the strategy content including identifying the priorities for FSS over the strategy period. These currently are:
 - 4.5.1 **Consumer protection** using robust science and evidence, risk assessments and investigation to drive risk management actions and recommendations that ensure food safety and support a food environment that help protect the people of Scotland from foodborne illnesses and the impacts of poor diet.
 - 4.5.2 **Evolving and reforming the regulatory landscape** creating, developing, influencing and implementing a regulatory and enforcement framework which is implemented efficiently and effectively, driving compliance and strengthening trust in Scotland's food system
 - 4.5.3 **Providing an effective public service for the people of Scotland** ensuring the services we deliver are effective, efficient, inclusive and sustainable.

- 4.6 The Board is presented with the latest version of our Strategy ahead of moving forward to public consultation 01/08/25. It should be noted that some of the narrative will likely change to take account of other external factors such as SPS and the Public Health Framework where we do not have sufficient information yet to understand the potential impact and/or influence they may have. The strategy will also undergo copywriting to ensure it is presented in a consistent manner.

5 Questions for the FSS Board consideration

- 5.1 The Board's views on the items below are appreciated:
- 5.1.1 Are the Board content with the priorities identified in the 'Targeting priorities that will make a difference to Scotland' section of the FSS Strategy (para 4.5 and **Annex A** p7).
- 5.1.2 Are the Board content with the headings defined in the 'Navigating a complex operating environment' section of the FSS Strategy (**Annex A** p9)

6 Next steps

- 6.1 Plan for the consultation phase of the strategy which will target stakeholders including Local Authorities, Food Business Operators, consumers and other identified stakeholders.
- 6.2 The public consultation will be undertaken 01/08/25 – 12/09/25 where we will seek feedback from consumers and stakeholders on the content of the strategy where areas may need to be changed, updated or developed further. We will use our digital consultation platform and upload specific questions about the content of the strategy.
- 6.2.1 Stakeholders will be emailed with a link to complete the consultation, with a reminder sent halfway through the consultation period.
- 6.2.2 The consultation will be shared with local authorities through the monthly enforcement report.
- 6.2.3 A link to the consultation will be shared on social media (this will be done several times when it is live).
- 6.2.4 Where there are existing regular stakeholder meetings (e.g. Food and Drink Federation Scotland) we will advise that the strategy is live and invite them to respond.
- 6.2.5 The consultation will be shared with MSPs and Scottish MPs at Westminster
- 6.3 Throughout the period that the consultation is live, we will monitor the completion rate as well as the types of organisations completing it. If we believe we need more responses from specific groups, e.g. retailers, we will target these groups specifically.
- 6.4 Work will continue to progress with our C&M team to:

- 6.4.1 Review the practicalities of hosting our Strategy on new FSS website to allow readers to navigate through content. This also allows for up-to-date content to be loaded if needed, and for us to utilise links from the Strategy to relevant areas of the website.
 - 6.4.2 Utilise the new Website Project Writing Guide to ensure consistency in style when developing our strategy.
 - 6.4.3 Corporate Support will work with our Communication and Engagement team to identify an innovative and creative presentation style that meet the needs of modern-day audience.
- 6.5 Our revised detailed timeline can be found in **Annex B** and the milestones, including updates to Board, are noted below.

Date	Milestone
31/10/24	Workshop to review outputs of WHO assessment (Heads of Divisions and Senior Leadership Group)
09/01/25 – 11/04/25	Draft strategy framework
26/02/25	Workshop to review strategy framework (Heads of Divisions and Senior Leadership Group)
26/03/25	FSS Board meeting (feedback on strategy framework)
01/04/25 – 30/07/25	Further develop strategy content
18/06/25	FSS Board meeting (development & progress update)
01/08/25 – 12/09/25	Public consultation
17/09/25	FSS Board meeting (development, progress update & draft supporting governance documents)
28/10/25	FSS Board Away Day (update including public consultation results)
10/12/25	FSS Board Meeting (Approve strategy & supporting governance documents)
15/01/26	Submission to Minister “To notify the Minister of the launch of FSS’s new Strategy for 2026-31.”
20/01/26	Stakeholder event
TBC/01/26	Formal launch date (to align with FSS Board if possible)

7 Equality Impact Assessment and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 7.1 Equality Impact (EIA) and Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD) assessments are not considered necessary for this paper. The purpose of the paper is to provide an update on our approach to developing the new Strategy. We will complete the EIA and FSD (outlining the socio-economic and inequality factors we need to consider when developing and implementing our new policies and initiatives as part of the Strategy) to support the 2026 to 31 Strategy and they are scheduled for Q4 2025/26.

7.2 Conclusion

- 7.3 Feedback received by the FSS Board on 18 June 2025 will be considered when continuing to develop the Strategy. The Board Champion will also continue to be consulted at regular intervals.
- 7.4 A Steering Group has been established and will meet regularly to ensure the development of the Strategy remains on target and actions are being completed. The Steering Group will report progress to the Strategy Forum, for accountability and oversight purposes.
- 7.5 The strategy development timeline (**Annex B**) details the points at which progress updates / areas for discussion will be presented to the FSS Board. The schedule will be monitored by the Steering Group with escalation to the Strategy Forum as required.
- 7.6 The Board is asked to:
- **Discuss and provide a view** on our draft strategy ahead of moving to public consultation 01/08/25.
 - **Discuss and provide a view** on the questions raised in **section 5**.

Please direct queries to:

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