

Chief Executives Report

1. Introduction

1.1 There has been a considerable amount of activity since the last meeting.

2. Engagements and meetings

2.1 The CEO continues to have regular engagement with a range of stakeholders and organisations.

3. Ministerial meetings

3.1 The CEO continued to have regular catch-ups meetings with Jenni Minto MSP, the Scottish Government's Minister for Public Health and Women's Health to update her on ongoing FSS activity.

4. Public Affairs and Engagement Strategy

4.1 The Comms team revised the public affairs strategy for engagement with the new Scottish Government, the new Scottish Parliament and with MSPs. The new Public Affairs and Engagement Strategy was discussed at the Board seminar on 29 April 2026. It is anticipated that this will include a parliamentary event early in the new parliament, subject to the availability of event space in the Parliament.

5. Engagement with MSPs

5.1 Prior to the pre-election period FSS continued its cross-party engagement with MSPs, focussing on a wide range of FSS's work. On 27 February 2026 a food crime meeting was held with Michelle Thomson MSP, the Deputy Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Economy and Fair Work Committee, and with Ron McNaughton, Head of the SFCIU, and Robert McGeachy, Head of Public Affairs and Engagement.

6. Allergen Information

6.1 Information about the public consultation on allergen information was sent out to all MSPs, and to all MPs representing constituencies in Scotland, on 2 March 2026.

7. Scottish Parliament Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's Legacy Paper

7.1 The Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee published its legacy paper on 18 March 2026. FSS had 4 evidence sessions, which was more than any other public body, with the Committee highlighting its concerns over other public bodies reluctance to give evidence and/or lack of availability, Paragraph 87, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, Legacy Paper, Session 6, the Scottish

Parliament. The Report can be accessed at: <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/committee-reports/hscs/2026/3/18/hscss062026r16/pdf>

8. Future Food Information

8.1 Information about future foods was sent to all MSPs, and to all MPs representing constituencies in Scotland, on 20 March 2026.

9. Consultation on authorisation of regulated products

9.1 Information about the consultation on the authorisation of regulated products: three CBD products was sent to all MSPs, and to all MPs representing constituencies in Scotland, on 25 March 2026.

10. Update on population groups at higher risk of food poisoning - [Food Standards Scotland updates guidance on those most at risk from foodborne illness | Food Standards Scotland](#)

10.1 On 11 June 2026, FSS published on its website an updated definition of the groups at higher risk of food poisoning, alongside three commissioned research reports that provide the evidence that underpins the updated definition:

- Examining vulnerability to foodborne illness: A comprehensive review of 'clinically vulnerable groups'
- Determining the lifestyle factors which cause particular members of the older population to become ill with foodborne illness.
- Consumer research regarding people at higher risk of food poisoning

10.2 The updated definition was reviewed by Public Health Scotland and tested with consumers prior to publication and dissemination to ensure it was accessible, informative and proportionate. The definition retains age/life-stage groups at risk (children under 5, pregnancy and older adults, typically those aged 65 years and older) but expands on the "weakened immune system" category to reference specific clinical conditions (cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, liver and kidney disease) and treatments/medications, notably adding prescribed medications that reduce the production of stomach acid (Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)) alongside chemotherapy and immunosuppressants.

10.3 Information regarding this update was disseminated to relevant NHS and SG departments and third sector organisations to raise awareness with health professionals and consumers at higher risk of foodborne illness.

11. Change to Deputy Chair

11.1 Following Alban Denton's decision to step down from the role as Deputy Chair, we are delighted to announce that Christina Bichan has been appointed as the new Deputy Chair and has taken over with immediate effect.

12. The Science Division actively participated in and co-hosted the 12th International Conference on Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC/VTEC) at the P&J Live conference centre in Aberdeen

12.1 VTEC 2026 brought together over 250 scientists from around the world who have dedicated their research to advancing understanding of STEC – its biology, how it causes disease, and how it can be controlled.

12.2 As a priority within FSS's foodborne illness reduction strategy, STEC research is an area where we continue to make a strong impact. This was reflected throughout the conference, with excellent contributions from the team. Karen Pearson, our Senior Microbiological Risk Assessor, delivered a well-received presentation on the challenges of isolating STEC from implicated foods during outbreaks (based on work done with Christina Anthony from our incidents team and our head statistician Chrissy Coakley), while Public Health Scotland (PHS) colleagues shared early findings from a major study led by Jane Horne, our Head of Food Protection, Science and Surveillance, on the epidemiology of STEC in Scotland.

12.3 The final day highlighted the global reach of FSS-funded science. In his keynote presentation, Professor David Gally, previously our Chief Scientific Advisor, highlighted the impacts of work we published in 2018 on STEC in livestock and how the outputs from our PATHSAFE project are shaping future analytical approaches. While our Head of Science, Jacqui McElhiney, chaired an international expert panel on strengthening STEC surveillance and improving data sharing across countries and sectors.

12.4 Marianne James, our Head of Risk Assessment, played a key role throughout the event serving on the organising committee, chairing a diagnostics session, and helping to host a symposium with the UK Food Safety Research Network. This highlighted collaborative work with partners across government, industry, and academia to develop practical tools for managing STEC risks in the fresh produce sector to prevent future incidents.

12.5 Overall, the conference provided a fantastic opportunity to connect with global experts and showcase FSS science on the international stage.

For queries contact:
Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive
Geoff.ogle@fss.scot

17 June 2026