

FSS Strategy – A safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust

Food Standards Scotland
Strategy for 2026 - 2031

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Foreword

Action: Board Chair and FSS CEO to draft.

About us

Our role

Food Standards Scotland was established on 1st April 2015 as the new public sector food body for Scotland, to protect the health and wellbeing of consumers through three objectives set under the [Food \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#). FSS has a unique role in government, working independently of Ministers and industry, to provide advice which is impartial, and based on robust science and data. Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain which can impact on public health – aiming to protect consumers from food safety risks and support a healthier food environment.

We put evidence first, acquiring data on what we eat and the risks to our food chain, as well as the social, ethical and environmental factors that influence the way it is produced, supplied and consumed. This ensures we remain trusted and influential – providing advice which makes a difference and supports improvements in the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.

Our values

We will continue to embrace these values in our day-to-day work.

Consumer Focussed: We keep public health and consumer protection at the heart of what we do. We ensure our actions are targeted, recognising the diversity of people in Scotland and taking account of health inequalities.

Evidence Based: We ensure our work is underpinned by robust science and data. We maintain an understanding of the issues that matter most to consumers in Scotland.

Fair and Proportionate: We protect public health and support economic growth through promoting compliance by regulating fairly, firmly and proportionately. We establish trust, ensuring regulatory objectives are transparent and our actions are consistent and timely.

Independent: We preserve our independence, working at arm's length from government and industry. We influence UK policy development through robust risk analysis, recommending decisions which are in the best interests of consumers in Scotland.

Inclusive and Open: We respect the rights of every individual, organisation and business to have a say in the matters that affect them and work collaboratively to achieve the greatest benefit for the people of Scotland. We ensure transparency in our decision making, advice and recommendations, by publishing our evidence base and enabling those impacted to understand the issue.

Our Strategy 2026 - 31

Our vision

A safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust.

Our statutory objectives

Our statutory objectives:

- To protect the public from risks to health which may arise in connection with the consumption of food
- To improve the extent to which members of the public have diets which are conducive to good health
- To protect the other interests of consumers in relation to food

The difference we make

[Visual to accompany]

In delivery of our statutory objectives we will ensure the development of food and feed policy while advising the Scottish Government, Ministers, other authorities and the public on these matters. We also have a unique responsibility to improve diet in Scotland and to support consumers to achieve a healthy diet, ensuring that the food environment helps them to make informed choices about the food they eat.

To meet and exceed our objectives the strategy is designed in a way that is aspirational yet realistic to ensure it delivers on all legal requirements as set out in the Food (Scotland) Act 2015. FSS will implement processes that provide appropriate levels of governance and accountability while maintaining independence from industry and the Scottish Government. FSS performance and accountability ultimately lie with the public in Scotland through the Scottish Parliament.

When requested, or when appropriate, the FSS Board will provide advice and guidance to Scottish Government, Ministers and other public bodies on all areas within our remit. Within the general framework of the Act the Board approves our strategic direction through this five-year strategy.

Our strategy is supported by annual delivery plans that outline the work to be progressed over the five years. The Board will ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place to facilitate the delivery of our vision and strategic objectives.

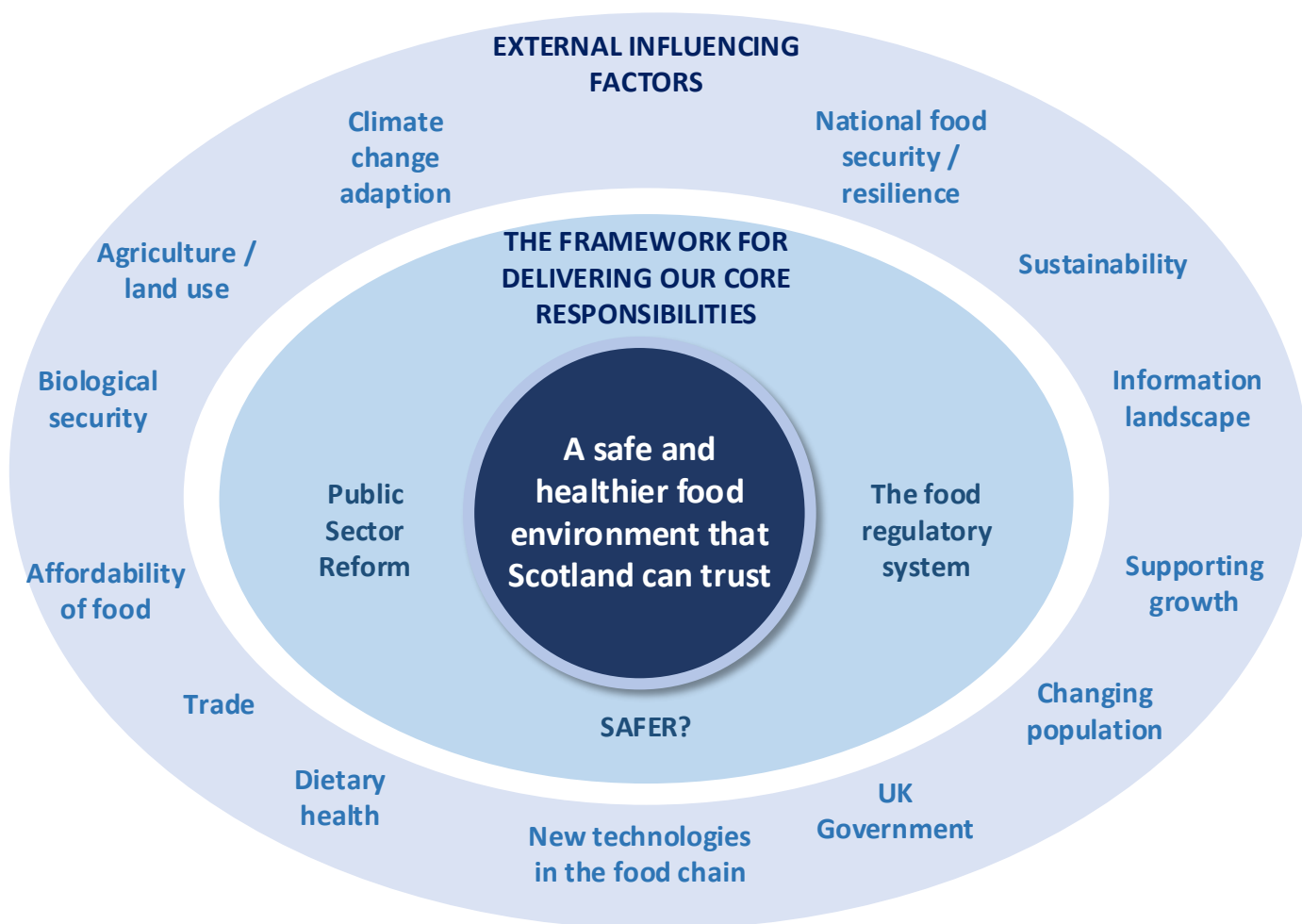
To earn the trust and confidence of consumers, our Board operates in an open and transparent manner. The Board meets in public at least four times a year and adopts Standing Orders that specify, among other things, which matters will be considered in private and how the reasons for such discussions will be recorded and published.

To meet our statutory objectives, our core responsibilities remain to:

- Work with stakeholders to drive improvements to the safety, standards and nutritional quality of food and feed produced and sold in Scotland to prevent foodborne illness and poor dietary health outcomes in our population.
- Work with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to provide an effective risk analysis process for the UK; ensuring our advice on food safety is underpinned on robust science and evidence and supports delivery of a streamlined, efficient and effective Market Authorisations service for Regulated Products which protects public health and the interests of consumers in Scotland.
- Undertake research, surveillance, monitoring and analysis to generate a robust evidence base which enables us to understand trends in foodborne illness and public health nutrition, assess risks, and target interventions to where they are most likely to have an impact.
- Protect consumers from potential risks associated with food and feed, intervening by investigating food/feed safety incidents and food crime, ensuring the appropriate action is taken.
- Ensure consumers have the information they need to inform healthier food choices and can trust the provenance of the food they buy.
- Work with partners to implement a proportionate and effective enforcement regime that supports the food and drink industry by applying evidence based and targeted controls; rewarding good practice, applying robust sanctions where appropriate and providing guidance which promotes compliance.
- Maintain a robust and effective regulatory assurance regime in Scotland, working across the UK and internationally to strengthen consumer confidence and support trade.
- Play our part in supporting efforts to create a more sustainable and resilient food system for Scotland; supporting our partners across government in ensuring policies on climate change adaptation and sustainability take full account of food and feed safety and public health nutrition.

Our operating environment

Once diagram/concept agreed will draft a paragraph here to introduce the diagram below and include narrative on how external factors can impact / influence what we do, use of systems thinking etc.



Sections below are placeholders with the narrative to be reviewed and updated to ensure current nearer publication date.

Scottish Authorities Food Enforcement Rebuild (SAFER) programme

The Scottish Authority Food Enforcement Re-Build programme (SAFER) is an ambitious Food Standards Scotland proposal to develop and deliver a new model for food law regulation in Scotland. The current system is not fit for purpose and therefore presents significant public health, economic and trade risks. It is essential that all aspects of the system are reviewed and modernised.

SAFER proposes transformation of the system for food law regulation and enforcement in Scotland. It will ensure that the delivery model is efficient, robust and sustainable with significantly less or without the need for government subsidy; targeting interventions which optimise public health protection and support a thriving food sector.

Public Service Reform

We recognise that the medium to long-term projections of demand and cost for all Scotland's public services are extremely challenging. The immediacy of this means we must continue to deliver efficiencies and make more effective use of resources to deliver services in a fashion that reduces demand and cost and improves outcomes for communities. With this as a backdrop, the Scottish Government has committed to a ten-year PSR programme. Whilst still very early in its development the Scottish Government is in the process of laying out a portfolio of work to:

- ensure public services remain fiscally sustainable, by reducing the costs and long-term demand through investment in prevention,
- improve outcomes, which will improve lives and reduce demand, and
- reduce inequalities of outcome among communities in Scotland, recognising the need not just for improved outcomes, but a focus in policy and delivery on those most disadvantaged.

We will work closely with Scottish Government and partners in supporting and delivering the PSR programme whilst continuing to identify opportunities for cost reduction, increased efficiency and transforming the service.

Sustainability

We are committed to delivering our strategy in the context of wider environmental, food and health policies and consumer interests relating to sustainability. We will ensure we deliver our work in a sustainable manner and consider environmental and societal impacts when developing and implementing new policies on food and feed safety, standards and nutrition.

The concept of sustainability has become increasingly important to the people of Scotland and is an area where consumers and stakeholders have indicated that FSS has a role to play. The established definition of sustainability is to ensure development "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. With regard to food, sustainability is a multi-faceted concept comprising a wide range of environmental, social, ethical and economic issues, many of which have an influence on dietary choices, risks to our food chain and public health. FSS will ensure this strategy is delivered sustainably, taking account of environmental and societal impacts in all of our work. Where appropriate, we will also contribute to Scottish Government priorities for a sustainable food and drink industry in Scotland, and our collective commitments regarding climate change adaptation

Supporting our operational environment

Currently a placeholder section.

Couple of high-level paragraphs covering points below

- Our people and skills (staff and wellbeing)
- Data and digital
- Governance and assurance
- Finance (quantifying what is achievable on what we have, workforce plan reference)

Delivering our Strategy

Placeholder and diagram to be further developed to demonstrate how we are going to deliver on our strategy and our governance / accountability.

We have set out in this Strategy the vision that we want to achieve – “A safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust.” We have our statutory objectives and core responsibilities that are key to us achieving this vision. Our Annual Delivery plans will detail what we will do on an annual basis to move us towards that vision and our values that will underpin how we will work at all levels. The links between these elements are illustrated below.

