

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 and engagement since the last quarter has included a number of ministerial meetings, a presentation on incident management in Manchester, a regular catch up with FDF Scotland; a meeting with the Hospitality Association to discuss SAFER; liaison with SG officials, a meeting with SEPA; and Geoff also was a guest on the Food Foundation podcast to discuss their report “Broken Plate”.

[Podcast: Broken Plate 2025 report | Food Foundation](#)

2.2 Geoff and Heather Kelman, FSS Chair also attended the Public Service Reform (PSR) conference in February. This provided the opportunity to discuss improving outcomes, efficiency, collaboration, and preventing demand for services in advance of the upcoming publication of the Scottish Governments PSR Strategy.

2.3 The Chair and CEO continue to have regular catch ups with the FSA Chair and Katie Pettifer, the new CEO, to discuss a range of current issues, such as Public Service Reform (PSR), allergen labelling and financial challenges.

3. Dietary Intake of Scotland’s Children (DISH) survey

3.1 The results of the DISH survey, a report providing critical insights into the dietary habits of children and young people aged 2 to 15 years across Scotland was published late January. This was the first significant survey of children and young people in Scotland in 15 years and the results revealed alarming health inequalities, with children in the most deprived areas experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity and struggling the most to meet dietary goals compared to those in the least deprived areas. The results are available on our website: [Alarming diet trends among Scottish children highlight urgent need for action | Food Standards Scotland](#)

3.2 The findings from the survey have been widely disseminated including a webinar attended by over 250 people including MSPs and coverage in print, online and broadcast media featuring TV and radio interviews. You can now [view the webinar recording](#).

4. Food and You 2 Survey (Scotland)

4.1 The Wave 8 Key Findings Report was updated on 25 February 2025 and is now available via the FSS website.

4.2 This report presents the key findings emerging from the data gathered in Scotland, who have been included for the first time. The survey has been running in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 2020.

4.3 Focussing on eating at home and food safety practices among consumers, the report also covers eating out and ordering takeaways, consumer concerns about food, food allergies and intolerances, sustainable diets and meat alternatives, and genetic technologies.

5. Review of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy

5.1 The UK Government has started the process of reviewing the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) to ensure that it remains effective and fit-for-purpose. FSS, alongside Public Health Scotland, have officially responded to this review following engagement with officials from HMT and HMRC. Our response supports a reduction in the levy thresholds to capture a wider range of sugar containing soft drinks and expanding the scope of the levy to capture milk-based drinks with added sugar. Depending on the outcome of the review, the UK Government expects to enact any changes to the SDIL in the 2025 Budget.

6. High Fat, Salt or Sugar (HFSS) Advertising restrictions

6.1 The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has revised its guidance on the forthcoming Government's restrictions on advertising foods high in fat, salt, or sugar (HFSS) following criticism from health campaigners. The new guidance, effective from October 2025, clarifies that even advertisements that do not explicitly show HFSS products, may still be banned if audiences could reasonably associate them with the company's HFSS products. On behalf of ASA, the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP) is consulting on the updated version of the guidance until 17:00 on Tuesday 18 March.

[Further consultation on the implementation of new rules on ads for "less healthy" food and drink products - ASA | CAP](#)

7. Market Authorisation of Regulated Products – Reform

7.1 The Reform SI was notified to Scottish Parliament in December 2024 and considered by the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on 21 January 2025. FSS staff attended committee along with the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health. Consent was given by majority vote and the Reform SI was subsequently laid in draft in UK Parliament on 29 January 2025. As this is an affirmative instrument, debates are required. The first of which was held in the Commons on 04 March 2025 with few questions and members were supportive. The Lords debate was held on 10 March and was also supportive but with much more interest and questions. The instrument is expected to come into force on 01 April 2025.

8. Market Authorisations (Regulated Products) Feed additives

8.1 Work on the third tranche of feed additive authorisation applications has been completed and the implementing regulations, [The Feed Additives \(Authorisations\) and Uses of Feed Intended for Particular Nutritional Purposes \(Amendment of Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2020/354\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) came into force on 20 December 2024. These Regulations make provision regarding [Feed additives authorisation guidance | Food Standards Agency](#) on additives for use in animal nutrition and the use of feed for a particular nutritional purpose in Scotland. The Authorised Regulated Food and Feed Products for Great Britain register will be updated to include these authorisations.

9. Publication of new FSS shelf-life guidance

9.1 In January we published new guidance to help food businesses understand and determine the shelf lives of their products. This guidance was developed following an outbreak of human illness which began in 2022 and was attributed to the contamination of smoked fish with *Listeria monocytogenes*; a pathogen which can grow at refrigeration temperatures in a range of chilled, ready to eat foods. Setting an appropriate shelf-life is an important food safety control for these products, but this process can be technically complex and challenging, especially for small businesses. This guidance aims to support these businesses by describing best practice and providing practical examples of the various methods that can be used to determine and verify shelf-life under reasonably foreseeable conditions of distribution, storage and use. The guidance was developed by the FSS microbiological risk assessment team in conjunction with external experts including industry representatives and members of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food – [Shelf-life guidance](#)

10. Food Standards Scotland Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) 2023-24

10.1 FSS received an unmodified audit report from their external auditors, Deloitte for the year 2023-24 and the ARA were signed off by the FSS Board on 28 November 2024. These have now been laid in Parliament and are available to view. [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 | Food Standards Scotland](#)

11. Export Missions

11.1 The Canadian meat inspection audit, which included visits to four Scottish establishments took place during September 2024. Work has been ongoing to address non-compliances raised during the audit. The draft audit report has now been received, and action will begin to develop the response.

12. EU Audits

12.1 The EU dairy audit took place in England and Scotland in November 2024, with visits in Scotland to three food business establishments in two local authorities and meetings with the LAs concerned. The closing meeting took place on 22 November.

12.2 The report included five recommendations which concerned official control delivery, HACCP, export certification, traceability, and segregation and identification of animal by-products, with only one of the recommendations explicitly related to issues identified in Scotland.

12.3 Planning is now beginning for the EU live bivalve molluscs (LBM) audit in June 2025, with current priority given to completion of the pre-audit questionnaire. The EU has advised that they intend to visit Scotland.

12.4 The 2025 EU audit work plan was published in November 2024 - [Health and food audits and analysis programme 2025](#)

13. Scottish parliament and UK parliament engagement

13.1 FSS has continued to progress its engagement with MSPs on a cross-party basis.

13.2 FSS's Chief Executive, Geoff Ogle, FSS's Chair, Heather Kelman, and Head of Public Affairs and Engagement, Robert McGeachy, had a meeting with Carol Mochan MSP, Scottish Labour Party's Deputy Spokesperson on Public Health and Women's Health on 08 January 2025, and a meeting with Arianne Burgess MSP, the Scottish Green Party's Spokesperson on Communities, on Housing and on Rural Affairs, and the Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, and a member of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, on 23 January 2025. The meetings were to provide updates on the key findings of the joint FSS/FSA Annual Report on food standards across the UK, and on FSS's work.

13.3 Ian McWatt, FSS's Deputy Chief Executive, and Robert McGeachy, Head of Public Affairs and Engagement, met Monica Lennon MSP. The meeting focused on our partnership working with local authorities and stakeholders in relation to food safety and standards enforcement.

13.4 Ron McNaughton, Head of the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit, and Robert McGeachy, Head of Public Affairs and Engagement, had meetings on food crime with Audrey Nicoll MSP, the Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee, with Foysol Choudhury MSP, the Scottish Labour Party's Deputy Spokesperson on Culture, on Europe and on International Development on 20 January 2025 with Emma Harper MSP, who is a member of the Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, and of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, and with Katy Clark MSP, Scottish Labour Party's Deputy Spokesperson on Community Safety and a member of the Criminal Justice Committee on 24 January 2025.

13.5 Gillian Purdon, Chief Nutritionist, Alana McDonald, Senior Public Health Nutrition Advisor, and Robert McGeachy, Head of Public Affairs and Engagement, met Emma Harper MSP, to discuss issues around ultra processed foods.

13.6 A version of **Newsbites** has been adapted for politicians by Iona Dawson, and has been circulated to all MSPs, and to all MPs representing constituencies in Scotland.

13.7 **Information about Vitamin D**, and the risks of Vitamin D deficiency, was sent to all MSPs, and to various Cross-Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament.

13.8 Details of the **DISH report**, and an invite to the DISH webinar, were sent to all MSPs, and to all Scottish MPs, and were also sent to various Cross-Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament.

13.9 Details of the repeat analysis of the **calorie content of sweet discretionary products** in the out of home sector in Scotland in 2023 was sent to all MSPs.

13.10 Information and advice about the **risks of listeria** associated with eating cold-smoked, and cured fish was sent to all MSPs, to various CPGs in the Scottish Parliament and to all and to all MPs representing constituencies in Scotland.

13.11 **FSS's Annual Report and Accounts** have been sent to all MSPs, and to MPs representing constituencies in Scotland.

For queries contact:
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