

Putting the Consumer First

Autumn Performance Report

November 2002

This is part of a series of departmental reports which, along with the Main Estimates, and the document Public Expenditure: Statistical Analyses 2002-03, present the Government's expenditure plans for 2002-04.



**Food Standards Agency
Autumn Performance Report 2002**

The Government's Expenditure Plans
2002-03 to 2003-04

Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State
for Health by Command of Her Majesty November 2002
Laid before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers
Laid before the National Assembly for Wales by the First Minister
Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly by the First and Deputy Ministers

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Introduction

- 1 The UK FSA was set up under the Food Standards Act 1999 and launched on 1 April 2000. Our main purpose as defined in the legislation is:

‘to protect public health from risks which may arise in connection with the consumption of food, and otherwise to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.’

- 2 At the FSA launch, the Chairman committed us to three core values that continue to govern all we do. They are to:
 - Put the consumer first
 - Be open and accessible
 - Be an independent voice
- 3 The FSA is a non-Ministerial government department, operating at arm’s length from Ministers and governed by a Board appointed to act in the public interest. The Board consists of a Chair, deputy Chair, and up to 12 members. The Board is responsible for our overall strategic direction, and for ensuring that our legal obligations are fulfilled. We are a UK-wide body, accountable to the Westminster Parliament and to the devolved administrations through the relevant Health Ministers.

Autumn Performance Report

- 4 This is our first Autumn Performance report. It explains how we are making progress towards the targets first published in our Service Delivery Agreement.

Our Service Delivery Agreement

- 5 We published our first Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) in autumn 2000. The full text of the SDA can be found at www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sda. We report in detail on our progress against the SDA in the next section of this report.

Our Strategic Plan

- 6 In May 2001, we published our Strategic Plan, setting out our priorities for the years 2001/06. The Plan sets out our key priorities for food safety, public information and choice, nutrition and diet, and food law enforcement over the five year period. You can find the full text of our Strategic plan on our website www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/stratplan.pdf.

Our Departmental Resource Accounts

- 7 Our Westminster Funded Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2002 are published by The Stationery Office. The Accounts contain an Operating and Financial Review, which sets out details of our available budget and expenditure for 2001/02. A full explanation detailing the spend against budget, operating cost statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement and resource by departmental aim is contained in the Schedules to the Accounts.

More Detailed Information About Us

- 8 You can find more detailed information about us, our performance, and our budget and expenditure in a number of publications. For example:

- Food Standards Agency Departmental Report Spring 2001 (Cm 5104, The Stationery Office, ISBN 0-10-151042-X, £17.20)
- Food Standards Agency Departmental Report Spring 2002 (Cm 5404, The Stationery Office, ISBN 0-10-154042-6, £17.00)
- Food Standards Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2000/01 (HC No. 488, ISBN 0-10-291371-4, The Stationery Office, £25.40)
- Food Standards Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2001/02 (to be published by The Stationery Office, autumn 2002)

(All the reports above are also published on our website www.food.gov.uk)

- Resource Accounts 2000-2001 (HC 513, The Stationery Office, ISBN 0-10-291411-7, £7.00)
- Resource Accounts 2001-2002 (to be published by The Stationery Office, autumn 2002)

PERFORMANCE AGAINST SDA TARGETS

Aim 1	Target during spending review period 2001/04	Progress to date
<p>Measurably improve public confidence in the national food safety and standards arrangements.</p>	<p>In 2000/01 we will establish a baseline, and then set targets over the three years of the Spending Review period which will show an overall improvement in consumer confidence.</p>	<p>The results of our first consumer survey were published in February 2001 and set the baseline levels of consumer confidence in the national regulatory system for food safety and standards and in the credibility of the FSA.</p> <p>The results of our second survey, published in February 2002, demonstrated our success so far through significant increases in both confidence in and awareness of the FSA.</p> <p>Survey results are available from our website www.food.gov.uk/yourviews/surveys/foodsafety-nutrition-diet/.</p>
<p>We will:</p> <p>Enhance our website so that it is truly interactive from 2002, so that members of the public can outline what they would like us to do. Develop our facilities for providing advice for consumers by piloting new approaches that harness recent developments in e-technology, and publish performance against targets.</p>	<p>Our new website www.food.gov.uk was launched in December 2001. We want the site to be accessible to all users, including those with visual impairments. A text-only version of the site is available simply by selecting 'Text only'. We regularly add new interactive features such as "Ask an expert" and Food poll!</p> <p>Our website has been developed to take advantage of the latest developments in e-technology. It is easy to navigate, has links to other related websites, and includes a 'text only' version aimed at people with limited vision. Our site is also regularly monitored for 'Bobby' compliance. Our measure of success is that the improvements have increased the level of use of the site by more than 50% since it was launched.</p>	<p>Our annual Research and Survey Programmes Annual Report 2002 was published in October 2002. This year's report differs from the 2001 report, in that it contains additional information on the Agency's Surveillance activities. The report is a compendium of the scientific research and survey projects, supported by the Agency, that were active during the financial year 2001/02. The full Report is available on our website at www.food.gov.uk/science/research/researchannualreports/. Each chapter explains the strategic objectives of the research programmes, and how they are intended to benefit consumers.</p> <p>In addition recommendations to improve the presentation of the results of research and surveillance programmes, made by the FSA's independent review of research published in July 2001, are currently being implemented. We are currently reviewing our research procurement and commissioning processes. We want to know what consumers think of them and how they could be improved. Anyone can assist by completing and returning the questionnaire which can be found on our website www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/webpage/94657.</p>
<p>Publish annual reports that are understandable to consumers about the Agency's scientific and surveillance work, and food safety information</p>	<p>All research and surveillance final reports are published and available through the library.</p>	<p>During 2002, we have introduced a new content area on our website www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ which gives wide-ranging information on all research programmes and projects, including a summary of findings.</p>
<p>Increase the availability of research results, and by April 2001 make reports publicly available.</p>	<p>All research and surveillance final reports are published and available through the library.</p>	<p>During 2002, we have introduced a new content area on our website www.food.gov.uk/science/research/ which gives wide-ranging information on all research programmes and projects, including a summary of findings.</p>

<p>Hold Board meetings in public and hold open discussions with the public in order to listen to their concerns and to act on them.</p> <p>Twelve public Board meetings held around the country. We aim to hold at least 7 open Board meetings each year. In addition, all of the Agency's scientific advisory committees will hold at least one open meeting each year.</p> <p>We publish Board meeting agendas, papers, and decisions on our website www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/ourboard/.</p> <p>We have held several stakeholder meetings to promote debate on issues of consumer concern and scientific uncertainty, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labelling of foods produced from GM technology ▪ The theoretical risk of BSE in sheep ▪ Potential controls to reduce consumer exposure to <i>Mycobacterium avium</i> subsp. paratuberculosis from milk ▪ Folic acid and the prevention of disease 	<p>Twelve public Board meetings held around the country. We aim to hold at least 7 open Board meetings each year. In addition, all of the Agency's scientific advisory committees will hold at least one open meeting each year.</p> <p>We publish Board meeting agendas, papers, and decisions on our website www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/ourboard/.</p> <p>We have held several stakeholder meetings to promote debate on issues of consumer concern and scientific uncertainty, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labelling of foods produced from GM technology ▪ The theoretical risk of BSE in sheep ▪ Potential controls to reduce consumer exposure to <i>Mycobacterium avium</i> subsp. paratuberculosis from milk ▪ Folic acid and the prevention of disease
<p>Publish our independent advice to Ministers (and to other appropriate authorities) on matters of substance, so that people will understand and know what we are saying about food safety.</p>	<p>The FSA regularly issues advice on a wide range of issues. All advice is published on our website www.food.gov.uk which is updated frequently. We publish 'frequently asked questions' on subjects such as BSE and sheep, and acrylamide in packaging.</p>
<p>Establish a system for post hoc audits of major food incidents, involving relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Incidents Response Branch became operational on 8 July 2002. The Branch held the first post hoc evaluation meeting of a major food incident on 15 August 2002. The meeting involved internal and external stakeholders. On closure, all major environmental contamination incidents will be the subject of formal review involving relevant stakeholders. Action points will be documented and incorporated into procedures, as appropriate.</p> <p>In addition, the Branch will begin a programme of quarterly focussed meetings examining trends and analysing the progress of minor environmental contamination incidents with a view to improving procedures. These meetings will also involve relevant stakeholders. The first such meeting is planned for November 2002.</p>
<p>Carry out and publish annual consumer surveys of attitudes towards food issues, and towards the FSA.</p>	<p>Results of our annual consumer attitudes surveys are published on our website www.food.gov.uk/yourviews/surveys/foodsafety-nutrition-diet/. Results of the 2002 survey show that awareness of and confidence in the FSA has risen since 2001. Poor standards of hygiene in food outlets remains a key concern for consumers.</p>

<p>Publish performance information including Hygiene Assessment System (HAS) scores, information on local authority enforcement activity, and audit reports on local authority performance.</p>	<p>HAS scores are published on our website www.food.gov.uk (search for 'HAS scores'), and updated monthly. Information on local authority enforcement activity and audit reports are published on our website.</p>
<p>Publish our independent advice to Ministers (and to other appropriate authorities) on matters of substance, so that people will understand and know what we are saying about food safety.</p>	<p>The FSA regularly issues advice on a wide range of issues. All advice is published on our website www.food.gov.uk which is updated frequently. We publish "frequently asked questions" on subjects such as BSE and sheep, and acrylamide in packaging.</p>
<p>Encourage local authorities to publish local information about hygiene standards in food premises.</p>	<p>Local authorities consulted in order to collate information on the various ways in which they promote local initiatives (e.g. hygiene award schemes) to local consumers about standards of food businesses. Responses are currently being collated and summarised with a view to making this information publicly available.</p>

Targets during spending review period 2001/04		Progress to date
Aim 2	Targets during spending review period 2001/04	Progress to date
Reduce foodborne illness by 20% over the next five years, including reducing levels of salmonella in UK produced chickens on retail sale by at least 50% by the end of 2004/05.	Establish a baseline during 2000/01 for monitoring targets. Establish targets to assess progress over the Spending Review period. Target will be set once the baseline survey has been undertaken.	The key measure of performance for this target is the annual number of laboratory reports of the five main foodborne bacteria (salmonella, campylobacter, E.coli O157, listeria and Clostridium perfringens), which provides the most reliable information to monitor trends in levels of foodborne illness and so to assessing progress towards the target. Results of the baseline study, our findings of trends in infectious diseases, and our progress reports to the Board are published on our website www.food.gov.uk/science/sciencetopics/microbiology/ .
We will:		
Develop and implement a cost-effective strategy to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness in humans.		The foodborne disease five-year strategy was published in July 2001 and is available on our website www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fdscg-strategy-revised.pdf along with six-monthly reports on progress.
Focus activity on reducing incidences of salmonella in UK produced chickens on retail sale by at least 50% in the coming five years.		We announced on 16 August 2001 the results of a survey of retail chickens that showed that the target to reduce salmonella in chickens was achieved ahead of schedule. The survey indicated that there were high levels of campylobacter present in retail chickens. The results are published on our website www.food.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/salmonellachick . Focus of activity has shifted to another major cause of foodborne disease – campylobacter. During 2002/03 we are developing, and will then implement, a strategy for reducing levels of campylobacter in chicken by 2005/6.
Set new targets for the Meat Hygiene Service.		Targets are set on an annual basis in consultation with key stakeholders including DEFRA, industry, consumer and trade associations and interest groups. Targets for 2002/03 were set by the FSA Board in March 2002. Draft targets for 2003/04 have been issued for consultation. Targets and performance information is published in the MHS Annual Report and on our website www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/meathygieneperformance2002 .
Tackle the food hygiene knowledge gap across the whole population. Note: see also activity on 'protecting consumers' shown in the next table.		The five-year Food Hygiene Campaign was launched in February 2002. The results of the first phase of activity have been evaluated and used to develop the next phase of activity aimed at caterers. The report on the evaluation activities for the first phase of the campaign can be downloaded from our website www.food.gov.uk/hygcampaign/ . A Barbecue and summer eating campaign was launched over the Queen's Golden Jubilee Weekend and ran through out the summer to promote the "cook properly" and other food hygiene related messages. FSA Wales produced food hygiene resource packs in English and Welsh for primary and secondary schools and conducted a number of school-based activities. It has helped the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales to produce guidance for the Welsh curriculum, advising on how food-related aspects should be best taught.

Aim 3		
Targets during spending review period 2001/04		
Progress to date		
<p>To protect consumers through improved food safety and standards by:</p> <p>a) Improving local authority enforcement;</p> <p>b) Promoting the use of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points);</p> <p>c) Improving the safety of fresh meat through MHS action to ensure the effective enforcement of hygiene controls.</p>	<p>We will develop a new framework agreement with local authorities to promote high and consistent standards of enforcement throughout the UK.</p> <p>30% of food premises to have implemented HACCP food safety management systems by the end of the Spending Review period.</p> <p>To set annual targets for the MHS to ensure the application of clean livestock policy, health marking, and strict enforcement of SRM controls. Targets will be agreed by the FSA Board and published by the MHS.</p>	<p>Framework Agreement published in September 2000, and fully operational by 1 April 2001. For further details of what we will do during the Spending Review period see below.</p> <p>Strategy for wider implementation of HACCP was published in November 2001, and is available on our website www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsa_01_07_02.pdf.</p> <p>A local authority survey in 2001/02 confirmed that 20% of premises now have documented HACCP in place. For further details of what we will do during the Spending Review period see below.</p> <p>Targets are set on an annual basis in consultation with key stakeholders including DEFRA, industry, consumer and trade associations and interest groups). Targets and performance information are published in the MHS Annual Report and on our website www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/meathygieneperformance2002.</p>
<p>We will:</p> <p>Develop a new Framework Agreement with local authorities by 1 April 2001 to promote high and consistent standards of enforcement throughout the UK.</p>	<p>Our Framework Agreement with Local Authorities became fully operational from 1 April 2001, and is available on our website www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/role/framework/. The way we work with local enforcement authorities is set out in the Framework Agreement, and an Enforcement Liaison Group has been set up to strengthen links between the FSA and local authorities. The FSA monitors the enforcement performance of enforcement authorities, and there is an audit scheme in place.</p> <p>Six auditors trained by April 2001. In 2001/02 we audited 10% of local authorities under the new scheme. Thereafter, in light of the first year's results we decided on an expanded programme to cover a larger sample of local authorities, and to undertake audits targeting specific policy issues, for 2002/03, 2003/4 and 2004/05. Further 5% (21) of local authorities audited from 1 April to 30 September 2002.</p>	

	<p>Audit programme for October 2002 to March 2003 to consist of 4 more full audits and 30 focused audits – 15 in Oct-Dec 2002 to look specifically at local authority food sampling activity and 15 in Jan-March 2003 to look specifically at local authority formal enforcement activity. Further focused audits planned for future audit programme.</p> <p>In Scotland, an Audit Unit within the Agency and agreed local authority audit scheme has been established. A three-year rolling audit programme started April 2001, with all Scottish authorities being partially audited in 2001/02. We are on track to complete the second year of the three year rolling programme.</p> <p>In Wales, 4 audits to be completed during 2002/03. One audit completed so far, and another awaiting completion.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, we will complete 5 audits of local authorities during the 2002/03 financial year. One report completed and published. Work is currently under way on agreeing the action plans for the other four.</p> <p>All audit results are published on our website www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/audits/.</p>
<p>Consult on and implement a strategy for the promotion of HACCP throughout the food chain, so that 30% of food premises have HACCP food safety management systems in place by the end of the Spending Review period.</p>	<p>Strategy for wider implementation of HACCP was published in November 2001, and is available on our website www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsa_01_07_02.pdf.</p> <p>A local authority survey in 2001/02 confirmed that 20% of premises now have documented HACCP in place. Our aim is that 30% of food businesses should have implemented food safety management based on the HACCP principles by the end of 2003/04.</p>
<p>Undertake additional research into new techniques for assessing the safety of genetically modified foods.</p>	<p>A new three-year programme of research commenced in September 2001. Two workshops were held in June 2002 to promote discussion and collaboration between research contractors. All annual site visits to monitor progress were completed by August 2002 and annual progress reports received for all projects by 30 September 2002.</p>
<p>Ensure effective enforcement of animal feed legislation.</p>	<p>In November 2001 we announced £7.5 million extra funding, to be distributed to local authorities over three years. The new funding will help them devote more resources to carrying out surveillance and checks on animal feed, registering, assessing and checking on-farm mixing, and also checking compliance of imported animal feed. In 2001/02 the money was used to fund a project for local authorities to make checks on contaminants and additives in feeds. Some 30,000 analyses have been carried out and the results will be published before the end of the year.</p>

<p>Ensure that Specified Risk Material (SRM) controls are fully enforced, and improve ante- and post-mortem inspections.</p>	<p>MHS targets for 2001/02 included challenging targets relating to the enforcement of SRM controls. The targets were met. Similar targets apply in 2002/03 and have been proposed for 2003/04.</p> <p>The level of veterinary supervision in full throughput plants has been brought into line with EU requirements. This will be achieved for low throughput abattoirs by 31 March 2003.</p> <p>MHS checks on imported carcass beef detected SRM in 14 consignments in 2001/02 and 5 consignments between April and September 2002.</p>
<p>Implement the agreed recommendations of the Pooley Report in the MHS as a means of securing improved public health and better value for money.</p>	<p>There were originally 29 recommendations in the Pooley Report for the FSA to take forward, including those relating to meat inspection and the work of the Meat Hygiene Service. One of these recommendations was subsequently transferred by agreement to DEFRA. Of the remaining current 28 recommendations for the FSA, 6 require EU approval, and we are working on these, 11 have been completed, 10 are being acted on, and 1 will be addressed when the review of the Over Thirty Month rule is complete.</p>
<p>Contribute to re-negotiation of the European Meat Hygiene Directive so as to better protect public health and produce a more efficient enforcement system.</p>	<p>During 2001/02 we consulted on and began implementation of the EC Decision requiring mandatory HACCP-based controls in fresh meat and poultry meat plants and micro-testing rules for fresh meat slaughterhouses and cutting plants. Regulations came into force on 7 June 2002.</p>
<p>Develop policy on the nutritional quality of foods and diets and their effect on public health, especially amongst disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p>Our Nutrition Strategic Framework was agreed by the Board in March 2001, and a Nutrition Action Plan in December 2001. We have established a Nutrition Forum, which first met in March 2002. Details of these can be found on our website www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/NutritionStrategicFramework.pdf. Regular reports to the Board can also be found on our website.</p> <p>We work closely with the Department of Health to ensure that our advice to consumers on nutritional issues is always based on the best and most recent scientific evidence. Jointly with Department of Health we provide the secretariat for the UK-wide Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN). SACN advises health departments as well as the FSA. Full details of SACN can be found on the Committee's website at www.sacn.gov.uk.</p> <p>Improved and extended consumer information is now available via our website www.food.gov.uk.</p>

Publish consultation document on future labelling policy, in light of responses to the 'Better Labelling' initiative.

We have made progress on a number of the initiatives in the Agency's Labelling Action Plan:

- Proposal for EU rules requiring more comprehensive allergen labelling is under active discussion
- Commented on proposals for EU legislation on health and nutrition claims
- Agency advice on use of terms like fresh and traditional was published in July
- Research into prevalence and consumer impact of 'may contain nuts' labelling was published in June 2002
- An open Labelling Forum held in Cardiff in June discussed clear labelling, GM labelling and enforcement of labelling rules
- Issued a tender for a research review relating to evidence on the effect of promotional activity on eating behaviour
- Agreed a number of actions to protect consumers' interests in relation to distance selling.

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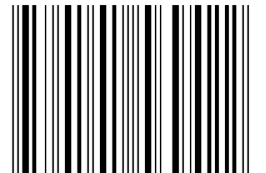
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