

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1: Should the scope of the new food body extend beyond the current scope of the FSA in Scotland? If yes, what specific extensions of scope would you suggest, and why?

- The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) agrees that the New Food Body (NFB) should perform the same functions at the very least as the current scope of the FSA in Scotland.
- The NFB should have a focus on enforcement on nationwide issues, while also providing advice on food safety issues in production, distribution and use.
- The Scottish Parliament will and should have responsibility for making policy. The NFB though should play a key role in advising the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament on the best scientific advice and experience of applying existing legislation. Local authorities should continue to monitor and act upon food safety issues within their boundaries.
- The credibility and independence of the Chair and members of the Board of the organisation is critical. In particular they should not be perceived to have commercial links with the food industry.

2: Should the new food body and the Scottish Government continue the arrangements for independent and partnership work on diet and nutrition set out in Annex A? If not, what changes would you suggest, and why?

The NFB should be seen as a trusted body on advice on diet and nutrition. It should work closely with the Health Department of the Scottish Government, whilst maintaining a clear delineation of responsibilities.

3: Are there any additional roles, responsibilities or functions in respect of diet and nutrition that you think the new food body could take on to help deliver an improvement to the health of the people in Scotland? Please give details and reasons.

- The RSE endorses the current proposed remit.
- There is an issue on how the NFB should deal with food fraud, such as the recent horse meat scandal and whether it will be resourced to deal with such issues as well as food safety.

4: What steps do you think could be taken to ensure the new food body is able to access the best available independent expert advice it needs to underpin its work on food safety and public health nutrition in Scotland? Please give reasons.

- The current FSA has access to a suite of scientific advisory committees

– maintaining this is crucial.

- Whatever the constitutional future of Scotland it is important to maintain links with relevant bodies across the UK, given the overlap of food distribution / production and the expertise that exists across the UK.

5: Do you consider that the new food body should focus its research and surveillance activities on issues that are particularly pertinent to Scottish citizens or should it also contribute to science and evidence programmes on wider issues which have relevance to the UK as a whole? Please give reasons.

- The RSE is of the view that it isn't an either or issue. As appropriate, Scottish issues can have broader implications and Scotland can draw on evidence from other areas. If an innovative solution comes about, it should be available to all. Some issues may be more pertinent to Scotland, but not unique. A joined up approach is critical, even if a problem is more severe in Scotland.

6: Do you agree that the new food body should be responsible for the coordination of all Scottish Government funded research on food safety and public health nutrition? What steps could be taken to raise the profile of the new food body as a research funder across the UK and beyond? Please give reasons.

- The NFB should be the lead body on co-ordinating food safety and public health nutrition research in Scotland. A key part of that role of course should be to work with other bodies such as the NHS and the Research Councils to avoid duplication and learn lessons from existing programmes.

7: Do you have any further suggestions for how the new food body could establish a strong independent evidence base for food safety, food standards and nutrition policy? Please give reasons.

- Working with other bodies such as learned and professional societies with a reputation for scientific excellence and independence from politics would aid the new body in establishing the evidence base suggested.

8: Do you consider that the new food body would require any further statutory powers, in addition to those that the FSA already has, to equip it to deal effectively with incidents such as the recent horse meat substitutions, and to prevent such incidents happening? Please give reasons.

- The NFB should have a role in seeking prosecution for cases of food fraud, however whether this should be in advising the Procurator Fiscal service, or having powers to prosecute itself is debateable. Whilst the recent horse meat controversy was undoubtedly an important issue, if the NFB were to be made responsible for investigating and prosecuting such an issue it would be expensive and international. The new body should be resourced to test for food fraud, even if the potential prosecution is pursued by another body.

9: Do you have any further comments about how the new food body might ensure that it can deal effectively with contraventions of food standards and safety law? Please give reasons.

- The RSE agrees that the FSA already has adequate powers. There is no need for further statutory powers.

10: Should the new food body take on any roles and responsibilities not currently fulfilled by the FSA in Scotland? If yes, please give details and reasons.

- The RSE working group agreed that they are not in favour of adding any additional enforcement or monitoring roles to the NFB.

11: Please tell us your views about these suggestions for changes to the delivery of official food and feed controls. Do you think that the new food body should work in a different way with local authorities? Please give reasons.

- The new body should continue to operate in a similar way to the existing FSA Scotland.

12: Do you have any views on how the new food body should assure delivery of official controls and meet the relevant EU obligations? Please give reasons.

- Responsibility for ensuring that EU obligations are met should be for the Scottish Government. The NFB should advise Government and Parliament on how to achieve this.

13: Are there any additional or alternative relationships that you would suggest that would help the new food body achieve the Scottish Ministers' objective of longer, healthier lives for the people of Scotland? Please give details and reasons.

- There should be appropriate dialogue between the relevant scientific advisers and Ministers and the NFB. There should also be a close relationship with Parliamentary Committees including a planned annual report to Parliament.

14: Do you have any suggestions about how the new food body can engage effectively with consumers, both in developing policy and providing information and advice?

- The new body is clearly important in ensuring that key messages on nutrition and health are communicated to people who need this information the most. In order to achieve the maximum consumer interaction, it will be important to target the groups that are in most need of this advice. There is already a good relationship with the media in helping to get these ideas across. The new body should seek to build upon existing arrangements.

15: Do you agree with the suggested approach to ensuring the new food body's independence from Government and the food industry? Do you have any further suggestions for how the new food body could best establish and maintain its position as an arms length part of Government? Please give reasons.

- The group fully endorses the idea of independence from Government and the food industry in practice and perception. It should also be a requirement to publish advice given to Government or Parliament.

16: Do you have any further comments, or suggestions, on the creation of a new food body for Scotland that are not covered by any of the previous questions?

- The independence of the Chair is an important issue.
- It is important to have the meetings open to the public. It adds a degree of transparency. All board meetings along with the minutes and agenda should be open and available to the public.
- If the board does meet in private the minutes should be published at a later date.

Meat Hygiene has been the responsibility of the FSA since 2010 when it took over the Meat Hygiene Service. It would be sensible for the NFB to take over such responsibilities in Scotland, providing appropriate budgetary transfers took place.

Ends.