

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?

- I think the scope should be left as it is

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?

- This is obviously a serious issue for the Scottish public sector, but I don't think a step-change will result from a change in responsibilities. The current division of responsibilities between the partners seems appropriate. More analysis of success stories of countries which have improved eating habits could be useful but I think that is a role for Public Health rather than the FSA.

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.

- No because I think diet and nutrition need to remain closer to the Health agenda of Government than the FSA is perceived to be.

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 new body needs to have simple and rapid access to the best advice wherever it is available. That means that other organisations have to commit to providing that advice, whether it is from within their own organisation or not. ClimateXChange was set up for that purpose to provide advice on climate change – maybe something similar would be appropriate in relation to food safety and public health nutrition? The key principles are a highly accessible secretariat with access to an excellent database of experts and managed by scientists and knowledge exchange experts who can ensure quality control of the evidence provided and also commission some foresight work.

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.

- Apologies but from my perspective most issues pertinent to Scottish citizens are pertinent to citizens elsewhere in the UK. Research and surveillance is expensive –Scotland cannot afford to ‘go it alone’ and have expertise in every issue of relevance to Scotland, hence a partnership with other UK bodies working on similar issues would seem the best value for public money.

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.

- No. For 2 major reasons:
 1. The landscape of research funders is already complex. It is fine for the FSA to have a relatively small budget (as at present) to commission specific pieces of work but it would not make sense to broaden its scope. Commissioning and managing significant research budgets requires a high level of experience and expertise supported by significant administrative skills. It would not make economic sense for the Scottish Government to fragment its research budget further.
 2. The food system is very complex (see the UK Government Foresight work on Global Food and Farming Futures) and to separate out research on food and health from food and agriculture and/or from food and the environment does not make sense. In fact it would be a very significant step backwards in an area where Scotland currently has a world-leading reputation. Equally it would not make sense to move food and environmental research across to a food body – there are lots of issues which would fall outside such a remit. For the last 2 decades the Scottish Government has continued to support its research institutes and the benefits of this are the very strong international reputation that they have, but this is increasingly dependent on enabling multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches. There is evidence in other parts of the world of ‘solutions’ to very significant nutrition issues and in recent years a multi-sectoral approach has been a key contributor to success. What is proposed would be working against that evidence.

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.

- As suggested earlier setting up some sort of Centre of Expertise with a small secretariat capable of acting as a single portal to the best expertise wherever that can be found would be my recommendation.

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.

- Outwith my area of expertise so no comment except to say that any new statutory powers should be developed in the broadest context, taking account of other relevant legislation.

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.

- Comments

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.

- Comments

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.

- Comments

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.

- Comments

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.

- Comments

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?

- Comments

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.

- Comments

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?

- Comments