



Our vision:

“Safe food and healthy eating for all”



Our values:

Everything we do reflects this vision, and our core values:

- › Putting the consumer first
- › Openness and independence
- › Science and evidence-based

Our principles in practice:

As an organisation, employer and as individuals we value:

- › Honesty, objectivity and integrity
- › Striving for continuous improvement, efficiency and effectiveness
- › Diversity, co-operation and respect

What we do:

As a Government department, independent regulator and consumer protection body, we use the best available evidence and work with:

- › Businesses from farm to fork to help them keep consumers safe
- › Local authorities and other food law enforcement bodies to help them take proportionate, timely and resolute action
- › Consumers to provide reliable and up to date information to help them make healthy choices about food



Chair's foreword:
The Food Standards Agency was established to make food and drink safer and healthy eating easier. This Strategic Plan, published at a time when rapid global changes are reshaping our food culture, outlines our priorities for the next three years.

Our objectives are shared objectives. To deliver them effectively we must work with our many partners and stakeholders in the food and drink industries, with food law enforcers and wider society.

Our achievements to date – such as the 19% reduction in foodborne illness, more proportionate BSE controls, and innovative front-of-pack nutrition labelling – have been achieved predominantly as a result of actions by those who produce and sell our food.

Achieving the targets outlined in this Strategic Plan, requires trust in the basis of our work and a shared understanding of what we are trying to achieve. That is why it is important to re-state that the Agency is guided by the best scientific evidence and is open about how our decisions are made.

Agency policy has always been made in public at our open-access board meetings. Now we are looking at ways of increasing the transparency of our decision making, while also making the Agency more receptive to external ideas and views. We wish to make it easier for people to observe how decisions are made and to contribute to the process. This will impact on the way we work with the science community, with all sectors of the food industry, with local authorities and with the people on whose behalf we regulate.

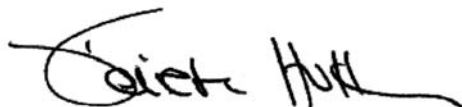
Whatever policy conclusions we reach, we must also take account of sustainable development implications and be informed by the ability of the food industry to deliver. Some of our notable successes – for example the reduction in salt in processed foods – have only been achieved through working in partnership with the industry. This is something we wish to continue and strengthen.

Equally, we must strive to understand the many voices of the public, and over the period of this Strategic Plan we aim to get in closer touch with local communities, to understand better the different circumstances, attitudes and lifestyles that affect what we eat. Our new Citizens Forums on Food should help with this, as should our dedicated teams working in the Agency's national offices and the regional government offices across England.

While your views help determine what is practical and proportionate in response to food risks, the credibility of the Agency rests on its ability to establish authoritatively, and scientifically, the nature and definition of food risks. This is why we have devoted considerable attention over the past year to the governance of science within the Agency, further embedding it in the process of developing policy, while ensuring greater independence and authority for the Agency's Chief Scientist and our nine independent Scientific Advisory Committees.

We are also forming an independent Social Sciences Advisory Committee and a new over-arching scientific advisory committee – the General Advisory Committee on Science – that will ensure we are making full use of the best available scientific evidence and expertise. The Agency must also be a capable and efficient organisation, and we are seeking to develop the necessary internal processes to ensure that we work in a more sustainable way and are more economic, efficient and effective in our use of public money.

The specific targets we are working towards are set out below, with further details to be found later in the document, or on our websites: food.gov.uk and eatwell.gov.uk. I hope you feel that they reflect the ambition set out in this foreword – an ambition that can only be delivered through the integrity and professionalism of the Agency's staff and the co-operation and partnership of our many stakeholders and partners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deirdre Hutton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deirdre Hutton – Chair

Strategic themes

- › **Food safety**
- › **Eating for health**
- › **Choice**

Summary of strategic targets



Food safety

Reducing foodborne disease further

- › We will work with industry to achieve a 50% reduction in the incidence of UK-produced chickens which test positive for Campylobacter by the end of December 2010¹
- › We will work with industry to achieve a 50% reduction in the incidence of pigs which test positive for Salmonella at slaughter by the end of December 2010²
- › We will develop a measure of slaughterhouse hygiene and secure improvements by the end of December 2010
- › Working with stakeholders, we will provide guidance and support to help small retail and catering businesses. By the end of December 2010, all food businesses are actively working to achieve compliance with food safety management requirements with at least 75% fully compliant

Delivering proportionate BSE and TSE controls based on the latest scientific knowledge

- › We will promote and aid the development of a sensitive, rapid and cost-effective live test for TSEs by the end of December 2010

Building and maintaining the trust of stakeholders in our handling of food safety issues

- › We will develop effective interventions to tackle food safety problems at source before they become incidents, by the end of December 2010.

¹ compared to the baseline in 2001

² compared to the baseline in 2001



Eating for health

Enabling consumers to choose a healthier diet and helping to reduce diet-related diseases

- › We will work with health departments and other stakeholders to reduce the average salt intake of UK adults from the current 9.5g to 6g per day by end of December 2010, and to reduce the salt intake of children, in line with Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition age-specific recommendations, by the end of December 2010. We will monitor progress to ensure that we remain on course to achieve the target
- › We will work with health departments and other stakeholders to reduce the average intake of saturated fat (for everyone from age 5 upwards) from the current level of 13.4% to below 11% of food energy, by the end of December 2010
- › We will work with health and other departments and stakeholders to develop and implement, by the end of December 2008, a strategy for calorie intakes which contributes to achieving a balance between calorie intake and energy output
- › By the end of December 2008, we will have completed the independent evaluation of the impacts of front of pack labelling on consumer purchasing behaviour and knowledge and begun discussions on future approaches with stakeholders.



Choice

Enabling consumers to make informed choices

- › By the end of December 2008, we will recommend a national scheme for publishing information to consumers on food hygiene in food businesses based on evidence from a series of pilots working in partnership with local authorities

To protect consumers from food fraud and illegal practices

- › We will implement an action plan to deliver recommendations of the Food Fraud Task Force which fall within the period of this Strategic Plan.



How we will deliver

Improving consumer protection by improving compliance

- › For those UK-related regulations over whose implementation the UK has some control, we will reduce the net administrative burden by £11.9 million by April 2010, compared to the May 2005 baseline for such regulations, of £47.6 million.

Chapter 1



About the Food Standards Agency

- › Putting consumers first: Strategic Plan to 2010
- › Responding to a changing world
- › Delivering the Strategic Plan

Chapter 2



Food safety

- › Strategic targets
- › Why we do it
- › What we want to achieve

Chapter 3



Eating for health

- › Strategic targets
- › Why we do it
- › What we want to achieve

Chapter 4



Choice

- › Strategic targets
- › Why we do it
- › What we want to achieve

Chapter 5



How we will deliver

- › Strategic targets
- › Challenges
- › Meeting the challenges to deliver the outcomes in our strategic plan

About the Food Standards Agency:

The Food Standards Agency 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

We are a UK-wide body, accountable to the Westminster Parliament and to the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, through the relevant Health Ministers.

Our remit covers the safety of food and drink³, nutrition (jointly with the UK health departments) and protecting the interests of consumers in relation to food. Our Executive Agency, the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS), operates in Great Britain and is responsible for the protection of public health and animal health and welfare in Great Britain, through proportionate enforcement of legislation in approved fresh meat premises.

To find out more about us, visit our website at www.food.gov.uk



Putting consumers first: Strategic Plan to 2010

The Food Standards Agency Strategic Plan 2005-2010 was developed and published in March 2005 following stakeholder engagement, including a formal 12-week consultation. The Strategic Plan was reviewed at the end of 2006, to ensure the objectives and targets were still appropriate to delivering the goals of food safety, eating for health and choice⁴. The outcome of the review is our updated Strategic Plan to 2010 and publication of a more detailed 3-year delivery plan to cover the corporate objectives and targets.

The Strategic Plan to 2010 sets out how we are going to work towards our vision of safe food and healthy eating for all. Over the next three years:

› **We want to see continuing improvements in food safety**

Food safety remains our top priority, and we will continue to maintain high standards for protecting public health and consumer's other interests in relation to food.

› **We want to see continuing improvements in the nutritional quality of the food people eat**

We want to give people reliable information and advice about food and diet; make the information people use to make choices simpler, clearer and more consistent, such as in labelling; and encourage availability of healthier foods – particularly in the range of convenience and processed foods that increasingly make up people's diets.

› **We want to develop our role as an independent regulator and consumer protection body**

We will seek to ensure that our actions are proportionate, risk-based and outcome-focused, in line with the principles of good regulation; that we foster improvements and reward good practice, whilst seeking firm action against those who persistently fail to meet acceptable standards. We want our actions to be practical and deliverable.



⁴ Board paper FSA 06/12/07: Review of progress with delivering the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan is available at www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fsa061207.pdf



CHAPTER 1

ABOUT THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY (CONTINUED)



This strategy sets out what we want to achieve, much of which cannot be delivered alone. We will work in partnership with others to secure the outcomes we want.

We will continue to:

- › be an open and transparent organisation, making policy decisions in public
- › act on the best available science and evidence
- › proactively seek the views of consumers and stakeholders
- › build on and maintain our capability to engage and influence our European partners to deliver effective and proportionate law that delivers benefits to consumers
- › work in partnership with industry and other stakeholders in the UK and internationally to influence the food markets in a safer, healthier direction
- › work with our enforcement partners and other stakeholders to maintain the right conditions for consumer protection, whilst seeking ways to allow responsible food businesses of all sizes to flourish
- › develop the organisation and the way we work to be economic, efficient and effective in the way we manage our resources
- › take account of the sustainability of our policies and actions.



Responding to a changing world

The world is changing rapidly and new issues will arise that may require new policy responses. To address these challenges, our strategy must continually evolve if we are to meet our long-term goals and ultimately realise our vision.

- › **We will review this strategic plan and monitor our progress against it annually** to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- › **We will continue to track stakeholder views.** In particular, we will listen to the views of consumers to understand how attitudes, habits and behaviours are changing, using our annual survey to track consumer attitudes to food and exploring new and innovative approaches to consumer engagement.
- › **We will keep abreast of developments in technology** and the potential opportunities and threats they could present.
- › **We will monitor demographic trends and other changes in society, including issues of public and international concern** to develop appropriate and timely policy responses.

Delivering the Strategic Plan

The Agency's Strategic Plan sets our general strategic direction and priorities across the UK. Activities are grouped under the themes of food safety, eating for health and choice, where we set out:

- › why we do it
- › what we want to achieve
- › examples of how we will do it and the stakeholders we will work with
- › the long-term targets against which we will measure how we are doing



The final chapter “How we will deliver” describes our approach to evidence-based policy development and enforcement, highlighting the importance we attach to working in partnership with all stakeholders to meet our strategic targets. It sets out the key principles underlying the way we will implement the plan, continually seeking to improve the economy, efficiently and effectiveness of our operations, and taking sustainability into account in all of our activities and policy decisions.

We want to ensure that we deliver the Strategic Plan in ways that reflect local priorities, circumstances and arrangements, including those in the devolved administrations. We will develop policies and strategies for delivery that meet local needs within an overall UK framework. This will be done through our offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, taking advice from our Food Advisory Committees. It will be done regionally in England where we have begun establishing FSA teams in 4 of the 9 government regional offices, with plans for roll-out to the remaining 5 regions in due course. This means that where appropriate the implementation approaches may vary regionally and between countries to reflect local needs.

The Food Standards Agency's three-year corporate plan sets out the objectives and targets to deliver this strategy.

Similarly, the Meat Hygiene Service three-year business plan sets out its objectives and targets.

We will monitor progress against what we want to achieve and report on how we are doing in the Agency's annual report and the MHS annual report.

Food safety

Improved public health by making food safer

Strategic targets

Reducing foodborne disease further

- › We will work with industry to achieve a 50% reduction in the incidence of UK-produced chickens which test positive for *Campylobacter* by the end of December 2010⁵
- › We will work with industry to achieve a 50% reduction in the incidence of pigs which test positive for *Salmonella* at slaughter by the end of December 2010⁶
- › We will develop a measure of slaughterhouse hygiene and secure improvements by the end of December 2010
- › Working with stakeholders, we will provide guidance and support to help small retail and catering businesses. By the end of December 2010, all food businesses are actively working to achieve compliance with food safety management requirements with at least 75% fully compliant

Delivering proportionate BSE and TSE controls based on the latest scientific knowledge

- › We will promote and aid the development of a sensitive, rapid and cost-effective live test for TSEs by the end of December 2010

Building and maintaining the trust of stakeholders in our handling of food safety issues

- › We will develop effective interventions to tackle food safety problems at source before they become incidents, by the end of December 2010

⁵ compared to the baseline in 2001

⁶ compared to the baseline in 2001



CHAPTER 2

FOOD SAFETY

Our primary aim is to ensure food safety and we have a wide remit across the whole food chain – ‘from farm to fork’, including primary producers (such as farmers), manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and caterers. But the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of food and animal feed rests with the businesses that produce, transport, store and sell it.

We negotiate in Europe and globally to secure standards and controls to protect the public. We commission surveys and fund research on **chemical, microbiological and radiological safety, as well as food hygiene, TSEs⁷ and allergies** to provide the scientific evidence needed to underpin our work⁸. For instance:

- › ensuring appropriate regulation to protect consumers, based on an assessment of risk; and
- › helping us decide what immediate actions to take to protect consumers when new or emerging food risks arise.

We work closely with local and port health authorities and other food enforcement bodies across the UK, who are responsible for the day-to-day enforcement of most food safety and standards legislation. The Meat Hygiene Service helps us to protect the public against foodborne illness through fair, consistent and effective enforcement of hygiene, inspection and welfare regulations in Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) carries out the equivalent function on our behalf.



⁷ The family of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) include scrapie in sheep and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in people

⁸ To find out more, see our Science Strategy 2005-2010 at www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/jul/sciencestrategy and our Research and Surveys Programme Annual Report 2006



CHAPTER 2 FOOD SAFETY (CONTINUED)



Why we do it

Foodborne illness

- › Food poisoning causes a great deal of pain and suffering for about three quarters of a million people every year and kills around 500⁹. Through the Foodborne Disease Strategy, we and our partners have helped to reduce foodborne disease cases by 19% since 2000, saving an estimated £750 million¹⁰. This represents a considerable improvement in public health and significant economic benefits.
- › The Foodborne Disease Strategy aims to secure further reductions in foodborne disease but this will only happen with the sustained effort of all involved within the food supply chain.



BSE and TSEs¹¹

The risk to consumers from exposure to BSE is now a small fraction of what it was at the height of the BSE epidemic and continues to decline. Nevertheless, we are committed to ensuring that BSE controls in the food chain are based on the latest scientific knowledge. This will help us to implement effective, enforceable and proportionate controls in relation to UK and imported meat and animal products, so continuing to protect the consumer. We will also continue to monitor developments and scientific understanding in other TSEs like atypical scrapie¹² in sheep.

⁹ Adak GK, Long SM, O'Brien SJ. Gut 2002; 51:832-841

¹⁰ This figure is for England and Wales

¹¹ Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is a prion disease which belongs to the family of TSEs. In 1996, a new variant of CJD (vCJD) was identified in people and the majority of experts agree that the most likely cause of vCJD is exposure to BSE. There are still many uncertainties about vCJD including how many people will develop the disease and how long it takes them to develop it, which is always fatal

¹² In recent years, scientific tests have identified a brain disease in sheep called atypical scrapie. Scientists have so far found no evidence that atypical scrapie can be transmitted to people or that it is dangerous to people, but some believe that such a risk is possible in theory



Food contaminants¹³

The challenge for all those involved in food production and its control is to work together to make sure that food contaminants do not harm people's health.

Food regulators and enforcers are likely to face new control issues as global trade increases in complexity and businesses source their food ingredients from different locations around the world.

In future, rapid innovation and technological changes may lead to new risks or mean that contaminants can be detected in food at increasingly lower levels. Understanding and anticipating emerging risks is a key element in enhancing the way that regulators, the food industry and other official bodies are able to prevent contamination incidents or react quickly to them if they do occur.



Allergy and Intolerance

In the UK about ten people die every year from an allergic reaction to food and many more end up in hospital¹⁴. This is in addition to the longer term health effects and impacts on quality of life which those experiencing these conditions face. Our work on allergy and intolerance aims to protect food allergic and food intolerant consumers and to help them make informed choices about food.

¹³ Includes chemical, radiological, physical and microbiological contaminants

¹⁴ Gupta R, Sheikh A, Strachan D P & Henderson H R. Time trends in allergic disorders in the UK. *Thorax*, 2006. doi: 10.1136/thx.2004.038844



CHAPTER 2

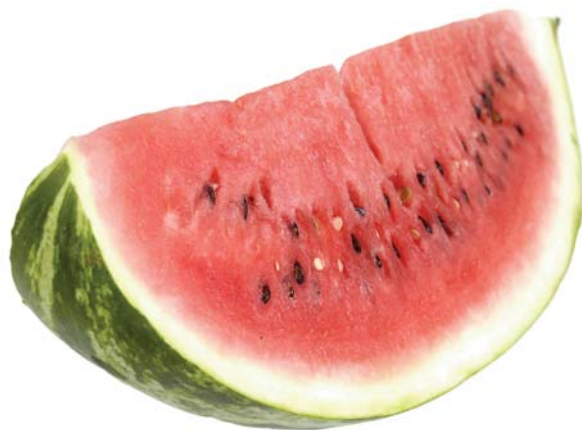
FOOD SAFETY (CONTINUED)



What we want to achieve

Further reductions in foodborne illness, by:

- › working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), agriculture departments in the devolved administrations and the food industry to reduce contamination at source
- › helping meat plant operators to manage meat hygiene and where necessary improve their performance
- › working with local authorities to provide guidance and support to help small retail and catering businesses implement food safety management procedures
- › working with local authorities to raise safety and regulatory compliance levels across the food industry, and taking firm action against businesses who break the law
- › working through the MHS in Great Britain and DARD in Northern Ireland, to help those in the meat processing sector establish risk-based controls for the safe production of meat
- › working with local community, regional and national bodies across the UK to promote awareness of the key steps everyone needs to take to ensure the safety of their food



Proportionate BSE and TSE controls based on the latest scientific knowledge, by:

- › funding research, in coordination with other funding bodies, to develop a sensitive, rapid and cost-effective live test for TSEs

Reductions in the risks to consumers from contaminated food, by:

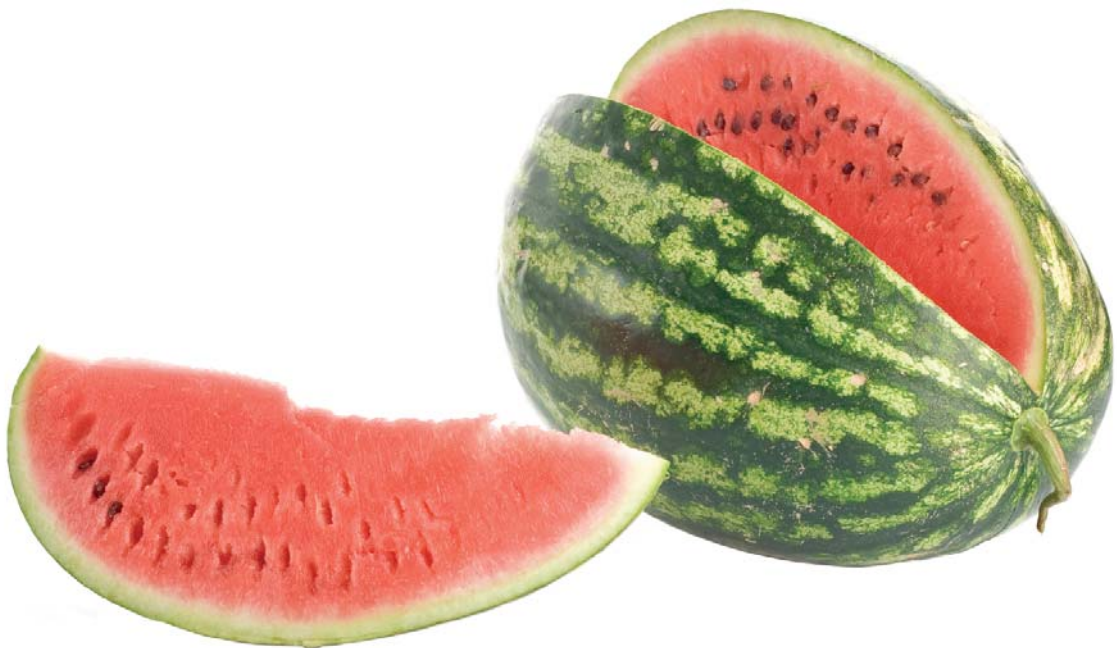
- › working to reduce contamination throughout the food chain, starting with primary production, identifying and encouraging best practice to reduce food risks in a proportionate way

Building and maintaining the trust of stakeholders in our handling of food safety issues, by:

- › working with the food industry, local authorities and other stakeholders to improve mechanisms for preventing and responding to incidents
- › annual reporting of incidents to help us and our stakeholders identify and monitor trends

Food safety for consumers with allergies and food intolerances, by:

- › working with stakeholders to develop and maintain appropriate policies and standards, to help ensure safety and choice for food allergic and food intolerant consumers.



Eating for health

Reduction of diet-related diseases by helping consumers achieve and maintain a healthier balanced diet

Strategic targets

Enabling consumers to choose a healthier diet and helping to reduce diet-related diseases

- › We will work with health departments and other stakeholders to reduce the average salt intake of UK adults from the current 9.5g to 6g per day by end of December 2010, and to reduce the salt intake of children, in line with Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition age-specific recommendations, by the end of December 2010. We will monitor progress to ensure that we remain on course to achieve the target
- › We will work with health departments and other stakeholders to reduce the average intake of saturated fat (for everyone from age five upwards) from the current level of 13.4% to below 11% of food energy, by the end of December 2010
- › We will work with health and other departments and stakeholders to develop and implement, by the end of December 2008, a strategy for calorie intakes which contributes to achieving a balance between calorie intake and energy output
- › By the end of December 2008, we will have completed the independent evaluation of the impacts of front of pack labelling on consumer purchasing behaviour and knowledge and begun discussions on future approaches with stakeholders.



CHAPTER 3

EATING FOR HEALTH

The Agency shares responsibility for nutrition with UK health departments. Our aim is to ensure that people have the best available dietary information and nutritional advice to enable them to make informed choices about their diet.

Our work in this area is underpinned by the best available evidence, and all policies are evaluated for effectiveness. Increasingly, the social sciences are being employed alongside nutritional science to help us understand consumer attitudes to diet and health, and influence behaviour. A key activity is monitoring dietary behaviour to identify and characterise problems and assess policy impact.

We work in partnership with others, including other Government departments across the UK (particularly health and education), local authorities, others in the public and the voluntary sectors, consumer organisations, schools, the NHS, and the food industry.

We are responsible on behalf of the UK Government for negotiating harmonised rules across the EU on nutritional issues, including the controls on nutrition and health claims.





CHAPTER 3 EATING FOR HEALTH (CONTINUED)



Why we do it

Diet-related disease affects people's health in many ways. For example, too much salt is associated with increased blood pressure¹⁵, about a third of all deaths from coronary heart disease (over 120,000 in total¹⁶) are attributable to diet¹⁷. Obesity alone is estimated to cost the economy £3.3-3.7 billion a year¹⁸.

In recent years, there has been increasing awareness of the public health implications of poor diets, which has led to a range of health and nutrition-based initiatives from governments, businesses and public interest groups. The challenge we all now face is how to turn increasing awareness and concern into actual changes in behaviour.

Our strategy in this area is aimed at making healthier eating choices easier for all. We do this by influencing products, people and the environment in which consumers make choices about their diets.

- › We work with industry groups and others to influence the nutrient content of individual products. This includes reformulation work to reduce levels of salt, saturated fat and calories. We also establish standards for foods for particular nutritional uses.
- › We aim to provide people with information about what constitutes a healthy diet and increase awareness of ways to make healthier choices. Key to this are the Agency's eatwell website and public health initiatives such as the salt campaign.
- › We want to reduce barriers to healthier choices. This includes working with businesses to provide clear front of pack labelling; supporting community initiatives; and supporting health and education departments' work on the marketing of food to children and school food.

¹⁵ Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. *Salt and Health*. The Stationary Office, 2003

¹⁶ British Heart Foundation. *Deaths by cause, sex and age, 2001, United Kingdom*. www.heartstats.org

¹⁷ European Heart Network (1998) *Food, Nutrition and Cardiovascular Disease in the European Union*. EHN: Brussels

¹⁸ House of Commons Health Committee, *Third Report of Session 2003–04: Obesity*. London: The Stationery Office Limited. The report estimated the cost for treatment of obesity and overweight at £6.6-7.4 billion per year



What we want to achieve

A reduction of diet-related diseases by helping consumers achieve and maintain a healthier, balanced diet, by:

- › ensuring a sound evidence base to underpin our policies by working with independent experts and commissioning research and surveys as appropriate
- › working with health departments and stakeholders to reduce the average UK intakes of salt
- › working with health departments and stakeholders to implement a strategy to reduce saturated fat intakes and encourage calorie balance
- › working with health departments and the food industry to promote clear accurate nutrition information on labels
- › working with stakeholders to promote awareness of balanced diets
- › supporting the work of local community, regional and national bodies across the UK, assisting them to deliver effective locally-based food initiatives that address the needs of their community
- › supporting the commitments made by health departments to change the way food is promoted to children
- › supporting health, education and other relevant departments in establishing and periodically surveying standards for providing healthy meals in public sector institutions¹⁹, and supporting their work to encourage adoption of the whole school approach to food hygiene, diet, nutrition and food choice.



¹⁹ Including schools, care homes, hospitals, and prisons

Choice

Effective labelling and information so that consumers are able to make informed choices about the food they purchase

Improved consumer protection from food fraud and illegal practices

Strategic targets

Enabling consumers to make informed choices

- › By the end of December 2008, we will recommend a national scheme for publishing information to consumers on food hygiene in food businesses, based on evidence from a series of pilots working in partnership with local authorities

To protect consumers from food fraud and illegal practices

- › We will implement an action plan to deliver recommendations of the Food Fraud Task Force which fall within the period of this Strategic Plan.



CHAPTER 4 CHOICE

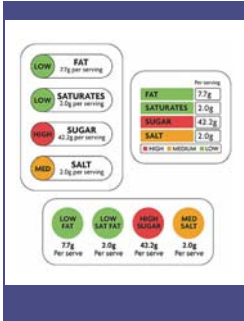
We want to enable people to make informed choices about food and help them choose foods that meet their individual needs. We also want to ensure that the information they get is accurate and reliable and does not mislead. We protect the interests of consumers by promoting best practice in the provision of information.

Food labels are a useful source of providing information, primarily to inform and protect consumers. Most rules about labelling are set internationally, and our job is to protect the interests of UK consumers in international negotiations.





CHAPTER 4 CHOICE (CONTINUED)



Why we do it

We have a statutory duty to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. Consumers need accurate information, so that they can make informed and effective choices about the foods they eat. Many things affect the choices people make and in the future, developing technologies will widen the range of ways that information can be delivered. Individual consumers may be particularly influenced by economic or cultural factors, by their health or attitudes to health, or by their religious or ethical beliefs. We will need to take account of new developments and changes in people's attitudes if we are to continue to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food.



Consumers also have a right to expect that the food they get is what they paid for and is fit to eat. With our partners in food law enforcement, we work to protect food safety and standards for consumers, by ensuring there are adequate control systems and penalties to deter fraudulent business operators from trading and to limit any further illegal activity when it is detected.





What we want to achieve

Effective labelling and information so that consumers are able to make informed choices about the food they purchase, by:

- › working with local authorities to develop a national scheme to provide information to consumers on hygiene in food businesses
- › pressing for simplification of existing EC food labelling legislation within the European labelling review, and encouraging an approach that delivers clear labelling and information for the consumer
- › ensuring that the regulation of food supplements is based on the best available evidence, and is proportionate, for informed consumer choice.

Improved consumer protection from food fraud and illegal practices, by:

- › working with local and port health authorities to protect food safety and standards for consumers, by ensuring there are adequate control systems and penalties to deter fraudulent business operators from trading and to limit any further illegal activity when it is detected.



How we will deliver

Economic, efficient and effective in the discharge of our responsibilities as a non-Ministerial Government department and independent regulator

Strategic targets

Improving consumer protection by improving compliance

- › For those UK-related regulations over whose implementation the UK has some control, we will reduce the net administrative burden by £11.9 million by April 2010, compared to the May 2005 baseline for such regulations, of £47.6 million.



CHAPTER 5

HOW WE WILL DELIVER

The environment in which we operate is changing and we need to respond to those changes.

Challenges

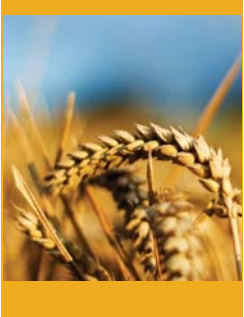
The regulatory landscape is complex.

- › Over 90% of food legislation originates in the EC and a significant percentage of food is imported. To deliver our over-arching aim of safe food and healthy eating, we need to deliver effective and proportionate law that protects the interests of the UK consumer.
- › In the UK, front line responsibility for protecting consumers rests with the MHS, local authorities, port health authorities, and other enforcement bodies and delivery has to reflect UK policies as well as the national priorities in the four countries of the UK. We need to understand the needs of communities at the national and local level by engaging with them, so that our policies and actions are designed to reflect different local circumstances.





CHAPTER 5 HOW WE WILL DELIVER (CONTINUED)



There will continue to be pressure on public spending, and it is essential that we seek more economic, efficient and effective ways of protecting consumers and encouraging healthier eating. We will also take sustainable development into account in all our activities and policy decisions, having full regard to environmental protection, social progress, the prudent use of natural resources, and future economic growth and employment.

Technology may provide opportunities to help us achieve more effective and efficient ways of protecting consumers and their interests in relation to food. However, technological advances also raise huge challenges. In determining the benefits and assessing the potential risks to consumers we will need to remain open, impartial and independent, basing our decisions on the very best evidence available.

Meeting the challenges to deliver the outcomes in our strategic plan

We will remain true to our values of putting the consumer first, being open and independent, and being science and evidence-based to maintain a dynamic and innovative organisation that is capable of meeting current and future challenges.

In doing this we will focus on:

- › delivering through partnership
- › delivering through consultation
- › delivering sustainably.





Delivering through partnership

The regulatory environment that underpins food safety means that we need to work closely with:

- › other countries and international institutions in Europe and across the world
- › other UK Government departments and devolved administrations
- › local authorities, port health authorities and other enforcement bodies, and their representatives
- › food producers, distributors, caterers and retailers
- › consumer groups and voluntary organisations
- › media organisations.

It is only through good working partnerships with these bodies and institutions that we can fulfil our primary role of protecting all UK consumers from unsafe food, and continue to play a leading role in improving the health of the nation through encouraging consumers to make more informed choices about eating healthily.

We will deliver by:

- › further developing and delivering an infrastructure that allows us to work better with EU and international institutions
- › further developing and delivering an infrastructure that allows us to work better with national, regional and local government in all four countries of the UK, and with local and community groups
- › delivering effective action on risks to public health and consumers' other interests in relation to food, through working better with our partners in the enforcement and business communities and in the voluntary sector.



CHAPTER 5 HOW WE WILL DELIVER (CONTINUED)



Delivering through consultation

We base our policies on the best available evidence. We will continue to develop and maintain our systems and processes for the robust governance of science²⁰. Key to our performance as a regulator is our open, transparent and consultative approach to risk-based policy development and enforcement, underpinned by sound evidence.

We will continue to form an independent view, actively seeking and taking into account the arguments and evidence from all our stakeholders, developing our dialogue with consumers and their representatives, particularly those that are disadvantaged or vulnerable. It also means that we will continue to reach our decisions openly, explaining them clearly to all those who are affected.

In everything we do, we will strive to secure the trust of both our partners and, most importantly, consumers.

We will deliver by:

- › being an effective and proportionate regulator, intervening to protect consumers and their interests where the market is not effective, and where the benefits justify action
- › continuing to be an open and evidence-based organisation, using our independent voice to deliver consumer protection
- › being the most used and most trusted source of advice on food safety and information about food and nutrition.

Delivering sustainably

The Agency's remit is to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food, now and in the future. In doing so we will take account of the sustainable development implications of our activities and policy decisions. What this means in practice is that we will consider the sustainability implications of any new or amending policies, by conducting sustainability assessments within the regulatory impact assessments we undertake. We will consider sustainability in all other activities we undertake such as consumer campaigns, research projects, decision making and in providing advice to consumers. We will work towards running our organisation in a more sustainable way.

²⁰ The Agency carries out and commissions extensive scientific research and survey work to ensure that our advice to the public is based on the best and most up-to-date food science. We are advised in our work by independent scientific committees. We also use consumer research expertise and expertise in the social, economic and behavioural sciences. To find out more, visit www.food.gov.uk/science/

We will continually seek to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of our operations. We will develop a medium term financial strategy to enable us to deliver the financial and efficiency targets, set in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, in a way that minimises the impact on our ability to achieve our strategic objectives. This will include reviewing our business processes and structures to ensure they are fit for purpose, make best use of information technology, and are proportionate to risk. For example, we are exploring alternative models for delivering Official Controls in approved meat premises, that will maintain consumer protection while improving efficiency and reducing the costs of regulation.

This is part of our longer-term vision for a partnership approach to regulating the meat industry, based on Food Business Operators being fully responsible for the safety of what they produce and for meeting the costs of inspection. There would be lighter touch inspection where there is clear evidence of compliance, balanced by strong powers to intervene, including revoking operating licenses, in cases of serious non-compliance. Food business operators and regulatory staff will need the right knowledge, skills and powers to make this work effectively and to deliver an efficient, risk-based, targeted regulatory and inspection service.

A key factor in our ability to deliver quality services and advice to consumers and industry is the attraction and retention of highly motivated, developed, and focused people with a shared sense of direction and purpose. We aim to promote and support diversity both in our policies and within our organisation, fostering innovation and continual improvement in our performance.

We will deliver by:

- › ensuring that the FSA meets its various statutory obligations and fulfils its role as a UK Government department, being economic, efficient and effective in doing so
- › reviewing arrangements for recovering costs from those parts of the food industry for which the FSA undertakes controls, with a view to progressively moving towards full cost recovery where this is appropriate and feasible
- › being a good employer, making the best use of our diverse talent and delivering a safe, secure, compliant and sustainable working environment for staff, contractors and visitors.

A note on the Food Standard Agency's remit in relation to food

1. 'Food' is defined in section 1(1) of the Food Safety Act 1990. That section has been amended and now says that "food" has the same meaning as in the EC General Food Regulation No 178/2002. This is the fundamental piece of EC food safety legislation that now underpins all modern EC food safety law, and through that our domestic legislation.

2. Article 2 of Regulation 178/2002 sets out the meaning of 'food' (the following is a simplification):

'Food' means any substance or product, whether processed, partially processed or unprocessed, intended to be, or reasonably expected to be ingested by humans.

'Food' includes drink, chewing gum and any substance, including water, intentionally incorporated into the food during its manufacture, preparation or treatment.

'Food' does not include:

(a) feed;

(b) live animals unless they are prepared for placing on the market for human consumption;

(c) plants prior to harvesting;

(d) medicinal products;

(e) cosmetics;

(f) tobacco and tobacco products;

(g) narcotic or psychotropic substances;

(h) residues and contaminants.

3. The Agency's remit, set out in the Food Standards Act 1999, is to protect public health from food risks and protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. The definition of 'food' does not include animal feed, but the Agency's remit extends to animal feed.

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