

Annex

Request

1. What responsibilities the FSA will have to audit and inspect food imports to ensure current and future food imports comply with environmental standards after the transition period due to end on 31 December 2020 as provided for in the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement.
2. Whether the FSA will be given additional responsibilities and resources to ensure food imports adhere to the UK's environmental standards.
3. Any powers or responsibilities the FSA will have for changing import standards.

Forward

The FSA puts food safety and consumers at the heart of everything we do.

We will continue to provide and publish expert independent advice to Ministers based on the latest science and evidence. We are committed to doing everything we can to protect consumer interests and uphold food standards, both now and once the transition period ends.

Decisions on food standards are a matter for the UK and will be made separately from any trade agreements

Response

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has policy responsibility for the safety of all imported food. This function is discharged through local and port health authorities that have responsibility to undertake controls on imported high-risk food and feed.

Under the Withdrawal Bill, EU legislation governing import controls for high-risk food and feed will become retained UK law, meaning that there will be no immediate change to the import requirements or controls on high-risk food and feed at the end of the Transition Period.

The FSA will continue to conduct reviews of port health authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland beyond the Transition Period, to ensure that the existing high standards for undertaking import controls remain.

At the end of the Transition Period, responsibility for determining and managing imported food safety controls will fall to the FSA. The FSA is therefore taking steps to develop a process to monitor imports data with a view to identifying new and emerging imported food safety risks.

This will enable the FSA to robustly assess levels of risk posed by imported foodstuffs with a view to determining future import controls, where required.

Policy on environmental standards is the responsibility of the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) and therefore we believe Defra are most suitable to provide the information requested. You can make a request to Defra via email at: defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk

As we communicated to you on 17 September 2020 in our response to your previous FOI request (FOI 2628), the FSA have established a risk analysis process to provide independent food safety advice and risk management recommendations to ministers after the Transition Period on food and feed safety issues, including for any pre-market approvals for regulated products.

As well as food safety the FSA has a statutory function of protecting consumers' other interests in relation to food and can also consider other factors in developing its risk management advice, such as animal welfare, environment and economic impacts, and in doing so would consult with Defra and other government departments where appropriate.