

Paper 13.2 Understanding Regulatory Change Working Group - Update (July 2024)

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress for the Understanding Regulatory Change Working Group. It summaries the background, key activities, and future action of the group. This paper is for information and discussion.

Background

1. The ACSS Understanding Regulatory Change (URC) working group was set up in January 2024 and is tasked with exploring how potential changes to food regulations may be perceived by, and impact upon, consumers and wider stakeholders.
2. A first ask for the group is to support FSA activity around consumer perceptions of potential changes to the regulated products risk analysis process, as part of the Regulated Products Reform Programme (RPRP).
3. No other requests are in train for this group, however as the regulatory landscape changes in light of the UKs exit from the EU (e.g. divergence amongst the devolved administrations, the Windsor Framework, targeted operation model), it's likely that other commissions will come in on this topic (terms of reference will be revised accordingly).

Members

The Working Group is comprised of the following members:

- Ms. Julie Hill (Chair)
- Dr Seda Erdem

- Professor Julie Barnett
- Professor Spencer Henson
- Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford

Terms of reference

The ACSS Understanding Regulatory Change working group will support the FSA by:

- Supporting FSA activity around consumer perceptions of potential changes to the regulated products risk analysis process, as part of the Regulated Products Reform Programme (RPRP). The main objective of the RPRP work will be to help ensure that any primary research commissioned in this area answers relevant research questions (phase 1), fills evidence gaps (phase 2), uses appropriate methodology - subject to budget and time restraints (phase 3) and is reported and interpreted correctly (phase 4).
- Supporting relevant future commissions as the regulatory landscape changes in light of the UK's exit from the EU.

Key activities to date

Since its inception the Understanding Regulatory Change working group has undertaken the following work:

RPRP Phase 1: Members considered research questions put forward by FSA related to RPRP. Working group members discussed the research aims, provided feedback on how well the research questions meet the research aims, and suggested revised questions (January 2024);

RPRP Phase 2: Members reflected on how well the current evidence based answered key research questions set out by the FSA and previously considered by the group. Working group members reviewed an evidence summary produced by the social science team in terms of how well the research questions were answered, and provided views as to what extent further research may be required.

This work has helped to gauge where there may be some concerns for consumers and also where we can be less sure on what consumer sentiment is on a given area. As such it will usefully inform how the FSA shape future engagement and

communications. We anticipate that the working group will play an advisory role in any subsequent research in this area (as per RPRP phase 3 and 4 work as outlined below), the need for which will be better known after the June FSA board meeting.

Current/Ongoing activities:

The following activities are being considered for 2024:

RPRP Phase 3: Support commissioning of primary research (TBC)

If primary research is commissioned, the working group will be asked to inform the development of the research specification and contribute to the tender evaluation panel.

RPRP Phase 4: Assure fieldwork materials and final research publications (TBC)

If primary research is commissioned, the working group will be asked to provide ongoing assurance (i.e. reviewing fieldwork materials, analysis plans) and per review final outputs.

Impact of Regulated Products on Food Access and Consumers Interests

Following discussions at the July ACSS plenary, the working group will be asked to feed into ongoing work to feed into the evidence base in this area, exploring the wider impacts of changes to the Regulated Products Process and how this might influence consumers access to food. Requirements and scope of this work are still to be established.

Julie Hill, ACSS URC Working Group Chair

Laura Broomfield, FSA URC Working Group Lead