

Paper 9.5 Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour Working Group - Update (July 2022)

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress for the Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour Working Group. It summarises background, key activities and future action. This paper is for information and discussion.

Background

- The FSA has a strong interest in identifying likely responses to climate change and understanding where those might impact its work. This working group helps to highlight trends in responses to climate change in order to contribute to the FSA's horizon scanning, and in order to inform future FSA policy.
- In the ACSS meeting on 1st December 2020, several scoping activities were proposed including engagement with the wider research community and with the FSA's Chief Scientific Advisor.
- The work of the group links closely to that of [Science Council Working Group 6](#) (who are exploring the potential food safety implications arising from changes to primary food production practices and technologies that reduce carbon emissions), and was recently referenced in a blog by the FSA's Chief Scientific Advisor [Starting the conversation on food safety and net zero carbon - Food Standards Agency \(blog.gov.uk\)](#).

Members

The working group comprises of the following members:

- Julie Hill (Chair)
- Seda Erdem
- Spencer Henson
- Hannah Lambie-Mumford

- Susan Michie

Terms of reference: Development/consultation

The Terms of Reference have been recently revised and are as follows:

- The Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour working group is tasked with exploring consumer behaviour trends which may be motivated by climate concerns, and impact upon FSA priorities in relation to food authenticity, safety and hygiene, informed consumer choices and access to healthy and sustainable food. This last consideration has been added to meet revised FSA strategic priorities.
- Given the wide-ranging impacts that climate change will have on all aspects of the food system, from agriculture to food processing to waste disposal, the working group will lay the foundation for considerations of climate change within FSA policy, and how it relates to broader Government initiatives, such as Net Zero Carbon.

Approach:

- Phase 1: Commission an expert engagement workshop to identify behaviours that consumers may engage in in response to climate change concerns. This will increase understanding of the evidence base, identify priority areas for the FSA, and inform future activity of the working group.
- Phase 2: Expand on phase 1 findings and engage across the FSA to explore key responsibilities and current activities, and identify potential follow up activity for the FSA and other organisations.

Expert Workshop

- The first workshop ran on the 18th May 2021, with 38 attendees. The first section of the workshop contained presentations from experts on topics relating to climate change's impact on consumer food-related behaviours: including food safety, consumer packaging choices and the need for regulation packaging for food safety
- In the second session, attendees were shown the output of a pre-workshop exercise, mapping possible behavioural trends on to FSA priority areas of food safety, food authenticity and Food Business Organisations (FBO) regulation. Attendees were asked to discuss the prevalence of the trends and possible impact on FSA priority areas. Some trends identified by the workshop were: Adoption of low carbon diets, the avoidance of food waste, increased consumption of alternative packaging or packaging with higher

content of recycled materials and Increased use of reusable containers in food and drinks. Each of these carried potential risks as well as benefits.

Second workshop

- The second workshop was held on the 18th February 2022. The purpose of the 2nd workshop was to expand on the Phase 1 findings with engagement across the relevant teams in the FSA, to explore responsibilities and current activities aimed at mitigating potential risks.
- Key participants were identified from relevant FSA areas. These included regulatory compliance, chemical safety policy, field operations, social research, additives and food contact materials, labelling, food crime, meat hygiene, general hygiene, strategic insights, wine standards, and novel proteins.
- A final report has been created, combining write ups from the first and second expert engagement workshops, producing one overall report summarising all CCCB WG conversations and information. This report provides recommendations and advice to the FSA.

Future activities:

A working group meeting was held on the 16th June to finalise any comments on the report, as well as to discuss the possible future direction of the WG.

Future activities include:

- The group will pause strategic activity whilst new members are on-boarded to the ACSS, at which point we will reconvene.
- The group will work closely with the Kitchen Life 2 working group to support the sustainability focussed analysis module.
- Future areas of interest could include further work with the Science Council Net-Zero working group, alignment to FSA strategic areas of focus as they develop and/or engagement on specific climate change related activities undertaken by the strategic and social research teams.