

# Paper 11.6 FSA Analytics Unit Update (July 2023)

## Summary

This paper is for information and provides an update on key activity and outputs from the Analytics Unit.

## Analytics Team Update:

Michelle Patel was appointed **Deputy Director for Analysis and Insight**, in May. She will lead three teams who together form the Analysis Unit:

- **Social Science** (led by Joanna Disson).
- **Analytics**, comprising Operational Research, Economics and Statistics teams (led by Willem Roelofs).
- **Strategic Insights** (led by Greg Wasinski).

The review of the FSA social science function against the Government Social Research code is now completed. As an addendum to the Civil Service Code, the GSR Code sets out specific principles to guide the work and behaviour of government social researchers. Adherence to the Code ensures high quality social research and analysis for government that is rigorous, relevant and valued. The review and the FSA response has been shared with the Assurance working group and is expected to be published on the ACSS website in July.

## Project updates

- **Food and You 2:** Wave 6 will be published in July 2023. Following this we will be publishing the first trend report which will present time series analysis for key questions asked in Waves 1-6. From Wave 7 the FSA will be bringing the production of the data tables in house. Food Standards Scotland (FSS) have funding approved to expand Food and You 2 to include Scotland in Wave 8 (currently fieldwork is only conducted in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland) allowing us to measure issues like food insecurity at a UK level.

- **Kitchen Life 2:** All 5 waves of fieldwork are now complete; with a total of 31 food businesses and 70 households taking part in the research. We are still in the reporting stages of the project, which should be completed in June 2023. Outputs will include raw data, an analysis tool and dashboard (complete with user-guides). Reports will focus on 7 high priority behaviours (analysed using the COM-B model) and provide recommendations for future research and/or recommendations for the FSA (such as improving consumer guidance).

The project team are developing an extensive communications plan to ensure that data from this award-winning research project is utilised by teams within the FSA, and to promote this project across and outside of Government. For example, the team were recently invited to present at two 'Civil Service Live' conference events.

In October 2022, the PhD studentship with Leeds University Business school commenced. Over 3.5 years, the studentship will primarily focus on the 'say- do' gap by exploring the differences between observed data from Kitchen Life 2 and self-reported data from other FSA data sources (particularly Food and You 2).

**Strategic assessment:** We have commissioned a fresh strategic assessment of the UK food system to identify potential changes in the UK food system over the next 10 years through a literature review and expert elicitation exercise. This has now been completed and the FSA will be considering the implications of its findings.

**The Wider Consumer Interests Programme:** We are expanding the scope of our evidence gathering to include wider interests of consumers in relation to food, giving perspective into wider food policy and provide evidence on some of the big challenges in the food system such as diet and nutrition, sustainability of food, food insecurity, provision, and choice. Update on the ongoing projects within this programme of work include:

- **School Food Standards (SFS):** The Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Department for Education (DfE) launched a joint project to design and test a new approach for local authorities in England in assuring and supporting compliance with the SFS in September 2022. The School Food Standards (SFS) are designed to help children and young people in schools in England

to eat a nutritious diet and develop healthy eating habits. They are mandatory for all maintained schools, with school governing boards responsible for ensuring the standards are met. Multiple phases of this work have now completed, with SFS checks being carried out in 18 participating LAs to test if it is possible for Food Safety Officers (FSOs) to ask questions and make observations related to the SFS to identify possible non-compliance. Research has been carried out to understand the experiences of FSOs, LAs and schools during this pilot, as well as the feasibility of different aspects of the SFS being testing. The final phase of research is at the commissioning stage currently, and reports from the first two phases are intending to publish in Autumn 2023.

- One of the steers from the Board in June 22 was to expand our work exploring household food insecurity (HHFI). As part of the Programme, we are working with University of Sheffield and Liverpool University to undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise, in order to identify the available evidence (and gaps in the evidence base) on household food insecurity. The Review is led by ACSS member Hannah Lambie-Mumford and Rachel Loopstra (University of Liverpool). This piece of work will give the FSA an up to date understanding of the household food insecurity data and evidence held by external stakeholders (government, academia and civil society) to help inform FSA's approach to future collaborations and research priorities. It will also help to inform FSA's understanding of the field and their potential contribution to it (how/why it is relevant to their remit and what their potential contribution could be). This project is now complete and due to be published June 2023.

**Consumer Insights Tracker:** The Consumer Insights Tracker is now being published every month, using a bulletin-style reporting. Bulletins dating back to April 2022 are [available on our website](#).

- In September 2022, FSA Social Science project team requested support from the WCI Working Group to carry out an independent review of the Consumer Insights Tracker. Professor Spencer Henson has led the review. A report of recommendations will be published in summer 2023.
- Earlier this year, we went out to tender to appoint a new contractor to the Consumer Insights tracker forward. We are in the final stages of signing a contract with our successful supplier, who we are working with.
- We have now published the Tracker End of Year Report which looks at trends from March 2022-March 2023. The report can be found here: [Consumer Insights Tracker: Chapter 1 Executive Summary | Food Standards Agency](#)

One of the current ongoing workstreams within the Tracker is identifying and monitoring similar tracking surveys across the sectors to ensure that our work is generating valuable insights.

**Behavioural Insight:** Two of our trials have been published in academic journals. ‘Testing the impact of covert and overt ordering interventions on sustainable consumption choices’ was published in *Appetite* and ‘Does proactively asking about allergens before ordering improve customer outcomes? An in-business randomised controlled trial’ was published in *Clinical and Experimental Allergy*. Both of these trials are now published on gov.uk. We presented the sustainable choices trial to the British Retail Consortium’s working group on consumer behaviour and sustainable choices (at their request). The Evaluation Accelerator Fund (EAF) Food System Trials has progressed to the second stage- development and delivery of the first tranche of trials- after the consortium’s proposal for the first tranche was approved. This first tranche of trials are scheduled to begin between July and September this year and deliver in March 2024.

**Annual Report on Food Standards.** Analytics Unit have been working on the second annual report on food standards. This includes coordinating input for two chapters, one on changes in consumer attitudes and behaviours related to food (including those resulting from the impact of inflation and cost of living pressures) and one on imports. AU have also worked to ensure quality assurance of the whole report. The report is due for publication in the Autumn.

## **Published Research (Feb 2023 - June 2023):**

- [The future of animal feed](#) (Feb 23): This Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) report highlights the opportunities and limitations of existing solutions for sustainable and safe protein in livestock feeds and proposes scenarios and directions for future biotechnological developments for the production of alternative protein sources.
- [Testing ordering interventions](#) (Feb 23): Tested whether displaying products in an online supermarket, from most to least sustainable, can shift consumer choices towards more sustainable options compared to when products are randomly ordered.
- [Developing rapid and effective communications testing](#) (Feb 23): In November 2021, we commissioned Ipsos to build on previous research and guidance to establish a process to rapidly test communication pieces. We achieved this by piloting different survey tools and testing existing

communication pieces.

- [Official Controls](#) (Feb 23): This research study – collecting the views of FBOs themselves – was intended to support the rollout of the OTP programme, and the implementation of Official Controls. The study entailed a quantitative survey of 400 FBOs based in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, followed by in-depth interviews with 60 FBOs. Fieldwork took place between June and August 2022. Questionnaire coverage included FBOs’ experience of working with the FSA, their understanding of what the FSA does, the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the UK’s exit from the European Union (EU), and their familiarity with the OTP.
- [Food and You 2 Wave 5](#) (Mar 23): Between April and July 2022 6,770 adults across England, Wales and Northern Ireland took part in Wave 5 of Food and You 2. While confidence in food and the FSA remain high, food prices are now the top concern amongst consumers, with food waste and the amount of sugar in food still featuring in the top three concerns.
- [Consumer perceptions of precision breeding](#) (Mar 23): This research includes a survey of around 4,000 respondents in the UK and deliberative groups with 97 consumers in E,W and NI. It explored views on consumer awareness and acceptability of precision bred food.
- [3D printing technologies and the food system](#) (Mar 2023): This report is intended to assist the FSA in policy development and regulatory decision-making relating to 3D printing of food and food packaging by: (1) Providing an overall assessment of 3D printing technologies as used in the current food system; (2) Establishing to what extent developments in 3D and 4D food printing will impact the food system and may act as a catalyst for further change, including shifts in manufacturing and supply of food as well as in consumer trends; and (3) Establishing implications of 3D printing technologies for food safety for consumers and the food system overall as well as their potential benefits.
- [Proactively asking about allergens](#) (Apr 23): Tested whether proactively asking restaurant customers at point of ordering if they have any food allergies or intolerances improved consumer outcomes, including confidence, comfort, satisfaction and trust, as well as whether it has an impact on declaring an allergy.
- [Eating Well Choosing Better Tracker Survey Wave 8](#) (Apr 23): This research monitors consumer understanding and knowledge of a wide range of food-related topics from consumer perceptions of healthy eating, healthier options and reformulation; consumer use of traffic light labels; and consumer knowledge and understanding of the recommended daily calorie intake.

- [Consumer Insights Tracker](#) (Jun 23): Annual report on CIT data reporting on trends between March 2022 and March 2023. Covers food insecurity, food availability, wider consumer concerns in relation to the food system, and consumer perception of the food supply chain and FSA.
- [Food system strategic assessment](#) (Jun 23): A strategic assessment of the UK food system using a literature review and to a large extent input from a pool of experts with a broad range of expertise across the food system.
- [Household food insecurity in the UK: data and research landscape](#) (Jun 23): an evidence scoping review of existing research and data on Household Food Insecurity (HHFI) in the UK, covering that produced by academia, government departments and wider civil society. Commissioned to feed into the development of the third pillar of the FSA strategy, the review identifies existing research questions and approaches in relation to HHFI and identifies key gaps in the evidence base.

## Upcoming Publications:

- Consumer Insights Tracker (monthly publications)
- Household food insecurity in the UK: data and research landscape (June 2023)
- Risks from animal by-products (June 2023)
- Food and You 2 Wave 6 (Jul 23)
- Alternatives to single use plastics in the food system (Jul 2023)
- Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Audit and survey (Jul 23)
- FSA GSR Review (July 2023)
- Kitchen Life 2 (Summer 2023 TBC)
- What works to prevent food fraud (August 2023)
- Cost of Food Crime Phase 2 (August 2023)
- Food and You 2 Waves 1-6 Trends (Autumn 23)
- Overview of mechanically separated meat issues (Autumn 2023)
- Labour shortages in the food system (Autumn 2023)
- School Food Standards (Autumn 2023)