

ACSS Round-Up June 2020 – August 2020

Highlights

- On the 12th August the FSA published the latest tranche of **consumer research around Covid-19**, commissioned to explore the issues affecting consumers and businesses and inform policy responses. Full reports on the Covid-19 tracker survey, Social Media Analysis, Qualitative Research and Expert Panel exercises are [on the FSA research webpage](#)
 - Key findings from Covid-19 tracker survey included:
 - 31% of respondents said they would not be returning to eat out for the foreseeable future in July, up from 25% in June. This was the case more so for older people.
 - People were buying less take-aways overall compared to pre-lockdown. Reported reasons for this included financial reasons, less availability, cooking more at home and concerns over food safety and hygiene.
 - There was a move towards more 'local' food purchasing behaviour with 35% reporting they had done so more often. An increase was also seen in buying from local suppliers e.g. farm shops and veg box schemes.
 - Reports of eating food past its use-by date varied by food type, ranging from 17% for smoked fish to 36% for bagged salads.
 - 35% of people reported throwing away or wasting foods less often.
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 - Later, changing businesses models leading to a lack of awareness of requirements was another focus. Changes to business practices include business diversification, specifically the shift to online delivery and takeaway
- On the 13th August the FSA published a rapid evidence review looking at the factors influencing food behaviours and how they may be affected by life events or '**moments of change**'. The [moments of change review](#) was produced by the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST) at Cardiff University and explores points of time/change where shifts in behaviours can be promoted or discouraged.
- On the 19th June the [latest FBO Tracker report](#) was published – Drawing on data collected during September-October 2019, the report details views of small and micro food business operators on regulatory issues, trust in the FSA and EU exit. Key findings included:
 - Views relating to the possible impact of EU exit were less polarised and more mixed than in 2018, however FBOs remain more likely to see the potential impact of the exit as negative rather than positive.
 - Respondents felt that regulations are of benefit to FBOs, helping to maintain good standards, public safety and ensure a level playing field.
 - FBOs remain very reliant on their local council/local authority for information and support in meeting food safety and hygiene regulations, with the FSA being the second most cited source.

The expert panel concluded that the policy response to COVID-19 outbreak needs to be responsive, far reaching, and address the needs of both the consumer and food businesses:

- In the short term, a reduction of regulatory oversight/inspection was a cause of concern.

Dr Rebecca Gillespie

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Useful Links

[FSA Website](#)

[ACSS Website](#)

[Science Council Website](#)

Other news / updates

- Catherine Bartle has joined the secretariat, following the departure of Mateusz Fedyniak in July.
- Given current social distancing guidelines and the expectation of continued restrictions on gatherings and movement, ACSS meetings will be held virtually until further notice.
- The next meeting of the ACSS will be a bespoke meeting on the 15th October to discuss proposals for new working groups. The secretariat is currently consulting internally to identify priority areas for social science input.
- On the 25th August the FSA launched the package of [new SAC websites](#). The secretariat will be considering how best the [new ACSS website](#) can be utilised over the coming months.
- Following an action for the last plenary meeting, the secretariat will be contacting ACSS members to provide a quarterly update on involvement in other SAC working groups.

Upcoming events

Meeting: Assurance working group meeting

Date: TBC October

Details: Virtual

Meeting: New Working Group Meeting

Date: 15th October

Details: Virtual

Meeting: 6th Plenary Open Meeting

Date: 4th December

Details: Virtual

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