

## Paper 7.1

### FSA Social Science Update (June 2021)

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#### SUMMARY

This paper provides an update on recent and upcoming FSA social science research publications. Hyperlinks for published reports are provided in the footnotes. This paper is for information only.

#### FSA Update:

- **Departure of FSA Chief Economist and Head of Analytics:** Vanna Aldin has moved on to a new role at DWP, heading up the economics team in their finance directorate. Nick Daniel will take over the role of Chief Economist for the FSA and Tim Johnston will be the interim head of Analytics whilst a permanent appointment is sought.
- **Professor Susan Jebb has been confirmed as FSA Chair :** Susan is a professor of diet and population health at the University of Oxford. She has been named as the preferred candidate to take over the role from our interim Chair Dr Ruth Hussey who will return to her Deputy Chair role. Before the appointment was confirmed, Matt Hancock, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has on behalf of all the appointing authorities invited the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) to hold a public pre-appointment scrutiny hearing in line with parliamentary procedures at their earliest opportunity.
- **Food and You:** The FSA's new flagship survey, 'Food and You 2', was launched in Summer 2020, replacing the biennial Food and You survey, annual Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Consumer Tracker, and bi-annual Public Attitudes Tracker. In November 2020, the FSA appointed a research fellow, Dr Beth Armstrong from the University of Sheffield, to oversee the reporting and secondary analysis of waves 1-4 of the survey. Updates on each wave are provided below.
  - Wave 1 – The first wave of fieldwork was conducted between July and October 2020 and 9,319 adults from 6,408 households across England, Wales and Northern Ireland took part. The survey included modules on food shopping, food safety in the home, food security, concerns about food, and trust in food. The [key findings](#) were published in March 2021 and in May 2021 a secondary report on food security in Northern Ireland was published.
  - Wave 2 – Fieldwork for wave 2 was conducted between November 2020 and January 2021. This wave included new modules on eating out/ takeaways and food hypersensitivities. We are currently drafting the report and plan to publish this at the end of July.

- Wave 3 – This wave is currently in the field and due to report in the Autumn. This wave included a new module focusing on Healthy Eating in Northern Ireland.
- Wave 4 – We are about to start questionnaire development for wave 4 which will include a new module on emerging issues. Wave 4 will go into the field in Autumn, and report in Spring 2022.
- **Kitchen Life 2:** Kitchen Life 2 commenced in January 2021, with the aim of exploring real-life behaviours in domestic and commercial kitchens by using video-capture technology, alongside passive measurements including fridge/freezer thermometers, as well as more traditional survey methods, and innovative qualitative recall techniques, to fully understand and quantify what really happens in kitchens. The footage will be analysed using COM-B to identify the behavioural triggers and barriers.

The first stage, a literature review and expert interviews, identified the areas of behaviour where most risks are apparent – namely food preparation, and cooking; and underpins the focus for the main phase of ethnographic research.

The pilot study, with 2 domestic and 2 commercial kitchens, commences at the end of June. The aim of the pilot is to test the logistical elements of the research, including recruitment and video camera set-up. The pilot also gives the opportunity to trial the analysis approach and devise a framework for analysing the mainstage fieldwork. Finally, we are using the pilot to test the impact of using audio recording (by comparing the analyses of footage with and without audio), to help us decide whether the data captured by audio recording adds sufficient value to offset the additional privacy concerns.

- **Consumer insights:** To reflect the increasing appetite to infuse the consumer perspective into food policy (that of the FSA but also more widely working with partners across Government) the social science team is developing a programme of work to better understand consumer interests in real time. We have been given additional resource to do this and are currently recruiting at junior and senior levels.
- **What works centre:** There is growing cross-Government appetite to bid for a What Works Centre around healthy sustainable diets. The objectives of a what works centre are to encourage the generation, translation and adoption of good evidence for policymaking. The FSA social science team are working with other departments and stakeholders on scoping work to prove the concept for a potential bid for SR21.
- **Cost of Food Crime (CoFC) Phase 2:** The FSA published its report (FS301065) on *The Cost of Food Crime* (CoFC) (Phase 1) back in September 2020. The scope of this project was to conduct a comprehensive review of existing methods and techniques for evaluating the economic impact of food crime to the UK economy and to develop a conceptual framework based on these findings. Phase 2 of this work has just been commissioned, with a view to building on the

conceptual framework for the CoFC model presented in Phase 1 of this project into a functioning model and database that will allow the FSA to capture the full range of impacts that food crime has on the UK economy. The CoFC framework will draw on the economics of crime, economic impact assessment, database development and data analytics to provide a robust model and database for the ongoing assessment of the cost of food crime.

- **Estimating The Financial Cost To Individual Sufferers With Food Hypersensitivity:** a study into the financial burden of living with FHS with an aim to quantify the additional financial costs faced by sufferers with FHS in the UK by comparing the price differentials paid for food between households with a FHS sufferer, to a comparison group (households without FHS); and monetising other direct or indirect costs faced by sufferers with FHS in their efforts to remain symptom free (e.g. medical and kitchen supplies to help manage their condition).
- **Food Hypersensitivity Willingness To Pay Project:** This project addresses the research needs of the FSA to capture and evaluate the burden caused by living with food hypersensitivities, the day-to-day management of these conditions and associated inconveniences. This research is to be completed across two linked workstreams. The first workstream aims to develop an annual tracking survey to collect data on management, quality of life and impact on daily lives. The second aims to produce monetary valuations on the non-tangible/ non-financial element, including pain, grief and suffering, associated with food hypersensitivity through eliciting Willingness to Pay (WTP) values.
- **Chemical Contaminants and Toxins (CCT) Cost of Illness (COI) Model:** The FSA is working in collaboration with the University of Exeter through a Research Fellowship to develop a COI framework for chemical contaminants and toxins (CCT) in relation to food safety. This is a complex and challenging area, which will take time to develop. The Research Fellow is currently undertaking a scoping and rapid evidence review; working closely with FSA Risk Assessors and Toxicologists to identify priority chemical contaminants.
- **Survey of Infectious Intestinal Disease during COVID-19** – During COVID-19 the FSA's traditional way of tracking Infectious Intestinal Disease (IID) and Foodborne Disease via confirmed laboratory reports has become compromised as less people visit their GP. The FSA is therefore running a series of 4 waves of an online panel survey asking people about IID symptoms and use of medical care. The survey also covers behaviours during the previous 4 weeks to see if there is any associations between IID levels and non pharmaceutical interventions, such as hand washing or social distancing. Three waves have been run and the fourth is planned for next year as a comparison when hopefully lockdown measures are reduced.

## **PUBLISHED RESEARCH (December 2020 – June 2021)**

### **December 2020**

- [COVID tracker waves, Waves 5-8 \(Aug-Nov\)](#). Findings from the COVID-19 Consumer Tracker survey, which monitors attitudes, experiences and behaviours of consumers in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings include an increase in levels of food insecurity, particularly amongst younger age groups (under 25s).

### **March 2021**

- [Citizen Science and Food: A Review](#). This report was the first step in the FSA's plan for citizen science, and demonstrated the utility of applying citizen science methodologies to FSA research areas. was followed by the launch of a joint funding call with [UK Research and Innovation](#), a leading research funder in this area. The call closed in May and will fund up to five pilot projects that address [FSA research interests](#). Awards will be announced in the late summer.
- [Food and You 2 survey](#), wave 1. This was the first publication from the Food and You since moving from traditional face-to-face surveying to the more innovative 'push-to-web' methodology. Key findings include:
  - When all respondents were asked to indicate if they had concerns about the food they eat, from a list of given options, the most common concerns related to the amount of sugar in food (59%), food waste (58%) and animal welfare (57%).
  - Around a quarter (27%) of respondents reported that they always follow the on-pack instructions.
  - Across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, 84% of respondents were classified as food secure (72% high, 12% marginal) and 16% of respondents were classified as food insecure (9% low, 7% very low).
- [Food in a Pandemic](#). Using a range of methodological approaches this research explores people's experiences of Covid-19 to better understand how a new food environment created during the pandemic has impacted the public's behaviours and preferences. Key findings include:
  - A noted increase in multiple forms of food insecurity, including physical availability and financial access. People have also stepped in to prevent new forms of food insecurity caused by people self-isolating, such as by offering informal forms of support. Just under two thirds (63%) agreed 'it is the government's responsibility to make sure no-one goes hungry'.
  - A significant proportion of the population have bought food more locally or grown more food during the pandemic, reflecting a wider move towards individual self-sufficiency. Most people who have

- moved towards more self-sufficiency, such as buying more locally-produced food, expect this to continue after the pandemic.
- A complex shift in people’s diets during Covid-19, with more home cooking. Although a third (32%) of respondents in the nationally representative poll reported eating more healthy main meals, a third (33%) ate more unhealthy snacks.
- [\*\*Food allergen communication in businesses feasibility trial\*\*](#), the results of our in-business feasibility trial on the effects of proactive allergen communications in businesses (i.e. asking customers “up-front” about their allergy requirements). This feasibility study looked at ease of recruitment, response rates, intervention fidelity and the appropriateness of the outcome measures. Although the trial was curtailed prematurely due to COVID-19, emerging findings suggest that the intervention increased customers’ trust and confidence in declaring their allergies. Valuable lessons on recruitment and intervention fidelity were also learnt, which will be taken into account if a fully-powered trial is attempted in the future.

## May 2021

- [\*\*The FSA Risk Communication Toolkit\*\*](#), was developed with advice from the [FSA Science Council](#) and a working group of the [FSA Advisory Committee for Social Science](#), and supported by bespoke research. The toolkit provides a framework for communicating food risk to consumers. It was developed to:
  - Make risk communications planning rigorous and consistent with the latest thinking; and
  - Support science, policy and strategy teams in understanding how to communicate risk more effectively
  - Be well-evidenced, useful and used.
- [\*\*Emerging Technologies that will impact on the UK food system\*\*](#), is a rapid evidence assessment of the emerging technologies considered most likely to have an impact on the UK food system and food safety over the coming decade, supporting our horizon scanning work. Six technology fields were identified and their implications for industry, consumers, food safety and the regulatory framework explored. These fields are:
  1. Food Production and Processing (indoor farming, 3D food printing, food side and by-product use, novel non-thermal processing, and novel pesticides)
  2. Novel Sources of Protein, such as insects (for human consumption, and animal feedstock)
  3. Synthetic Biology (including lab-grown meat and proteins)
  4. Genomics Applications along the value chain (for food safety applications, and personal “nutrigenomics”)
  5. Novel Packaging (active, smart, biodegradable, edible, and reusable solutions)

6. Digital Technologies in the food sector (supporting analysis, decision making and traceability)
- **Covid 19 Consumer Tracker Annual report** Findings from the complete time series (April 2020 – March 2021) of the COVID-19 Consumer Tracker survey, which monitored attitudes, experiences and behaviours of consumers in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings include:
    - Each measure of food insecurity in the Covid-19 tracker declined significantly in August 2020, rising again from September onwards
    - Participants from larger households (4+), those in younger age groups (aged 16-24), and households with a child present were more likely to be 'food insecure', across all these measures of food insecurity.
    - Food purchasing behaviours, habits in the home, and nutrition behaviours have remained stable over time
    - Food safety behaviours in the home have also remained stable since data collection began, with around half of participants reporting that they do 'not always' check use-by dates when they are about to cook or prepare food.
  
  - **Food Security in Northern Ireland (Food and You secondary report)** Secondary analysis of Food and You 2, Wave 1 was undertaken to explore levels of food security in Northern Ireland. This analysis found that levels were comparable across Northern Ireland, England, and Wales. Over three quarters of respondents were food secure (i.e. had high or marginal food security) in Northern Ireland (85%), England (84%) and Wales (83%). Approximately one in six respondents were food insecure (i.e. had low or very low food security) in Northern Ireland (15%), England (16%) and Wales (17%). Additional findings for Northern Ireland include:
    - Retired respondents were more likely to report being food secure (93%) than those who were working (86%) and those who were not working (73%).
    - Food security was more likely to be reported by respondents in some occupational groups (e.g. managerial, administrative, and professional occupations 90%) compared to those who were in semi-routine and routine occupations (73%)

## UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

- Survey of consumer practices with respect to coated frozen chicken products (16<sup>th</sup> June 2021)
- Public perceptions and understanding of AMR (TBC, Aug 2021)
- Food and You 2, Wave 2 (TBC, Sep 2021)
- Food Allergens in Businesses, Feasibility Trial, accepted for publication in Food Control Journal (TBC 2021).