

Review of Food and You

Summary

The Food and You Review Working Group has been asked to provide recommendations on the future direction of the Survey to the ACSS and FSA by the end of March 2019. This is an update on the Working Group's progress. This paper is for information and discussion.

Background

Food and You is the FSA's flagship consumer survey. It is a source of robust and representative evidence regarding UK consumers' reported behaviours, attitudes and knowledge relating to food safety and other food issues (e.g. food insecurity, trust). Since 2014 the results have been published as an Official Statistic.

Food and You is conducted on a biennial basis and uses random probability sampling to select a cross-section of adults (over 16 years old) across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To date, four waves of data have been published; results from Wave 5 will report in Spring 2019.

Between Aug 15 and Mar 16, the FSA commissioned an independent evaluation of the first three waves of Food and You. The evaluation was designed to establish the effectiveness and impact of the survey and provide recommendations for future waves. It was recommended that:

A review should be undertaken to consider the purpose and value of Food and You, with consideration of questions relating to the methodology, scope and focus of the survey. One of the aims should be to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of Food and You, in order to better communicate about the survey and evaluate its use and impact. A firm definition and purpose should be adopted consistently across future waves, and expressed clearly in publications.

A mixed mode design should be considered for future waves of the survey, with a self-completion element in order to minimise social desirability bias. This would need to be implemented through a split-sample test. Consideration should also be given to introducing a longitudinal element to the survey, in order to better monitor change over time and investigate causality.

The Food and You Review Working Group has therefore been established to address these recommendations by conducting a comprehensive review of Food and You and advising on the future direction of the survey. The Working Group comprises of the following members:

- Professor George Gaskell (Chair)
- Ms Julie Hill
- Professor Dan Rigby
- Dr Seda Erdem
- Mr John McTernan

- Professor Susan Michie

Key activities

Inaugural Working Group meeting (13 Sep 2018)

On 13 Sep the Food and You Review Working Group met for the first time. After discussing and agreeing the Working Group Terms of Reference, Working Group members listened to a presentation given by the FSA's Social Science Team on the background of the survey (objectives, methodology, sample, timeline, content, stakeholders etc). The Group also heard from the FSA's Statistics branch who gave a presentation on *Food and You as an Official Statistic*. Finally, the Working Group agreed it would be appropriate to conduct interviews with a range of individuals who use Food and You to inform the Review (see below).

Interviews (22 Oct – 2 Nov 2018)

Between 22 Oct and 2 Nov, the Working Group consulted with a range of individuals across the following areas:

- FSA Stakeholders:
 - Policy - Food Hygiene Policy; Novel Foods; Food Allergy and Intolerance; Foodborne Disease.
 - Science - Microbiological Risk; Exposure Assessment (Toxicology); Operational Research.
 - Northern Ireland - Standards and Dietary Health.
 - Wales - Policy / Communications.
- Food and You Advisory Committee (Wave 5)
- Social researchers in other government departments:
 - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)¹
 - Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)²
- Researchers working in private sector research agencies

Those who utilise Food and You (i.e. FSA stakeholders) were asked about the following:

- Survey topics of interest
- Uses of Food and You
- How the Food and You report, tables and data are used
- Views on the Food and You timings (e.g. data published every 2 years)
- Views on the Food and You methodology (robustness)
- Views on the use of online surveys

¹ DEFRA pay a contribution towards the Food and You contract.

² DCMS commission the Community Life Survey, a household survey of adults aged 16+ in England which recently survey moved away from face to face data collection towards a fully online / paper self-completion methodology.

- Why Food and You is used over other tools (e.g. biannual tracker, bespoke studies)
- Any bespoke work commissioned
- Use of the Food and You secondary analysis
- Gaps in Food and You
- Limitations of Food and You / areas to improve
- Alternative data sources / research tools used

Discussions with researchers from external companies were centred around the different methodologies used in social/consumer research. Specifically, the Working Group sought the researchers views on the value, pros and cons of face to face, self-completion (e.g. online or paper questionnaires) and mixed-method approaches.

Future action

The Working Group is meeting on 19 Nov to discuss the interview findings, draft report and recommendations. The draft report will be available end Dec 18 with the final report being delivered end Mar 19.

Discussion

This paper is for information and general discussion.

Professor George Gaskell
Food & You Review Working Group Chair

Lucy King
FSA Secretariat