

Lewis Macdonald MSP  
Convenor  
Health and Sport Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
By email

4 February 2019

Dear Convenor

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) welcomed the Committee's invitation to give evidence on the implications for FSS of the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018, and on our wider work. During the hearing, we committed to providing further information on access to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), and clarification on the level of possible future investment required in order to maintain a relationship with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

To take EFSA first -

Our future relationship with EFSA, and the investment required to support it, will be dependent upon the nature of the deal that is negotiated as this will determine to what extent the UK will continue to collaborate with the EU on evidence gathering and risk assessment activities post exit. Notwithstanding, FSS will continue to be able to access opinions published by EFSA and will be able to use existing scientific networks and informal links with EFSA officials to engage on areas of joint interest. FSS is currently reviewing the resources that will be required to support its risk assessment capability when the UK leaves the EU and any additional investment that may be needed to protect Scottish interests, including mechanisms for ensuring mutually beneficial relationships with EFSA.

On RASFF –

As the Committee is aware, this system enables the management and communication of food safety risks, providing early alerts of health or food contamination issues across the EU. It allows the UK to respond quickly to serious risks to public health relating to food and animal feed, and we regularly provide updates to member states through this system.

Under RASFF, the European Commission has a role to verify the RASFF notifications and inform third countries. To enhance the information exchange with third countries the Commission is obliged through EU law to establish contact with designated RASFF contact points in these countries. Moreover, it is obliged to inform third countries without undue delay if a RASFF notification concerns a product originating from or distributed to a third country. Through agreement with the EU, this notification can be facilitated through the electronic database RASFF Window, which gives non-RASFF member countries direct access to a database of notifications directly relevant to them. Otherwise the notifications would be via email or contacts at embassies. Information from other countries involved would only be available by the RASFF public portal which contains high level information (excludes details including: name of the product, follow-up information, brands, trader information, lab reports and other sensitive information).

Access to RASFF is subject to the outcome of negotiation between the EU and UK Government on future relationships. However, FSS considers that it would be mutually beneficial for the UK and EU to continue the level of data-sharing on food safety that would be enabled by continuing full access to RASFF.

On INFOSAN -

The UK is already a member of the INFOSAN network of over 180 countries and has full access to events/alerts published on the network platform. This provides the UK with extensive 'reach' and a framework for communicating food safety issues with member countries across the world. There is also longstanding cooperation between RASFF and INFOSAN.

FSS's top priority is to ensure that food remains safe and what it says it is. The UK can use INFOSAN immediately, and will continue as a third country to receive information on notifications from the EU relevant to the UK.

I hope that the Committee finds this additional information helpful.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Ogle  
Chief Executive  
Food Standards Scotland