

FSA Science Council Working Group 6 Final Report - Food Safety in the Net Zero Era

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A Report by Working Group 6 of the FSA Science Council to investigate the potential food safety implications arising from changes in primary food production.

This report was prepared and endorsed by the Science Council Working Group on Food Safety and Net Zero Carbon (Working Group 6) April 2023.

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Interests Declaration:

In line with FSA Guidance on managing interests of its scientific advisers, the interests of members of the Working Group were assessed to identify any potential conflicts with the work of this Group. No such interests were identified.

1. Foreword

We face a future climate that will be quite different and more volatile than the one we have known. Avoiding the catastrophic consequences of runaway climate change requires wholesale change across all of society, including to our food system. The UK's net zero target is an important ambition to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero carbon. To achieve this whilst continuing to feed a growing population requires the most significant change to industry since the industrial revolution, and food production is a significant part of that. Reducing net greenhouse gas emissions across the agri-food sector demands huge shifts in focus and funding towards innovative approaches and new technologies to build a more sustainable food system.

As we evolve this new, more sustainable food system, it is critical that we do so in a way that continues to maintain the highest standards of food safety and authenticity, as well as protecting values, such as animal welfare, that we know consumers hold dear.

This was why the Food Standards Agency (FSA) asked the Science Council to take a broad look at how potential changes to food production aimed at moving towards net zero carbon may also impact on food and animal feed safety.

In the following pages you will read their findings, which set out some clear overarching messages about food safety in a changing, more sustainable food production system. It highlights the importance of interactions between different regulatory and government bodies who all need to understand and react to those changes. Finally, it identifies some key technologies and approaches where extra attention may be needed to ensure that the potential sustainability gains do not come at the cost of reduced food safety.

I am very grateful to the Science Council for the hard work that went into this report, which expands the FSA's understanding of this rapidly evolving area and delves deeper to understand how we need to change our approach to ensure food safety and consumer interests continue to be protected through this intense period of change.



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