



**Food Standards Agency Science Council**

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**FSA Update: Science Evidence and Research Division Update**

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**1. Summary**

1.1 This paper is primarily for information only and provides an update on recent developments within the Science Evidence and Research Division on the FSA that may be of interest to the Science Council. However, Science Council members are encouraged to offer their input on any item, specifically how they might want to be involved.

1.2 The developments relate to:

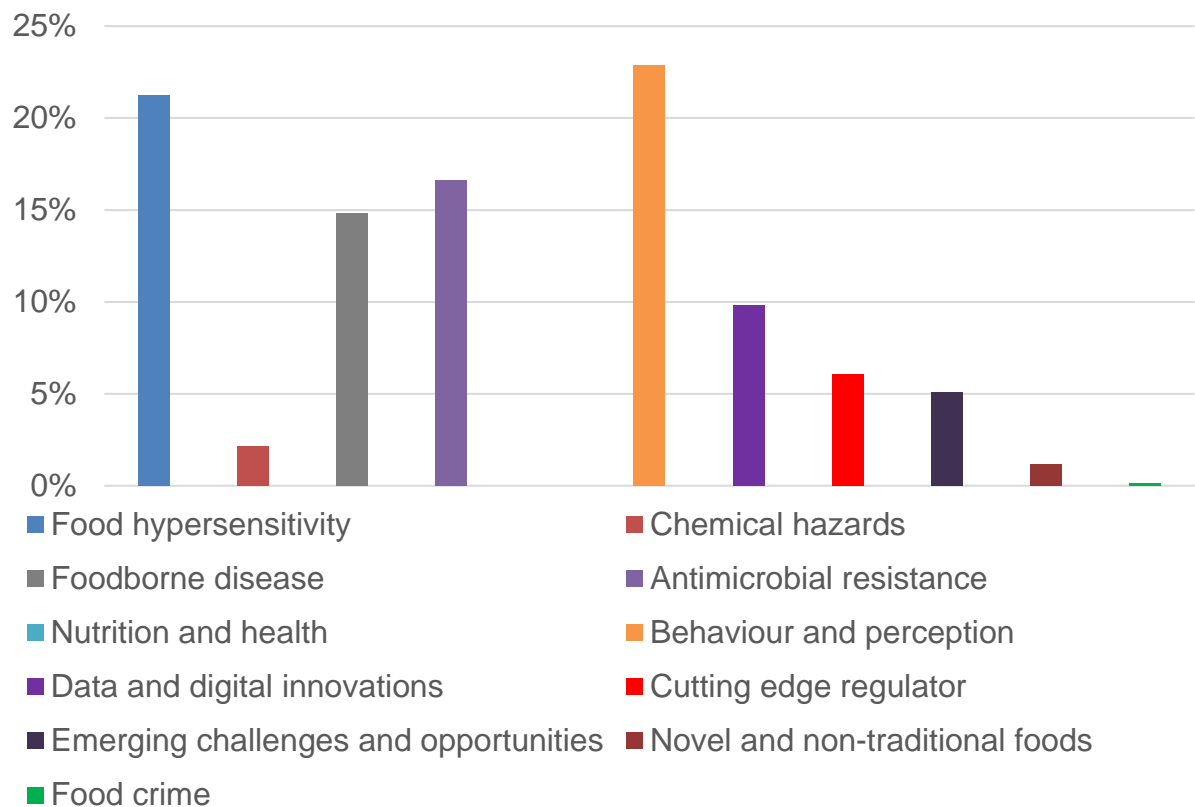
- Staffing
- Research and Evidence Programmes
- Science KPIs
- Collaborations and publications.

## 2. Staffing

- 2.1 Since the last update there has been a series of recruitment campaigns to increase the capacity and capability within the Science, Evidence and Research Division.
- 2.2 Following exit from the EU the number of applications for regulated products approval has increased as expected. In order to deliver robust risk assessments for these approvals, we have further strengthened the capacity within the Risk Assessment Unit. These staff are primarily in the regulated products team or are specialists in chemical or microbiological risk assessment.
- 2.3 As has been mentioned in previous updates, the FSA has adopted a programme-based approach to the delivery of research and evidence (see below). To deliver this effectively, a centralised science programme management function has been created, in line with recommendations from Working Group 5. This new centralised resource will enable better collaboration between the programmes and increase efficiencies.
- 2.4 The strategic insights team has also been formed to further advance internal activities surrounding horizon scanning.

## 3. Research and Evidence Programmes

- 3.1 The FSA [Areas of Research Interest](#) were published in 2020 and we have been developing a programme-based approach in order to deliver against these needs. The first stage in this process was to recruit additional capacity (see above). We have now identified technical leads for each programme and established steering groups to help drive the work forward. The design and approach to these steering groups has been influenced by the recommendation on ARIs from the Science Councils Working Group 5.
- 3.2 In addition to its wider impacts, COVID-19 has meant that many projects that were initiated, or planned, prior to the outbreak were delayed and there was less capacity to start new work as a result of internal and external staff being diverted to COVID-19 related activity. However, the behaviour and perception programme was increased to help understand the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of the food system. The distribution of research spend in the financial year 2020-21 across each of our programmes can be seen in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1 distribution of FSA research expenditure in financial year 2020-21**

3.3 The next stage of work for the research programmes is to develop a framework to monitor impact, the creation of a pipeline for future research and to increase our targeted external engagement.

#### 4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

4.1 The Science Council were previously presented with our approach to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of the work of SERD against our strategic objectives. We now have a revised set of KPIs that takes on board feedback from the Council and includes some of the key revisions:

- A context has been provided which can help explain why it is important to measure these factors, especially where some of these are internal-facing management metrics, rather than external-facing science ones

- The overall number has been reduced (from 21 to 16) and some have been significantly revised
- While some are still in development, we have started to build targets around the new and revised KPIs (targets were lacking from the original version)

4.2 We are in the process of collating the data for each KPI and creating a dashboard to present them and this will be brought to a future meeting of the Council.

## 5. Collaborations and Publications

5.1 Fellowships and studentships continue to be a priority for our academic collaboration, and we expect to have 9 active fellowships in the current financial year that are at least partially funded by the FSA. In order to increase the impact and create a cohort of academic partners, we have a workstream underway to create an outcomes-based strategy for fellowships. A summary of this work will be presented to the Council at a future meeting.

5.2 Since the last update to the Council, a sample of research publications includes:

- [A systematic literature review assessment comparing meat production processes in sixteen countries](#)
- [A report from the December 2020 stakeholder workshop on Genome Editing and the Future of Food](#)
- [A toolkit and checklist to help our policy, science and strategy teams to plan effective risk communications.](#)
- [A report exploring 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](#)
- [The wave 1 results from Food and You 2 survey which measures self-reported consumer knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to food safety and other food issues amongst adults in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.](#)
- [A review of how citizen science has been applied and how it is relevant to the FSA Areas of Research Interest.](#)

5.3 In order to make FSA research easier to discover, cite and track Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) are now being assigned to new SERD publications (including those associated with the Science Council and Science Advisory Committees).

## **6. Discussion**

6.1 The Science Council are asked for any comments on the above items and an indication of how they might want to be involved in any of them. Also, any comments about what information they would like shared in future updates from SERD to ensure the SC can deliver its mandate effectively would be greatly received.