



Research and evidence gathering

Issue

1. This paper provides an outline of the research and evidence gathering work that the FSA is putting in train.

Stakeholder Reference Group action

1. The Stakeholder Reference Group is asked to:

- **Consider and comment** on the planned research and evidence gathering.

Background

2. The first phase of the FSA's programme to review and improve the efficacy of current traceability, withdrawal and recall processes for food sold at retail involves gathering the evidence needed to assess the effectiveness of current processes. This paper outlines research and evidence gathering that the FSA is putting in train

Process mapping and theory of change modelling

3. Prior to the research and evidence gathering, we have started to map out what happens during the recalls process from start to finish. The aim is to include detail of the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders throughout so that we can get a fuller understanding of what is involved, where potential issues/weakness may be and what data we need to evaluate these. It will also help us to develop a 'theory of change' approach for the second phase of the work which can be used as a basis for planning, monitoring and evaluation. The work to date is described in paper ESRG - September 16-03.

Planned research and evidence gathering

4. ***Analysis of FSA incidents data*** - This will be undertaken to help establish trends. Issues that will be considered include: who triggers withdrawals/recalls; the issues leading to withdrawals/recalls; the time taken between reporting an incident and taking action; the scale and complexity of withdrawals/recalls; and the proportion of recalls relating to products produced overseas.

5. ***Recall case studies*** - A small number of food incidents reported to the FSA will be tracked live to obtain in-depth information. We will aim to include incidents arising from microbiological contamination, foreign body contamination and from undeclared allergenic ingredients. Information collected will include: the time lag before recall; the advertising medium used by the FSA; the proportion of consumers reached and the proportion taking action. We may also aim to work with the relevant FBOs on the actions they are taking to inform consumers etc.

6. ***Review of withdrawal/recall systems in other countries*** - A literature review is being undertaken to explore the processes in place in other EU countries and in third countries. The availability of published data from other countries is also being assessed. If the information and data are of a sufficient quality, we will carry out an in-depth cross-country comparative analysis.

7. ***Dissemination routes to consumers*** - We will collect and analyse data from a variety of sources to assess the number of people reached through different routes via which recalls information is disseminated. This includes: hits to the FSA website; number of subscribers to FSA email alerts; number of subscribers to alerts forwarded on via email by organisations such as Allergy UK; media reports etc.

8. ***Analysis of tweets following a recall*** - The level of discussion on Twitter may be used as a proxy measure of consumer awareness. Key word searches would be undertaken to assess the level of interest over the period of the incident. Relative interest in different type of recalls could also be assessed.

9. ***Consumer awareness, attitudes and claimed behaviours*** - We propose to commission independently conducted research to explore consumer awareness, attitudes and claimed behaviours in relation to food recalls. An iterative approach is proposed with a mix of quantitative and qualitative work. High risk groups of consumers will be included.

10. ***Other stakeholders*** - We also propose to commission independently conducted research to explore with food businesses, local authorities, consumer representative groups and special interest groups how the current system works from their perspective and the challenges associated with it. We also want to obtain views on where improvements are needed as well as identifying good practice that we can build on. The research will also include work with organisations and bodies involved in other types of product recalls to identify any lessons that we could apply in the food sector. A mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used.

Timescales

11. The table below sets out anticipated timescales.

Research/evidence gathering	Resource	Anticipated timescale
Process mapping and 'theory of change' modelling	FSA	Ongoing through research and evidence gathering phase
Analysis of FSA incident data	FSA	August to December 2016
Recall case studies	FSA	August to December 2016
Review of withdrawal/recall systems in other countries	FSA	August to November 2016
Dissemination routes for consumers and analysis of tweets	FSA	September to December 2016
Consumer awareness, attitudes and claimed behaviour	External contractor	September 2016 to March 2017
Views of other stakeholders	External contractor	September 2016 to March 2017

Next steps

12. The Stakeholder Reference Group will be kept up to date as the research and evidence gathering progresses.

**Stakeholder Reference Group Secretariat
September 2016**