

The impacts of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on food safety

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The impact of the UK's withdrawal on food safety

- Where we are – the current framework and safety
- Challenges and opportunities
- Priorities to be addressed



Where we are – the current framework

- EU approach has evolved (and reflected lessons learned from food scares)
- General Food Law Regulation (under review), sets out key principles:
 - Responsibilities
 - EU model of risk analysis
 - Independence of risk assessment
 - Role of other legitimate factors
 - Precautionary principle
 - Established the European Food Safety Authority
- Body of legislation setting out specific requirements sits alongside this
 - from food additives to GMOs
- Official Controls Regulation specifies approach by Member States (supported by the Commission)
- Co-ordination mechanisms in place (eg. RASFF)
- Common challenges remain across the EU and UK eg. tackling *Campylobacter*, understanding risks of chemical contaminants
- Some issues also left unresolved eg. animal cloning.

Opportunities

- A joined up food and farming policy?
 - Outside of the CAP – can incentives be better aligned across the supply chain?
 - Ensuring that policy better reflects consumer interests?
- Strengthening standards and protection
 - The EU's exit means that the enforcement regime needs to be over-hauled and modernised
 - Areas where regulation could be strengthened eg. traceability, labelling.
- Important to take the opportunity for the UK to compete on the basis of high health, welfare and quality standards
- Nature of the future relationship and extent of any divergence is currently unclear.



Challenges

- The UK's EU Withdrawal Bill will transpose all EU law into UK law, but:
 - Operational aspects need to be resolved as soon as possible:
 - Risk assessment – relationship with EFSA, national capacity?
 - Controls/ enforcement – capacity to conduct import and export checks, including extent of future collaboration (eg. third countries, RASFF)
 - Underlying principles in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Treaty also need to be transposed eg. precautionary principle, right to a high level of human health and consumer protection.
- Future UK trade policy
 - UK Government's commitment that it will promote high standards must be reflected in any trade deals – ensuring that food safety is not "traded away" (along with access to the EU market)
 - Consumer engagement (eg. on acceptability of production methods) also needs to be at the heart of the UK's future approach.
- Access and affordability
 - Need to avoid any shocks that will hit consumers hard – and potentially lead to a trading down by both consumers and by food businesses.



Priorities to be addressed

- Consumer interests need to be put at the heart of the negotiations, future relationship and future trade policy
- High standards for both UK and EU consumers must be ensured
- Existing law must be transposed, along with the underlying principles of food law
- Opportunities should also be taken to strengthen the framework, improve safety and reduce foodborne disease
- There must be investment in a robust UK enforcement regime
- Agreement needs to be reached as soon as possible on a future relationship and the extent to which there can be on-going co-operation
- On-going co-operation is also important at international level eg. Codex, WHO
- This will be essential in managing the risks of a complex and globalised food supply chain.