

By email: seneddLJC@senedd.wales

18 November 2022

Ref: MC2022/00298

Annwyl Weinidog / Dear Mr Irranca-Davies

I am writing in response to your request for stakeholder comment on the provisions in the REUL bill to inform scrutiny of the Bill and subsequent Welsh Government legislative consent memoranda.

Devolution transferred responsibility for food and feed safety and hygiene from the UK government to Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This means that the FSA has the function of developing policies and advising Welsh Ministers on these areas. Our commitment to four-country working ensures that we can effectively protect public health and consumer interests across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, working with Food Standards Scotland.

As you will be aware, the Bill intends to automatically sunset Retained EU Law (REUL) at the end of 2023, unless Ministers agree to extend, preserve, reform or restate them. The Bill also includes the option to extend REUL to allow reform in the period until 2026.

In the FSA, we are clear that we cannot simply sunset the laws on food safety and authenticity without a decline in UK food standards and a significant risk to public health. While I'm sure this is not the Government's intention with these plans, the current timeframe does cause me some concern. We will need to work through more than 150 pieces of retained EU law, 39 of which are specific to Wales very quickly and to advise ministers on how best to incorporate important rules that safeguard food safety and public health within our domestic legislation.

Ensuring that people have food they can trust remains our number one priority. We also recognise this is an opportunity to review and reform these laws so that businesses have the right regulation to enable them to provide safe and trusted food, to trade internationally and to grow.

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In due course, we think a new UK Food and Feed Bill would provide the best opportunity for a comprehensive rethink, tailored to the needs of the UK. Our experience tells us that developing policy in an evidence-based, open and transparent way is better for consumers and for businesses, but this takes time to get it right.

Food law is devolved and we support devolved decision making on food and feed safety and standards. We will continue to work with Welsh Government officials on the bill's impacts in Wales and will consider any reforms in line with commitments in the common framework agreements for Food and Feed Hygiene and Safety and Food Compositional Standards and Labelling.

Yn gywir



Yr Athro / Professor Susan Jebb OBE, PhD, FRCP (Hon), FMedSci

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