

## DRAFT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

This Action Plan is an evolving document and we welcome views from our staff and stakeholders at any time. If you have any comments please contact Karen Dell on 020 7276 8481 or by e-mail at [karen.dell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:karen.dell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

### Our Vision

1. The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and to enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations. It is about achieving economic, social and environmental objectives at the same time, and includes issues such as public health and consumer protection. The principles of sustainable development, as set out in the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, are:
  - living within environmental limits;
  - ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
  - achieving a sustainable economy;
  - promoting good governance; and
  - using sound science responsibly.
2. The Food Standards Agency is committed to putting sustainable development at the heart of its business in order to contribute to the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy. We aim to both run our business sustainably and take forward our remit in a sustainable manner. In practice this means taking sustainable development into account in all of the Food Standards Agency's activities, including in the full range of policy and decision making and advising consumers. It also affects how we run our business from accommodation to personnel policies.
3. The Food Standards Agency's Strategic Plan 2005-2010 includes the following position statement on sustainable development:

**The Food Standards Agency's remit is to protect the interests of consumers in relation to food, both now and in the future. In doing so the Agency will take sustainable development into account in all of its activities and policy decisions.**

4. This statement is owned, and its delivery monitored, by the Food Standards Agency's Executive Management Board (EMB).

## **The Benefits**

5. Operating more sustainably will provide benefits to the organisation, our staff and consumers.
  - Taking sustainable development into account in all our activities and policy decisions involves taking a wider and more long term view in decision making. By doing this we are likely to be more successful in identifying the implications and impacts of a proposal. In short, it leads to better, more robust decision and policy making.
  - By managing our buildings and using resources more sustainably, for example by reducing energy consumption and cutting down on the use of other consumables such as paper, the Agency will be reducing operational costs.
  - Staff will benefit from the Food Standards Agency's Human Resources policies. These aim to promote a good work/life balance and ensure that everyone who works for the Food Standards Agency, is treated fairly and with respect. The organisation also benefits from these HR policies which result in a better motivated and skilled workforce.
  - It is in consumers' long term interests that Food Standards Agency policies, decisions and advice take sustainability into account and do not compromise their future interests. Consumers will benefit from more robust policies which further the Agency's remit in relation to food and health whilst minimising the risk of unforeseen affects in other areas such as the environment or economy.

## **Our Commitments**

6. When considering our actions, we will follow the five guiding principles of sustainable development. We will assess the environmental, natural resource and economic impacts of our policies and actions routinely as part of our decision making process (see paragraphs 10-12).
7. The Food Standards Agency's core remit is to protect consumers by improving food safety and consumer information. The Agency in pursuing its remit will be contributing directly to ensuring a strong, healthy and just society. Some of the Agency's key initiatives in this area include:
  - measures to reduce foodborne illness, including food hygiene campaigns aimed at the public, catering sector and children;
  - activities to make it easier for consumers to choose a healthy diet such as developing a labelling system to highlight fat, salt and sugar content of certain pre-packed processed foods;
  - working with the food industry to reduce salt content in food and encouraging consumers to reduce salt intakes; and
  - encouraging the public sector to provide healthy food in schools, hospitals and other institutions.

8. We will continue to encourage stakeholder participation in our policy making, particularly seeking out the views of “hard to hear” groups. We will be developing more innovative mechanisms to hear the views of ordinary and hard to reach consumers. In 2006 we will be piloting a number of initiatives:
  - listening mechanisms such as people's panels;
  - bringing together community food initiatives with the help of Sustain to find out more about the issues that hard to reach groups face;
  - piloting e-mail networks and making better use of e-participation technology; and
  - continuing our work around the Sheila McKechnie awards, which reach out to hard to reach groups.
9. The Food Standards Agency will continue to give impartial advice on food safety and healthy eating based on the best available scientific evidence. More information on our commitments can be found in the Food Standards Agency’s Strategic Plan for 2005-2010 which is on our website: [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/stratplan0510.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/stratplan0510.pdf)

## **How we will achieve our Mission**

### **Policies**

10. The Food Standards Agency and Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) are committed to taking sustainable development into account in all activities, including in policy and decision making. To help policy makers, those running projects, making decisions, running campaigns and formulating advice, take account of all aspects of sustainable development, the Food Standards Agency has developed “Guidance to Staff on Sustainability Assessment”. We have developed guidance that is based on, and extends from, the Cabinet Office’s Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) Costs and Benefits Checklist. Our guidance is designed to help staff to complete the Costs and Benefits Section (Section 5) of the RIA. Where a RIA is not required our guidance can assist in the production of a stand alone sustainability assessment, outside of the RIA process.
11. Assessing a policy, project or intended consumer advice involves all five principles of sustainable development (see paragraph 1) and this is explained in the Guidance to staff. To assess the sustainability of individual policies and projects a set of questions has been devised. The questions are based on those in the RIA Costs and Benefits Checklist, but there are some additional ones that either expand on the Checklist or are more specific to the Food Standards Agency’s areas of work. Our Guidance highlights the need to consider both immediate expected impacts and those that might occur over longer time scales. Although the focus of assessment is on the UK, our Guidance also reminds staff to consider any significant impacts on other countries.
12. Our Guidance was developed in consultation with staff and stakeholders and was piloted on a range of live policy issues and projects in the course of 2005. The Food Standards Agency also provides seminars and workshops to

its staff on carrying out sustainability assessments (see paragraph 25). Our Guidance is an evolving document and is available on our website at: [www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how\\_we\\_work/sustainability/](http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how_we_work/sustainability/)

#### *Targets and milestones*

- ❖ Guidance on sustainable development assessments to be rolled out within the Food Standards Agency from 31 December 2005.

*(This target has been met.)*

**Division responsible for delivery:** *All divisions contributed to the delivery of this target. Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects will be responsible for monitoring progress.*

- ❖ All Food Standards Agency staff will be taking sustainable development into account, applying the assessment guidance as appropriate, by 31 July 2006.

**Division responsible for facilitating and monitoring delivery:** *Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects*

### **Business Planning**

13. This will be a key tool for putting sustainable development at the heart of the Food Standards Agency's business. Our Strategic Plan for 2005-2010 includes targets and milestones relating to sustainable development in the areas of estates management, the Food Standards Agency as an employer and policy development, to help assess our progress. We are introducing sustainable development objectives and targets into the 2006/2007 business planning round.

#### *Targets and milestones*

- ❖ The Food Standards Agency's business planning guidance to be revised to incorporate sustainability issues by October 2005.

*(This target has been met.)*

- ❖ Targets on sustainable development to feature in 50% of business plans (at Divisional level) from 1 April 2006, rising to 100% by 1 April 2007.

**Division responsible for delivery:** *All divisions will contribute to the delivery of this target. Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects will be responsible for monitoring progress.*

### **Procurement**

14. Our policy on procurement will help to minimise the purchase of goods and supplies that are dependent on the use of non-renewable resources or pollutant substances. We encourage the purchase of products based on recycled material and produced with due consideration to energy efficiency. In partnership with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Buying

Solutions we are benefiting from competitive utility contracts for cleaner fuels and renewable energy. OGC monitoring and targeting services help us cut energy consumption (see the target below paragraph 20).

15. FSA NI has been working with the Department of Finance and Personnel to develop guidance on integrating sustainable development into food and catering services across the public sector in Northern Ireland. Staff in Scotland and Wales follow the same procurement policies and guidelines required of all other Food Standards Agency employees.

#### *Targets and milestones*

- ❖ The Food Standards Agency's Procurement Portal will include advice and guidance on sustainability aspects of procurement. The Portal will be up and running by 31 March 2006.

***Division responsible for delivery: Finance Division***

### **Estates Management and Communications**

16. The Food Standards Agency and MHS<sup>1</sup> are committed to pursuing sound environmental practices at their offices around the UK. We have signed up to London Electricity's Green tariff for a further 12 months. The Green tariff supplies electricity generated from renewable sources<sup>2</sup> under the Government's Climate Change Levy Renewable Exemption Scheme, saving us approximately £14k-£15k per annum. We also operate an active recycling policy through our waste disposal contractors. Our consumable items such as IT equipment and display systems are either recycled or reused in line with the new Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations. Targets for energy reduction, the use of water, recycling and implementing an Environmental Management System have been set in line with those in the Sustainable Development on the Government Estate Framework. Further improvements to our performance are likely to follow the outcome of the review of the Framework.
17. The MHS headquarters at York is currently part of a sustainable development pilot with the Carbon Trust whereby energy efficient measures to reduce the amount of carbon emissions are being implemented. The MHS will only purchase cars that produce low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as part of their new car lease scheme. The MHS also operate several re-cycling schemes including for toner cartridges, paper, card, plastic cups, cans and furniture.
18. In Scotland we are reducing energy consumption through active management of the office environment at times of reduced office occupancy such as evenings and weekends. We also have arrangements in place for recycling all paper waste. Consumable items are recycled and re-used. The Food Standards Agency Scotland has also invested in dual fuel capacity for one of

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<sup>1</sup> The Meat Hygiene Service estate is managed by Defra.

<sup>2</sup> Under the Green Tariff, London Energy pledges to match the electricity we use with the equivalent amount of electricity from renewable sources; wind, landfill gas and small scale hydro.

its pool cars. The possibility of increasing this number will be considered when the remaining pool cars are due to be replaced.

19. The FSA Wales office in Cardiff and the FSA Northern Ireland office in Belfast have contracts in place for stationery waste to be collected for recycling.

20. The Food Standards Agency and the MHS encourage the use of video and telephone conferencing where practicable to reduce the amount of travel undertaken by staff and therefore contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

#### *Targets and Milestones*

- ❖ To reduce energy consumption in Aviation House by 10% by 2010-11.
- ❖ We will join the Watermark scheme by the end of 2005 to reduce our annual water consumption to 7.7m<sup>3</sup> per person per year.  
*(The target of joining the Watermark scheme has been met.)*
- ❖ We will increase our recycling figures by 5% per annum.
- ❖ We will implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) based on ISO 14001 by December 2006.

#### **Lead Division:** Finance Division

- ❖ Targets relating to the Food Standards Agency's estates in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to be set by 31 August 2006.

**Division responsible for delivery:** FSA Scotland, FSA Wales and FSA Northern Ireland

## **Human Resources**

21. The Investors in People Standard significantly contributes to the social and economic strands of social development. The Food Standards Agency successfully obtained Investors in People (IiP) accreditation in 2004 and we are committed to maintaining this external validation of our business practices. The Food Standards Agency is due to undertake re-assessment against the new IiP standard by the end of 2006. The revised Investors in People Standard launched in November 2004 with enhanced emphasis on factors which are critical to any successful organisation – effective leadership and management and employee involvement. The ideal to achieve business goals by maximising people's performance remains at the heart of the standard. In meeting this standard the Food Standards Agency will be fulfilling its role as a socially responsible employer which is a key component of sustainable development. We are committed to strengthening leadership capacity within the Agency through our learning and development programme, including training on sustainable development.

22. The Agency undertook a mid-term IiP review in November 2005 to see how it compares against the new IiP Standard. This confirmed that the Agency has moved on since the assessment in 2004 and continues to meet the old

standard against which it was assessed. It also highlighted some areas the Agency needs to develop further in the spirit of continuous improvement and we are planning action to address these. Some of the initiatives we are already pursuing will be reflected in this plan. These include for example, leadership and management development for our most senior staff and the introduction of a new Learning and Development Programme during 2006 to support delivery of our Strategic Plan.

23. The MHS has been an Investors in People (IIP) employer since 1999 and achieved re-accreditation in 2004. The MHS values are core to the way in which the MHS strives to operate. The values apply to everyone within the organisation. These values are:

- Supporting staff;
- Openness;
- Professional and responsive;
- Fairness, consistency, and independence;
- Effectiveness and innovation;
- Involvement.

24. Staff in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are fully committed to the drive to maintain the Food Standards Agency's IIP status. Additionally, FSA Scotland is planning to develop a new three year training and development strategy to complement the People Development programme. This will address both the future business needs of the organisation and the personal development needs of staff in Scotland. Work on this Training and Development Strategy will begin in parallel with the 2006/07 Annual Training and Development Plan. The Strategy will operate as a "work in progress" undergoing regular review and update on a rolling basis. FSA NI are also assessing how they may deliver a learning and development programme to staff in a more sustainable way, particularly in relation to business travel.

*Targets and milestones*

- ❖ To maintain IIP accreditation following reassessment against the revised Standard by late 2006.
- ❖ The FSA Scotland training and development strategy is expected to be operational by August 2006.\*

***Division responsible for facilitating and monitoring delivery:*** Human Resources Division. All divisions will contribute to delivery.

\* FSA Scotland

## **Staff Awareness and Skills**

25. The Food Standards Agency's policy on sustainable development is being brought to the attention of staff through a range of awareness raising measures including talks and seminars, articles in our weekly in-house news bulletin and a dedicated section on our intranet site. Staff are being provided

with the necessary skills for implementing this policy and the principles of sustainable development through the Guidance to Staff on Sustainability Assessments and through in-house seminars and workshops. We are also looking at incorporating sustainable development into the Food Standards Agency's learning and development courses.

#### *Targets and milestones*

- ❖ To have the sustainable development sections of both the intranet and internet sites running by April 2006.
- ❖ 60% of staff (approximately 530) to have attended introductory training on sustainable development by May 2006 rising to 90% by May 2007.
- ❖ To incorporate training on sustainable development into the Food Standards Agency's learning and development plan by August 2006\*.
- ❖ To review the MHS Corporate Development Plan to identify opportunities for incorporating training on sustainable development by August 2006.\*\*

***Division responsible for delivery:*** *Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects Division. \* Human Resources Division \*\* MHS*

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability**

26. The EMB will monitor delivery of the Sustainable Development Action Plan and will report to the Board of the Food Standards Agency on progress on a quarterly basis. Information on sustainable development in the Food Standards Agency has been collected via a wide ranging staff survey carried out in April and May 2005. It provides baseline data against which progress can be measured. A follow-up survey is planned for May 2006.
27. Targets and milestones have been set in both our Strategic Plan and in this Sustainable Development Action Plan and we will be monitoring and reporting progress against these. Progress against targets in the Strategic Plan and certain key targets in the Action Plan will be reported quarterly to the EMB. Progress against all targets and milestones will be reported annually on the Food Standards Agency's website. Divisional business plans will be monitored for their incorporation of sustainable development performance indicators.
28. RIAs, which will be the main vehicle for assessing sustainable development, will be monitored to ensure that sustainable development is taken into account. The Cabinet Office's Better Regulation Executive (BRE) monitors significant RIAs and these are reported publicly by the Better Regulation Commission (BRC). To date the Agency has received positive feedback from both the BRE and BRC on the quality of its RIAs, and we have a 100% record on consulting on our RIAs. Internally, the Agency has formal, documented quality assurance and sign-off procedures for RIAs. Our Better Regulation Unit monitors all RIAs. RIAs, Board papers and consultation documents are in the public domain and will also be subject to the scrutiny of our stakeholders.

29. The Agency will monitor the use and effectiveness of its guidance to staff on sustainability assessment. The evaluation will be included in the Agency's Annual Report of 2007.
30. We have systems in place to monitor the energy efficiency of our London Headquarters building, Aviation House, through the Building Management System software. We also have systems in place to monitor the waste management at Aviation House and identify areas where improvements can be made. Provisions for meeting our waste recycling targets have been incorporated into the new waste contract.
31. It was agreed that a joint Action Plan for the Food Standards Agency and MHS be compiled for 2006 due to the tight timescales involved. However the MHS will issue its own Action Plan for 2007.

#### *Targets and milestones*

- ❖ Report to the EMB on the results of the pilot of the Guidance to Staff on Sustainability Assessments December 2005.  
*(This target has been met.)*
- ❖ Report to the Board of the Food Standards Agency on progress against the Position Statement by June 2006.
- ❖ Publish a report on progress against the Sustainable Development Action Plan along with an updated Action Plan by December 2006.
- ❖ Follow-up staff survey on sustainable development May 2006.
- ❖ Produce first draft of MHS Action Plan by December 2006.\*

***Division responsible for delivery:*** *Consumer Choice, Food Standards and Special Projects Division. \* MHS*

## **Next Steps**

32. We have engaged with staff and stakeholders in the production of this Action Plan through staff seminars, a public consultation, discussion with the Food Standards Agency's stakeholder fora and through information on our intranet and internet sites. The Plan is an evolving document and we welcome views from our staff and stakeholders at any time. If you have any comments please contact Karen Dell on 020 276 8481 or by e-mail at [karen.dell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:karen.dell@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)
33. We will be reporting our progress against this Plan on the Food Standards Agency's website in December 2006.