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Baroness Smith of Basildon  
House of Lords  
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*JMK*  
October 2019

*Dear Angela,*

I am writing in response to the question you raised on 30<sup>th</sup> September in regards to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and to provide detail on the robust contingency plans in place to mitigate against the potential loss of full access to RASFF, which the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are leading.

I would first like to clarify how responsibilities are split between the FSA and Defra in relation to EU agencies, systems and databases (EU ASDs), such as RASFF. The FSA owns the policy for access to EU ASDs in relation to food safety, while Defra leads on negotiating access to these EU ASDs on the FSA's behalf, as part of broader agri-food negotiations with the EU. Where negotiations are relevant to the FSA, Defra work collaboratively with them, building on the strong working relationships that we have at all levels.

Ensuring food safety after Exit is a top priority for the UK Government, and we are committed to maintaining a relationship with the Commission on RASFF. The exact arrangements for UK participation are a matter for the next phase of the negotiations and part of wider discussions on the co-operation of UK authorities with EU agencies. We recognise the importance of continuing a relationship with the EU Commission on RASFF and we are pressing hard for a positive outcome.

I am however confident that, regardless of the EU Exit scenario or outcome of the negotiations, the FSA will maintain its world class expertise in managing food incidents, which is in line with the UK Government's commitment to a robust and effective regulatory regime for food safety. It is important to note that, even if the UK is considered a third country, we will continue to receive food safety notifications from the EU - as required by EU law - where a food or feed, subject to a notification under RASFF, has been dispatched to the UK.

To maintain continued levels of protection for UK consumers, the FSA has put measures in place to mitigate the potential loss of full access to RASFF and counteract uncertainties around both timeliness of notifications and the levels of information available. The FSA has strengthened its capability and capacity to detect and respond effectively to any foodborne contamination or outbreak incident that occurs in the UK. Improvements in FSA receipt and management and detection capability for potential incidents have been made, which build on proven mechanisms used by countries who are world leaders in food chain management, incidents and emergency response. These measures include monitoring of key data sources and the use of the FSA's new and innovative Strategic Surveillance Programme, which uses data algorithms and machine learning models to identify risks in a predictive way. These mechanisms are now in place and operational, with the systems already proving effective for early identification of food safety issues affecting the UK. The FSA has recruited and trained new staff, which has increased the size of its Incident and Resilience Unit by around 30%.

Furthermore, the FSA has undertaken a programme of enhanced stakeholder engagement, fostering strong relationships with food safety authorities across Europe and worldwide to develop a mutually supportive approach to information sharing on food safety incidents.

The FSA is also increasing its engagement with the International Network of Food Safety Authorities (INFOSAN), of which we are already a member. The use of INFOSAN to strengthen engagement with other trading countries will provide the UK with an extensive 'reach' for communicating information on food safety issues. INFOSAN's membership includes over 180 countries, including the QUAD countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States), who are all key users and advocates of the system. The FSA is investing in INFOSAN and has funded a FSA secondee posting to INFOSAN in Geneva. This investment will increase the UK's links to the global food supply chain and help the UK to continue to demonstrate its world class proficiency in this area.

The FSA is accountable to Parliament via the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and I know that my colleagues in the FSA or DHSC would be happy to answer any follow up questions directly. I am copying this letter to Lady Jones of Whitchurch and Lord Rooker, and placing a copy in the library.

*John*