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Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## Consultation on the abolition of Food from Britain (FFB)

September 2013

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Department of  
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Rural Development**  
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## **Purpose, scope and process of consultation**

### **Purpose**

Following a decision by the previous administration, Food from Britain (FFB) has already been administratively closed. The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on whether formally to dissolve FFB in law by repealing the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983, which initially established FFB, or to do nothing, allowing the legislation to remain in force for the foreseeable future. The preferred option of the UK Government is to repeal the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983. The rationale for these options and background on FFB can be found in the following pages.

### **Scope of the consultation**

When active, FFB operated its functions UK wide. Therefore the National Governments have agreed that this consultation should cover the whole of the UK.

### **Responding to the consultation**

The closing date for this consultation is 31 October 2013. Responses may be made by completing the online form at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/food/food-from-britain>. Alternatively, responses can be sent by e-mail to: [ffb@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ffb@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or by post to Ian Leggat, Food Policy Team, Defra, Area 3A, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.

### **Confidentiality**

In line with Defra's policy of openness, at the end of the consultation period, copies of the responses we receive may be published in a summary of the responses to this consultation. If you do not consent to this you must clearly request that your response be treated as confidential. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in email responses will not be treated as such a request. Respondents should also be aware that there may be circumstances in which Defra will be required to communicate information to third parties on request in order to comply with obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### **Compliance with the Government's Consultation Principles**

This consultation complies with HM Government's Consultation Principles which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

## **Background to Food from Britain**

### **Background to FFB**

Food from Britain (FFB) came into existence on 23rd March 1983. It was established as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) by the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983 to organise, develop, promote, encourage and coordinate the marketing in the United Kingdom (UK) and elsewhere of UK agricultural and horticultural produce, fish (other than sea fish) and fish products and any other food produced or processed in the UK. FFB later focused on promoting exports and assisting the marketing of quality regional food.

FFB provided organisations with a range of business development and information services such as market assessment reports, trade missions and support at international food and drink exhibitions to help break into and maintain a presence in international markets. It had a network of independent overseas offices in the key primary markets of Western Europe as well as in North America and Scandinavia and representatives in Eastern Europe and the Far East. These offices provided both basic information and advisory source and a consultancy service to British exporters.

FFB also took the lead in the delivery of a national programme of activity to support the quality regional food sector in England. The programme, for which funding ended in 2007/08, focussed on trade development, consumer awareness and increasing business competitiveness. FFB received approximately £5m per year in grant-in-aid from Defra (on behalf of the four UK Agriculture Departments) for export promotion work, in addition to £1m per annum paid by Defra for its regional food work. It also generated further income from industry and by working with industry organisations.

### **The administrative closure of FFB**

The decision to cease FFB's activities was taken by the FFB Council in 2008, following a reduction in its grant in aid by the previous administration. The decision to close FFB was announced in a written Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 26th March 2008, by the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This can be found at [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080326/wmstext/80326m0001.htm#column\\_10WS](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080326/wmstext/80326m0001.htm#column_10WS)

FFB ceased operating and vacated its former offices in 2009. All of FFB's staff were made redundant or retired with the exception of the person with responsibility for some of the delivery work relating to the EU Protected Food Name Scheme. That person transferred with that work to ADAS UK Limited in 2009 following a tender exercise by Defra. FFB's residual responsibilities, assets and liabilities were subsequently transferred to Defra.

### **FFB legacy**

Following the cessation of FFB's activities in 2009, advice and support to UK food and drink exporters was made available from UK Trade & Investment, as well as Scottish Development International, Welsh Government's Food and Market Development Division and Invest Northern Ireland. FFB's former network of independent International offices (now called the Green Seed Group) continues to offer consultancy services to UK exporters of food and drink on a commercial basis. The Food and Drink Federation continues to host a webpage which signposts the main organisations that continue to offer

export support to British food and drink companies (<http://www.fdf.org.uk/exports.aspx>). The Food and Drink Exporters Association was set up specifically to help exporters in the sector and it works closely with Defra and UK Trade and Investment. In addition, as part of the Export Action Plan (more details below) there is a specific action for industry and government to collaborate in the development of export information tools, A Defra-commissioned research project is currently looking at possible options for these information tools.

The delivery work relating to the EU Protected Food Name Scheme transferred to Defra in 2012.

## **Government support for food and drink exports**

Despite the closure of FFB, exports in the agri-food sector have been growing steadily, with 2011 seeing the seventh consecutive year of growth in value to £18.2 billion. The Government is committed to working closely with industry stakeholders to boost exports, promote innovation and encourage further growth, particularly amongst SMEs.

The joint government-industry action plan, “Driving Export Growth in the Farming, Food and Drink Sector”, published in January 2012, details how the Government will work together with industry to open up and take advantage of key markets to boost our economy and generate jobs: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-export-growth-in-the-farming-food-and-drink-sector>

The plan aims to achieve this by:

- Opening markets and removing trade barriers
- Building a business mindset of exporting as a key route to growth
- Encouraging more SMEs to explore overseas opportunities and supporting those who already export do more
- Shifting the focus of the sector toward the opportunities of emerging economies where there is the greatest future growth potential

The Government is currently in the process of refreshing the plan with the aim of republishing it. This is to update the priorities and also reflect the lessons that have been learnt since the first publication. The new plan will be written in consultation with industry again. Republishing the plan also reflects the Government’s continued interest and prioritisation of the desire to help promote export’s driven growth in a key sector for the UK economy.

In Northern Ireland Invest NI has for many years offered a comprehensive range of support to food companies. To take account of the cessation of FFB programmes the range of trade and marketing support through Invest NI was strengthened and a new Regional Food Programme introduced. In addition Invest NI delivers a programme of trade missions to international markets. Also, the Agri-Food Strategy Board which was appointed by Ministers in Northern Ireland in 2012 continues to play an important role in ensuring that the potential of the sector is maximised. Recommendations put forward by the Board in its strategic plan for the sector, ‘*Going for Growth*’, are currently being considered. A final response from the NI Executive and agreed implementation will follow.

In Scotland, Scottish Development International (SDI) continues to offer an extensive range of international products and support services to Scottish food and drink companies. This programme, since the closure of FFB, has continued and in fact has been enhanced through a number of additional activities including appointment of in-market specialist food and drink executives in key markets including US, Germany and China. SDI has also worked with industry partners to deliver a comprehensive programme of Missions, Exhibitions and Learning Journeys to key markets. SDI works closely with Scotland Food and Drink, the industry leadership organisation, to ensure that the international aspirations of the sector in Scotland is fully supported through an agreed strategic approach to key target markets

In Wales, the Welsh Government is strongly committed to the growth and development of its food sector. The Government supports Welsh food and drink produce through a number of initiatives including support towards attending major food and drink trade exhibitions both internationally and within the UK, as well as through a programme of measures including new product development, innovation, programmes for business mentoring and market development. Also supported is the development of value-added supply chains using the primary produce of the farming industry; with the aim of helping the food sector in Wales become more sustainable economically, socially and environmentally.

Since the closure of Food from Britain, the Welsh Government has funded ADAS to support the developing potential Protected Food Name applications in Wales, which would build upon the success of the Protected Geographical Indication status awarded to Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef. The EU Protected Food Name Scheme identifies regional and traditional foods whose authenticity and origin can be guaranteed. Under this system a named food or drink registered at a European level will be given legal protection against imitation throughout the EU.

### **Proposal to dissolve FFB in law**

Although FFB no longer exists as an operating body, the legislation which established FFB (the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983) does not provide for its abolition. Therefore, legislation is required before FFB can be legally dissolved and the government intends to use the powers in the Public Bodies Act 2011<sup>1</sup> to achieve this.

Whilst the Agricultural Marketing Act remains in force, Defra continues to have a legal obligation to publish Annual Report and Accounts for FFB which must be laid before Parliament each year. Despite having no activity to report, the preparation, auditing and printing of the report costs the department in the region of £5,000 per annum. Repealing the Agricultural Marketing Act will eliminate this unnecessary cost to the taxpayer.

### **Public Bodies Act 2011**

Shortly after the 2010 election, the Government announced that it would review arms-length bodies in order to reduce the numbers, costs and improve accountability. An announcement about the future of Defra's arms-length bodies, including FFB, was made in October 2010<sup>2</sup>. The Public Bodies Act is the main legislative vehicle for implementing the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/24/contents/enacted>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2010/10/14/public-bodies/>

outcome of the review. The Act allows Ministers to make Orders to abolish (in the case of the FFB) or make certain changes to the statutory public bodies listed in the various schedules to the legislation. The Order for FFB can only be put to the UK Parliament after consultation and would be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny and the consent of the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

## **Options for consideration, Government's preferred option and rationale**

There are two options under consideration:

**Option A: Maintain the status quo – the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983 remains in force and FFB continues to exist purely in legislative terms.** This would mean that Defra, which has responsibility for residual FFB matters, would continue to have responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Agricultural Marketing Act. Specifically, the Act requires that Annual Report and Accounts for FFB are published and laid before Parliament each year. This is despite no activity to report. The estimated cost of producing the reports is £5,000 per annum.

**Option B: Repeal the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983 and abolish FFB in law.** This is the Government's preferred option. It would complete the abolition of FFB, which has already been administratively closed, and dispense with the need to produce Annual Report and Accounts, resulting in financial and resource savings. It would also result in a more streamlined public bodies landscape.

## **Consultation questions**

### **Question 1**

Do you support the Government's preferred option to repeal the Agricultural Marketing Act and abolish FFB in law?

### **Question 2**

If you do not support the Government's preferred option, what is your rationale for retaining the Agricultural Marketing Act?

### **Question 3**

Do you have any additional points you would wish Ministers to consider before making their final decision?

**All responses will be considered carefully before a decision is taken on whether or not to proceed with an order under the Public Bodies Act to abolish the FFB.**



## List of Consultees

### Commercial food enterprises

AB Agri  
Apetito  
Devro  
Diageo  
Indulgence  
Nestle UK  
Mackays  
New York Delhi  
Ramsden International  
Tesco  
Waitrose  
Walkers Shortbread  
Adams Foods  
Tate and Lyle Sugars  
La Tua Pasta Ltd  
Llanllyr Water Co Ltd  
Lull  
CP Foods UK

### Trade Associations & other industry bodies

Agriculture Engineers Association  
Brewing, Food, and Beverage Industry Suppliers Association  
British Beer and Pub association  
British Egg Industry Council  
British Frozen Food Federation  
British Meat Processors Association  
British Pig Association  
British Poultry Council  
British Soft Drinks Association  
China Britain Business Council  
CBI  
Chilled Foods Association  
CIAA European Federation  
Dairy UK  
Food and Drink Federation

Food and Drink Exporters Association  
Fresh Produce Consortium  
IGD  
International Meat Trade Association  
Association of Independent Meat Suppliers  
NFU  
Provision Trade Federation  
Snack, Nut, Crisp Manufacturers' Association  
Scotch Whisky Association  
Association of Port Health Authorities  
Hillingdon Local Authority  
UK India Business Council  
Wine and Spirit Trade Association  
Ulster Farmers' Union  
Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association  
Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association  
Scotland Food & Drink  
Scottish Food and Drink Federation  
Scottish Council for Development and Industry  
NFU Scotland  
Quality Meat Scotland

### Sector Skills Councils

Improve Ltd

### Levy Boards

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board  
Seafish

### Consultancies

British Expertise  
ECL

Green Seed  
BRI  
KV International  
KPMG  
Global 78 Limited  
CABI

## **Regional Food Groups**

Food and Drink Forum  
HEFF  
EFDA

## **Universities**

Nottingham University

## **Government Departments**

Department of Business, Innovation and Skills  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Food Standards Agency  
Defra  
Rural Payments Agency  
UK Trade and Investment (UKTI)

## **National Governments**

Invest NI  
DARDNI  
Scottish Government  
Scottish Development International  
Welsh Government