

# Horizon Scanning 2023

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## Challenges associated with changes in the sizes of vulnerable groups.

*Direct challenges from climate change:*

### Challenges

#### *Climate Related Stress*

10 Vulnerable populations may experience climate-related stresses (heat, dehydration) which make them more susceptible to infection.

### Possible actions

10.1 The FSA should consider working with other government departments to help promote targeted consumer messaging to educate vulnerable groups or caregivers on the risk of climate related stresses, such as dehydration and heat stress.

## Challenges

### *Ageing Population*

11 There is risk of a disproportionate impact of climate change and food poverty on ageing and pregnant groups. In particular the ageing population is most at risk of not taking precautionary action to mitigate risks and least able to respond i.e., less likely to leave home in extreme weather conditions (heat) to shop and so buying more home delivery. This may lead to an increased purchase of ambient higher risk foods e.g., powdered milk.

The increasing size of vulnerable populations combined with the potential increase in microbiological food contamination related to various climate change factors may result in a multiplication of risk. To best target vulnerable groups to circumvent risk and change behaviour there is a need to define what a vulnerable group is. For example, the link between nutritional status and vulnerability needs to be better understood.

## Possible actions

11.1 The FSA should consider commissioning research into the effects of ageing on vulnerability to foodborne disease.

11.2 The FSA should obtain, or commission research to generate, evidence to identify groups likely to be particularly vulnerable to increased risks as a result of climate change, and then identify approaches to targeting relevant advice to them.

11.3 The FSA should consider reviewing the definition of vulnerable group as the associated mitigation will depend on why they are vulnerable.

11.4 The FSA is advised to review the food safety advice targeted at vulnerable groups and manufacturers/food service in preparation of foods for vulnerable groups.

11.5 The FSA should work with the NHS to identify to develop consumer guidance and education.

11.6 The FSA should look to develop a categorisation of vulnerabilities for consumers to refer to; provide advice on different food groups based on category.

11.7 The FSA should consider supporting research projects looking at the immune response in different populations as well as the development of easy tests for

*Indirect challenges from climate change:*

**Challenges**

**Possible actions**

*Obesity*

19. Increase in obesity may lead to more co-morbidities.

19.1 The FSA should work to develop consumer advice and guidance aimed at increasing healthiness of diet to reduce vulnerability of population.

*Food Poverty*

20. Food poverty has increased and may increase in the short term too leading consumers to store food for longer and consume more leftovers.

20.1 The FSA should develop better consumer advice and education on safe food storage.

20.2 FSA should look at carrying out a review on food storage to have a better understanding of what can safely be kept, though it is accepted this is unlikely to be changed by industry without validation.

*Migration*

21 An increase in migration will see a larger population which needs to be fed, putting further strain on food shortages. Increased migration may also increase novel food consumption.

21.1 The FSA should consider supporting surveillance to monitor changes in population size and the effect on food supplies.

21.2 FSA should consider future proofing new regulations on imported foods against any new and emerging threats from novel goods.

## *Alcoholism*

22 Alcoholism is on the rise after the pandemic. Both alcoholism & vaping have a possible impact on vulnerable groups

22.2 The FSA should consider surveillance obesity and use of vaping to monitor the rise in these levels across the population.