

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2217](#): Bring the Food Standards Agency hygiene rating scale to Scotland, and make it mandatory to display, lodged by Johnny Lee Kimberley

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

Consumer information on food hygiene

Food hygiene and food standards more broadly are devolved. Food Standards Scotland is responsible for food hygiene in Scotland, while the Food Standards Agency is responsible in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In all four UK nations, food hygiene is inspected and businesses are given a rating. Hygiene ratings from businesses in all four nations are [collated in a shared database](#).

However, the legal framework, consumer information system, rating scale and rules around displaying ratings differ across the UK.

In terms of the rating system, in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, [a six-point scale is used](#). In Scotland, [businesses are either awarded a 'pass' where they have met the legal requirements for food hygiene](#), or an 'improvement needed' where the business did not meet the legal requirements and needs to make improvements.

The petitioner would like to see Scotland adopt a similar type of scale to the rating system used in the rest of the UK to give the consumer more information than 'pass'/'improvement needed'.

Display of food hygiene inspection outcomes

In Wales and Northern Ireland, it is mandatory, broadly speaking, to [display the food hygiene rating near the customer entrance](#) (in Wales, there are slightly different rules for takeaway food). In Scotland and England, [displaying the rating on the premises is voluntary](#).

The petitioner would like it to become mandatory to display the food hygiene rating on the premises in Scotland.

The Scottish Government has the power to bring forward regulations requiring businesses to display their certificate showing their food hygiene rating in or on food premises. This is provided by [section 16\(1\)](#) and [Schedule 1](#) of the Food Safety Act 1990 ([as amended by the Food \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)).

Food Standards Scotland SAFER Programme

A broad programme of work to reform and modernise the delivery of food law in Scotland is currently underway.

The [SAFER Programme](#) –

“supports Ministerial commitments to wider public service reform and is a programme of reform to secure improved public health outcomes through model redesign, developing and embracing new and more efficient ways of working, better use of data and digital technologies, and ensuring financial sustainability.”

The objectives of the programme are to:

1. Review and reform the food law delivery model for Scotland, benchmarked against leading international approaches to ensure ambition and best practice.
2. Develop options to sustainably fund delivery of official controls and consider a transparent and proportionate cost recovery system.
3. Explore innovative regulatory strategies for reform, focused on risk, assurance, increased efficiency, and measurable public health outcomes.
4. Utilise new technologies to support food safety professionals, incentivise business compliance, and enhance consumer protection

Part of this programme is the reform of the consumer information system, which includes the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (communication with Food Standards Scotland, 12 August 2026).

In relation to the ratings system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Food Standards Agency is also [undertaking work to establish a Future of Food Regulation Programme](#). One of the proposed workstreams surrounds “evolving the Food Hygiene Rating System to assess impacts of reforms and modernise it as required.”

Key Organisations and relevant links

- Food Standards Scotland
 - [Food Hygiene Information Scheme](#)
- Food Standards Agency
 - [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme](#)
- Key legislation:

- The [Food Safety Act 1990](#) – Main legislation relating to e.g. food safety, food information, consumer protection, administration and enforcement.
- The [Food \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) – Established Food Standards Scotland and provides for their duties and powers.
- [Regulation \(EC\) No 178/2002](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (as amended and assimilated into UK law).
- [Regulation \(EC\) No 853/2004](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs (as amended and assimilated into UK law).

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 13 August 2026

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP