RESEARCH PROJECTS

Consumer Insights Tracker (January 2026 – March 2026)

Food Standards Agency, YouGov

Keywords: Regulating the changing food system, Novel foods, Wider consumer interests

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FSA Research and Evidence

The Consumer Insights Tracker is an online monthly tracking survey commissioned by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). It monitors the behaviour and attitudes of consumers aged 16+ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to food. Each month, the survey is conducted with approximately 2,000 consumers. This report presents findings for topics that are tracked regularly including consumer concerns in relation to food, food affordability, and trust in the FSA as a regulator. It also includes questions on precision breeding and precision fermentation that were included in March and February 2026 respectively. Sometimes other topics are included on an ad-hoc basis. All findings are available in the accompanying data tables: Consumer Insights Tracker July 2023 - present.

Consumer Insights Tracker - January to March 2026 Report

1. Key findings

Key findings for January to March 2026:

- **Food affordability:** Almost one in four (23%) respondents were worried about being able to afford food in March 2026. This is comparable with January (21%), but slightly higher than February (19%).
- **Money saving behaviours:** Eating food past its use-by date (64%, March 26) and eating leftovers kept for over two days (60%, March 26) were the most commonly reported money-saving behaviours across the quarter. Eating leftovers after two days was reported more frequently in January (68%), when respondents were referring to their behaviour in December.
- **Food concerns:** In March 2026, food prices (91%) remained the top concern among respondents, followed by ultra-processed food (77%) and food waste in the food chain (77%).

- **Food safety information:** The proportion of respondents who reported seeing or hearing information about food product recalls, food contamination incidents and food poisoning outbreaks increased in February 2026, compared to other months in the quarter. For example, 44% said they had heard about food product recalls (vs. 34% in January).
- **Precision breeding:** In March 2026, 13% of respondents had heard of precision breeding, however only 5% of respondents reported knowing what it is. This is slightly lower than when these questions were last asked in September 2025 (16%), but remains comparable with March 2025 (13%).
- **Precision fermentation:** In February 2026, 20% of respondents had heard of precision fermentation before, 15% had heard of precision-fermented dairy. Over two in five (44%) were unwilling to include it in their diet, compared with 26% who were willing. Findings were broadly in line with August 2025 when these questions were last asked.

2. Background and methodological information

2.1. Survey topics

This report presents findings for topics we track regularly including consumer concerns in relation to food, food affordability, and trust in the FSA as a regulator.

The core questions in this survey underwent review before the launch of the April 2025 survey. Some new questions and/or statements were introduced, resulting in a new timeseries for some questions/ statements. Please see the notes under each figure for further information.

Between January and March 2026, questions were also asked about consumer views on school meals (January), food regulations (January), precision fermentation (February) and precision breeding (March).

Findings on precision breeding and precision fermentation can be found in this report. Data for all questions can be found in the accompanying data tables.

2.2. Method

- This research was conducted online using the YouGov panel which gives access to 400,000 active panel members in the UK.
- This report presents findings from January – March 2026. Where appropriate, comparisons are made to previous waves since July 2023.
- Across England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2,201 people took part in the survey in January (2nd – 5th), 2,170 in February (6th – 9th) and 2,101 in March 2026 (6th – 9th).
- Quotas were set by age, gender, social grade, education and region. The data is also weighted to be representative of the population by these demographic variables. All results are based on final weighted data.
- Further details on the methodology including strengths and limitations can be found in our technical report.

2.3. Notes for interpretation

- **Reporting convention (↑ / ↓ on graphs):** The Consumer Insights Tracker uses t-tests to assess differences over time and between groups, and highlights those where the p value is <0.05. Due to the quota sampling methodology used this is not an exact test of whether differences are statistically significant and indicative of real changes in wider population. However, they may highlight where there could be shifts in behaviour or attitudes and further research would be required to assess if these changes are real.
- **Online panel survey:** As respondents are selected from an online panel, people without internet access are not represented.
- **Percentages:** Figures may not add up to 100% on graphs due to figures being rounded to the nearest whole number, or because in some questions, respondents were able to select multiple answers. In some cases, rounding may make changes appear smaller or larger than they are in the underlying data. Statistical tests have been conducted using the unrounded figures.

3. Results

3.1. Food affordability

Almost one in four (23%) respondents said they were worried about being able to afford food in March 2026. This is comparable with January (21%), but slightly higher than February 2026 (19%), as shown in Figure 1.

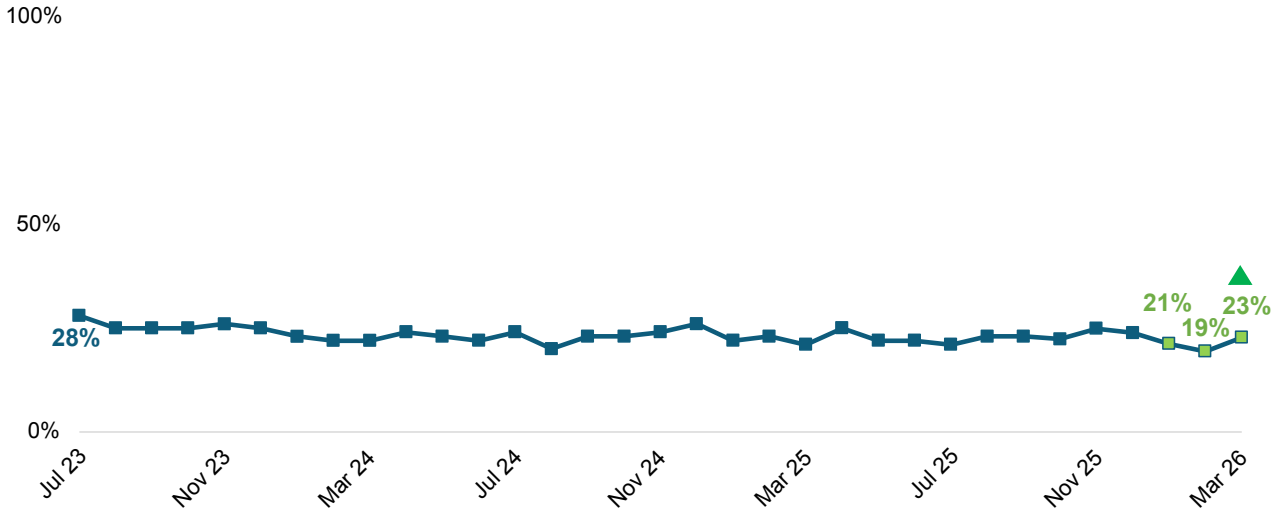

Figure 1. Proportion who reported worrying about their household not being able to afford food in the next month

Note: Q3m. To what extent, if at all, are you worried you/your household will not be able to afford food in the next month? Chart shows the proportion who were 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried'. The new data points (from January to March) are shown in a different colour. Differences compared to February 2026 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All each wave (c.2,000) from July 2023 to March 2026 (range between n= 2,008 in August 2024 and n=2,283 in July 2025).

In March 2026, eating food past its use-by date (64%) and eating leftovers kept for over two days (60%) were the most commonly reported money-saving behaviours, as shown in Figure 2. These were also most commonly reported across the quarter.

A higher proportion of respondents reported several money-saving behaviours in January (when referring to their behaviour in December) than in the following months. This included eating leftovers after more than two days and storing food that should be refrigerated outside the fridge.

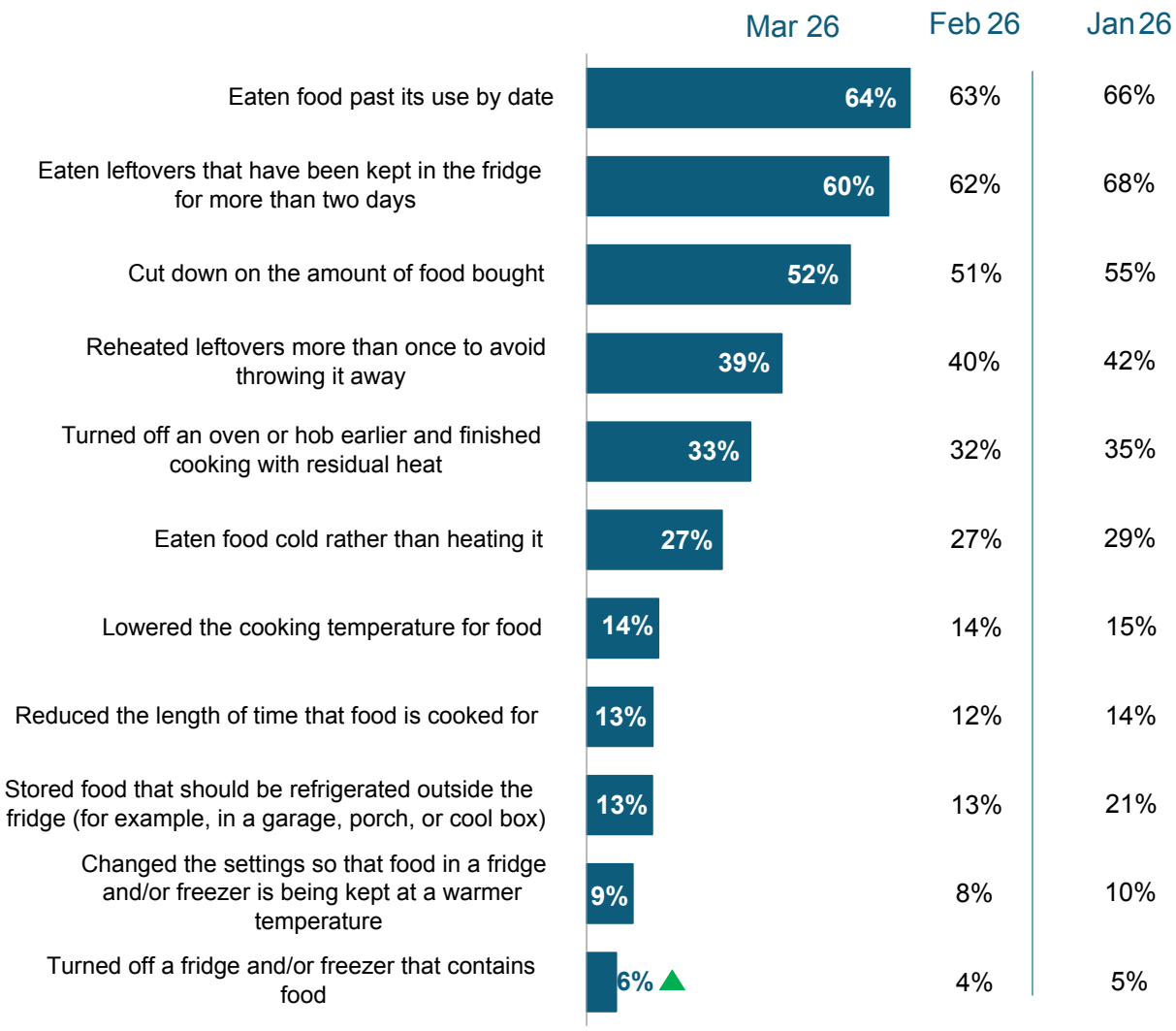

Figure 2. Proportion who reported money saving behaviours in the last month

Note: Q6_NEW1. The next question is about behaviours you have done to save money, for example to reduce your food shopping costs or energy bills. In the last month, which, if any, of the following have you or someone in your household done to save money? Figures shown in chart are the proportion who said 'Yes, I or someone in my household have done this every week', 'Yes, I or someone in my household have done this some weeks but not every week' or 'Yes, I or someone in my household have done this just one week in the last month'. This question was introduced in May 2025. Differences compared to February 2026 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in March 2026 (n=2,101), February (n=2,170) and January (n=2,201).

3.2. Food concerns

In March 2026, food prices (91%) remained the top concern among respondents, followed by ultra-processed food (77%) and food waste in the food chain (77%), as shown in Figure 3.

Concern about food quality increased from 70% to 76% between February and March 2026, bringing this back in line with January 2026.

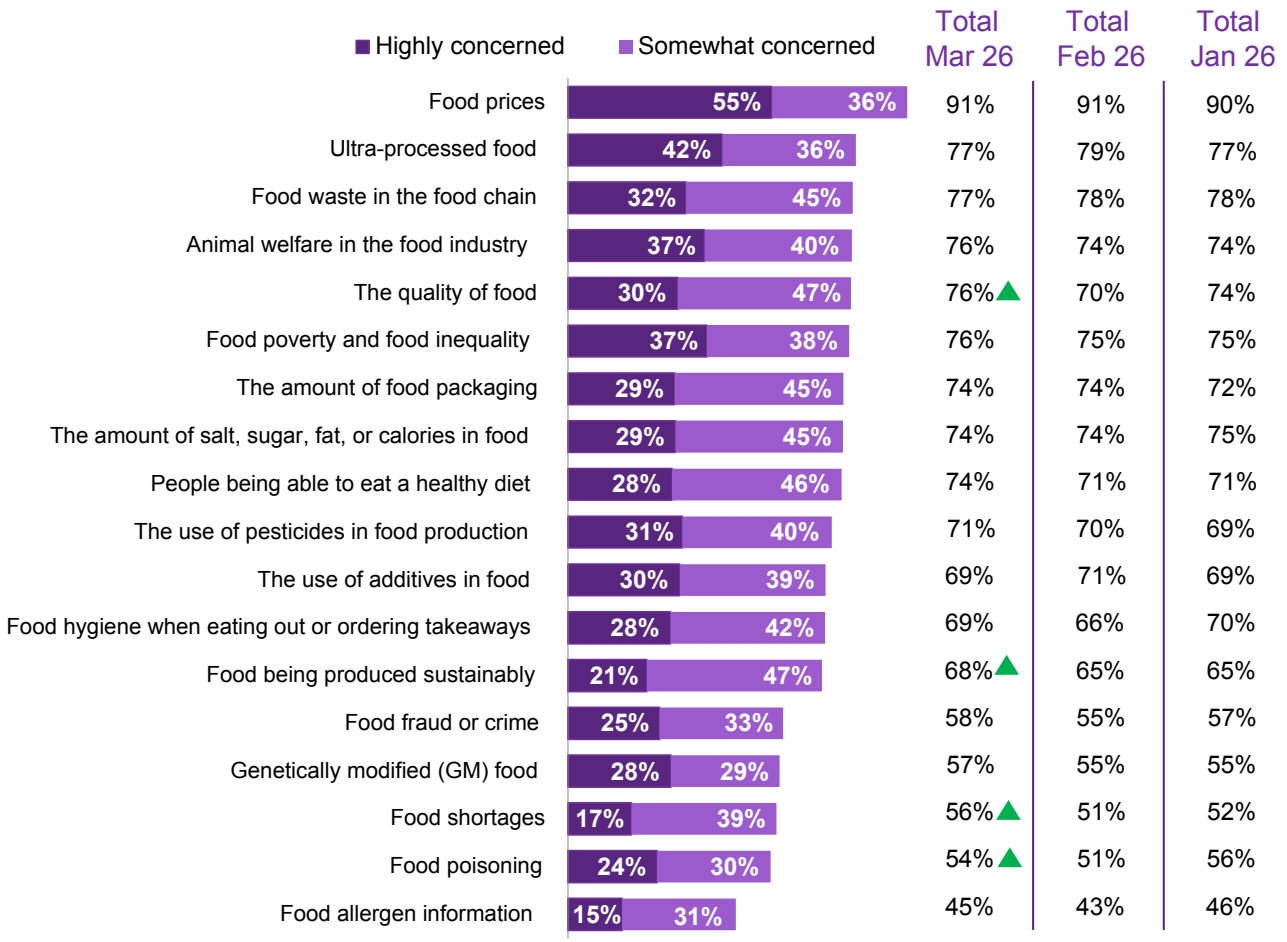

Figure 3. Proportion who reported concern about food by topic

Note: Q12. Thinking about food in the UK in general. At the moment, how concerned, if at all, do you feel about each of the following topics? Some statements were introduced in April 2025, for others wording was slightly updated. Respondents were shown all of the topics listed and asked how concerned, if at all, they felt about each. Figures shown in chart are the proportion 'highly concerned' or 'somewhat concerned'. Differences compared to February 2026 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in March 2026 (n=2,101), February (n=2,170) and January (n=2,201).

3.3. The Food Standards Agency

Among respondents with some knowledge of the FSA, trust in the FSA to do its job remained stable between January to March 2026 (60%-62%), as shown in Figure 4. This is consistent with October to December 2025 (61%-63%).

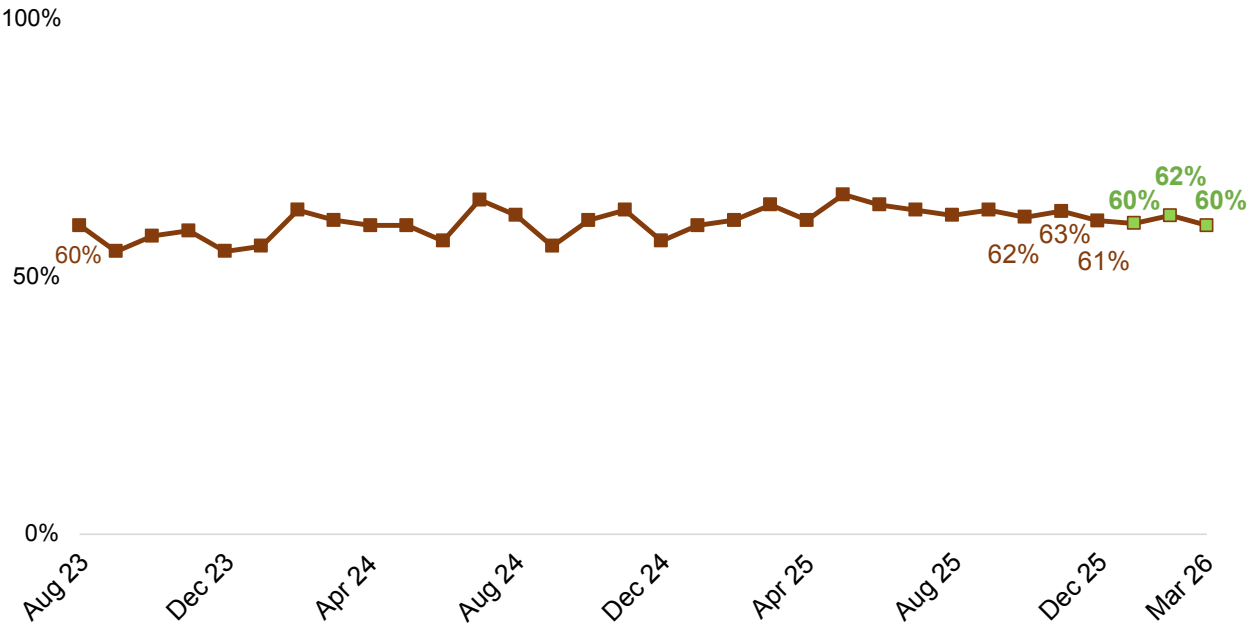

Figure 4. Proportion who trust the FSA to do its job (among those with knowledge of the FSA)

Note: Q16. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Government Agency responsible for food safety in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. How much do you trust or distrust the Food Standards Agency to do its job? That is to make sure that food is safe and what it says it is. Figures shown in chart are the proportion who said 'I trust it' or 'I trust it a lot'. Base: Those who know a little / a lot about the FSA each wave (c.1,300) from August 2023 to March 2026 (range between n= 1,063 in September 2024 and n=1,407 in July 2025).

3.4. Food safety topics

As shown in Figure 5, the proportion of respondents who reported seeing or hearing information about food product recalls, food contamination incidents and food poisoning outbreaks increased in February, before returning to a more typical level in March 2026.

The lead up to the February 2026 fieldwork coincided with high-profile national recalls of infant formula due to contamination.

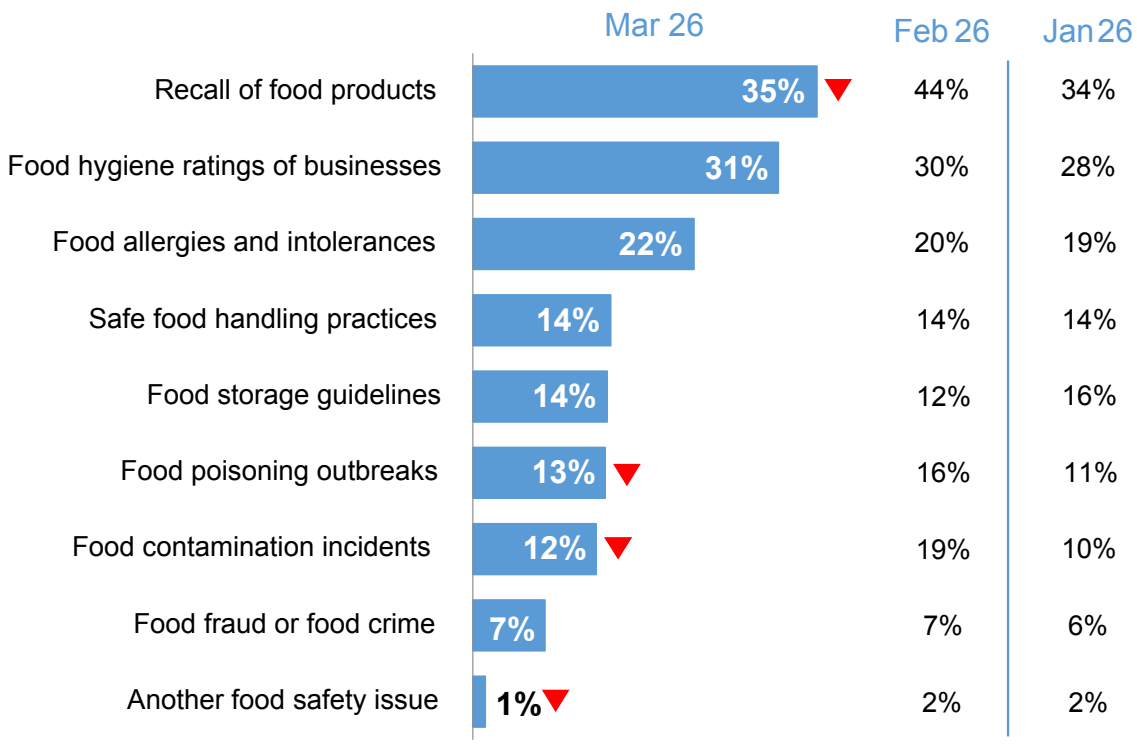

Figure 5. Proportion who had seen, heard or read about food safety topics in the past month

Note: NEWC1. In the past month, which, if any, of the following food safety topics have you seen, read or heard any information about? This could have been in the news, on social media, via word. This question was introduced in April 2025. Not displaying none of these. Differences compared to February 2026 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in March 2026 (n=2,101), February (n=2,170) and January (2,201).

Among respondents who said they had seen, heard or read about any of these food safety topics, the news remained the most commonly reported source across the quarter, as shown in Figure 6. The proportion of respondents reporting the news as a source increased between January (48%) and February (61%), before declining in March (52%).

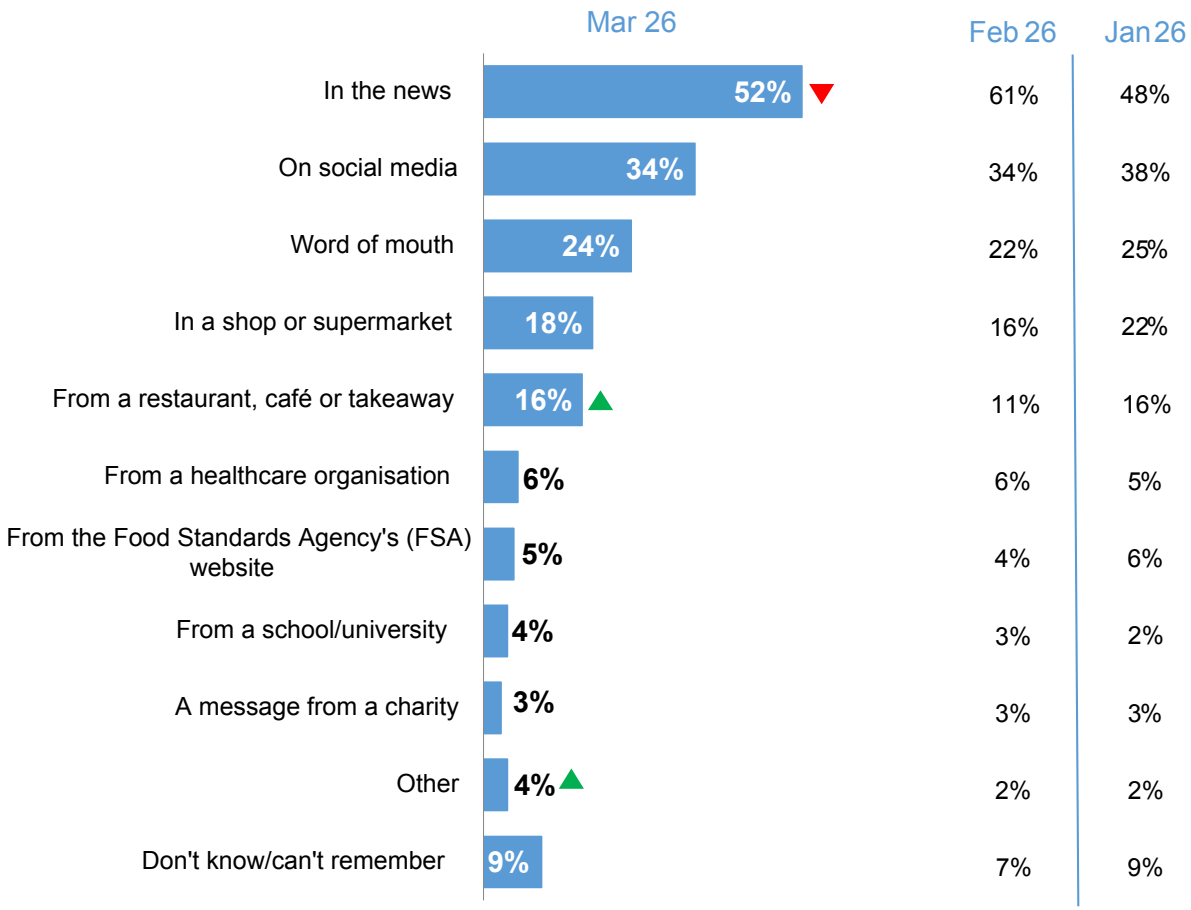

Figure 6. Sources of information on food safety topics

Note: NEWC2. In the past month, where have you seen, read or heard something about these food safety topics? This question was introduced in April 2025. Differences compared to February 2026 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All those who have seen, read or heard of any information about the food safety topics in March 2026 (n=1,289), February (n=1,483) and January (1,274).

3.5. Precision breeding

In March 2026, 13% of respondents had heard of precision breeding, however only 5% of respondents reported knowing what it is. Levels of awareness were slightly lower than in September 2025 (16%) but comparable with March 2025 (13%), as shown in Figure 7.

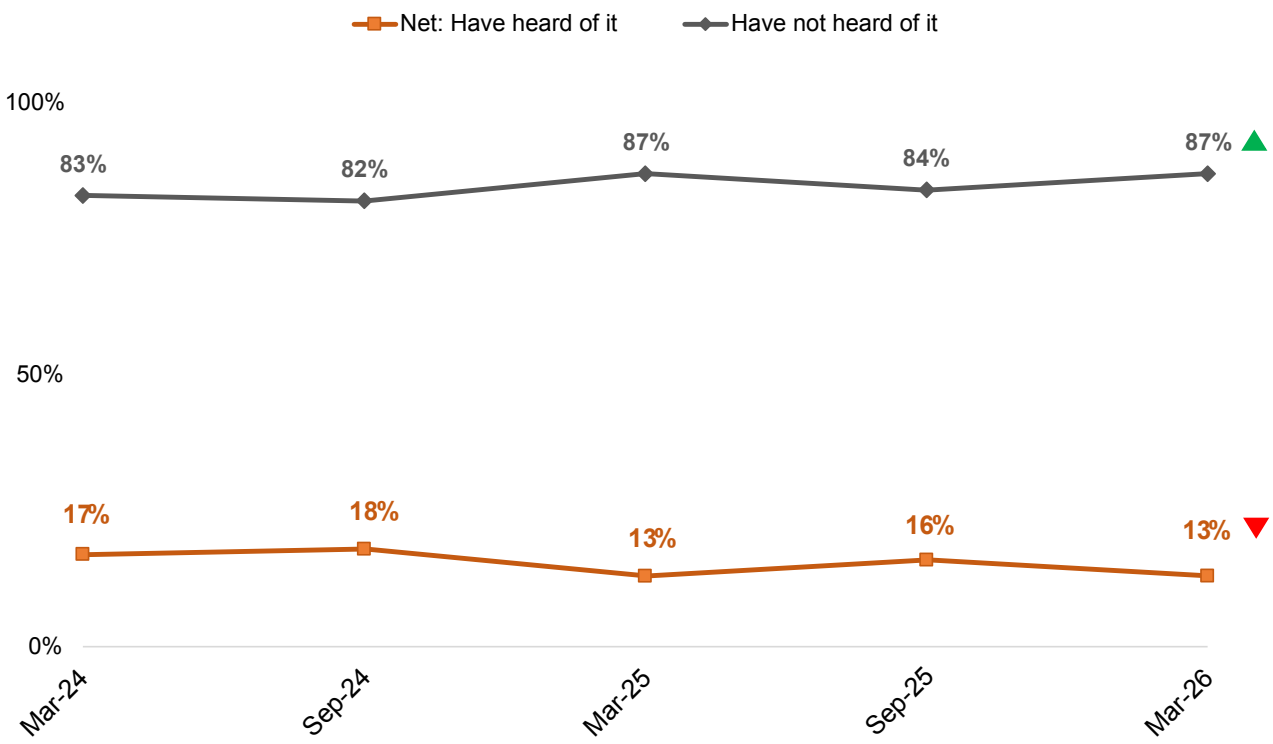

Figure 7. Proportion who have heard of precision breeding before

Note: QPB6. Have you heard of precision breeding before? This question was only asked in March and September 2024, 2025 and 2026. Figures for 'Net: Have heard of it' are the proportion who said 'Yes, and I know what it is' or 'Yes, but I don't know what it is'. Differences compared to September 2025 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in March 2026 (n=2,101), September 2025 (n=2,050), March 2025 (n=2,051), September 2024 (n=2,014) and March 2024 (n=2,015)

In March 2026, respondents continued to be more accepting of precision breeding of plants (49%) than animals (26%). The proportion who considered each to be acceptable is in line with September 2025, as shown in Figure 8.

The proportion of respondents who consider precision breeding of animals to be unacceptable increased slightly between September 2025 (41%) and March 2026 (45%).

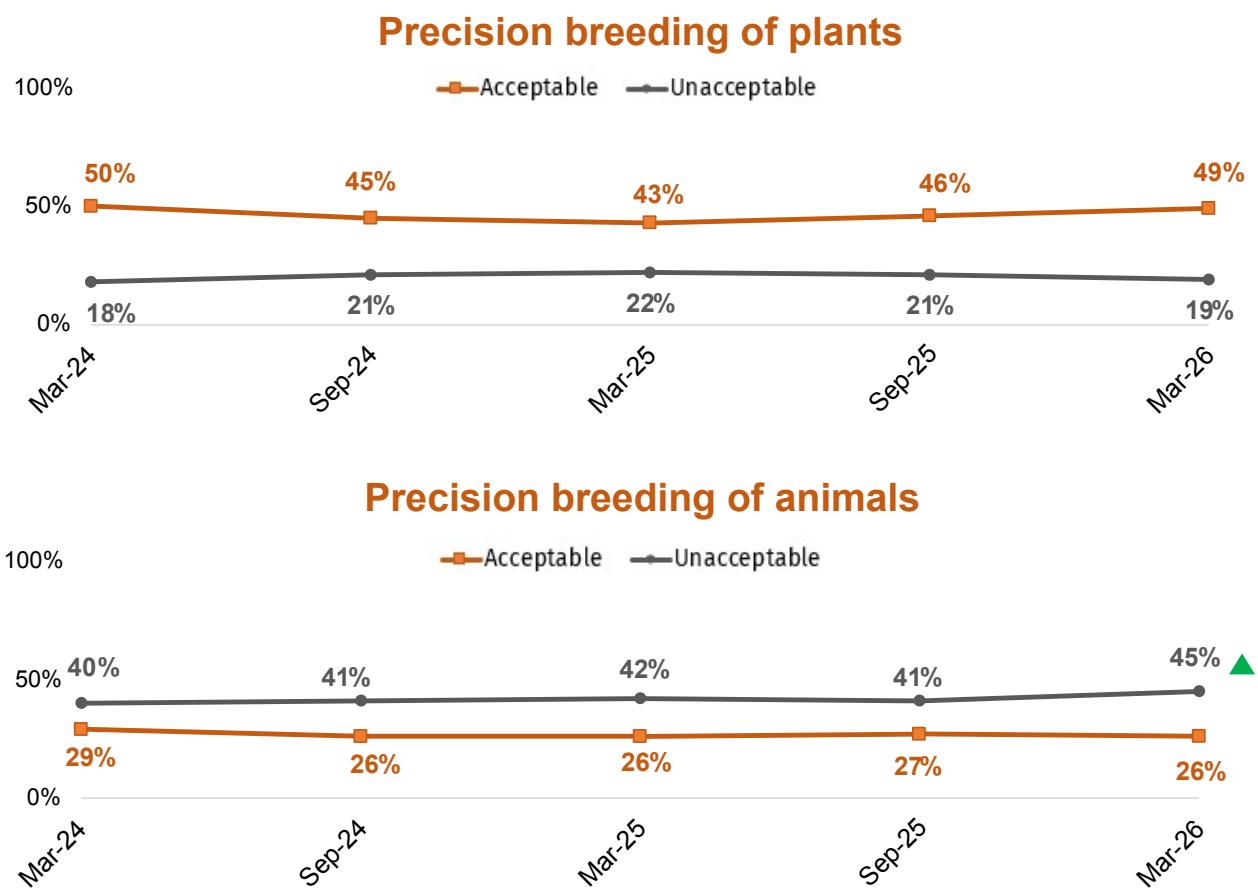

Figure 8. Acceptability of use in food production

Note: QPB10. How acceptable or unacceptable, do you think it is to use the following in food production? This question was only asked in March and September 2024, 2025 and 2026. Figures shown in the chart are a net of 'Very acceptable' and 'Fairly acceptable' and a net of 'Very unacceptable' and 'Fairly unacceptable'. Differences compared to September 2025 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in March 2026 (n=2,101), September 2025 (n=2,050), March 2025 (n=2,051), September 2024 (n=2,014) and March 2024 (n=2,015).

3.6. Precision fermentation

When prompted with a definition of each term, most respondents (82%) had heard of the term 'fermentation'. A minority had heard of 'precision fermentation' (20%) or 'precision-fermented dairy' (15%) in February 2026, as shown in Figure 9.

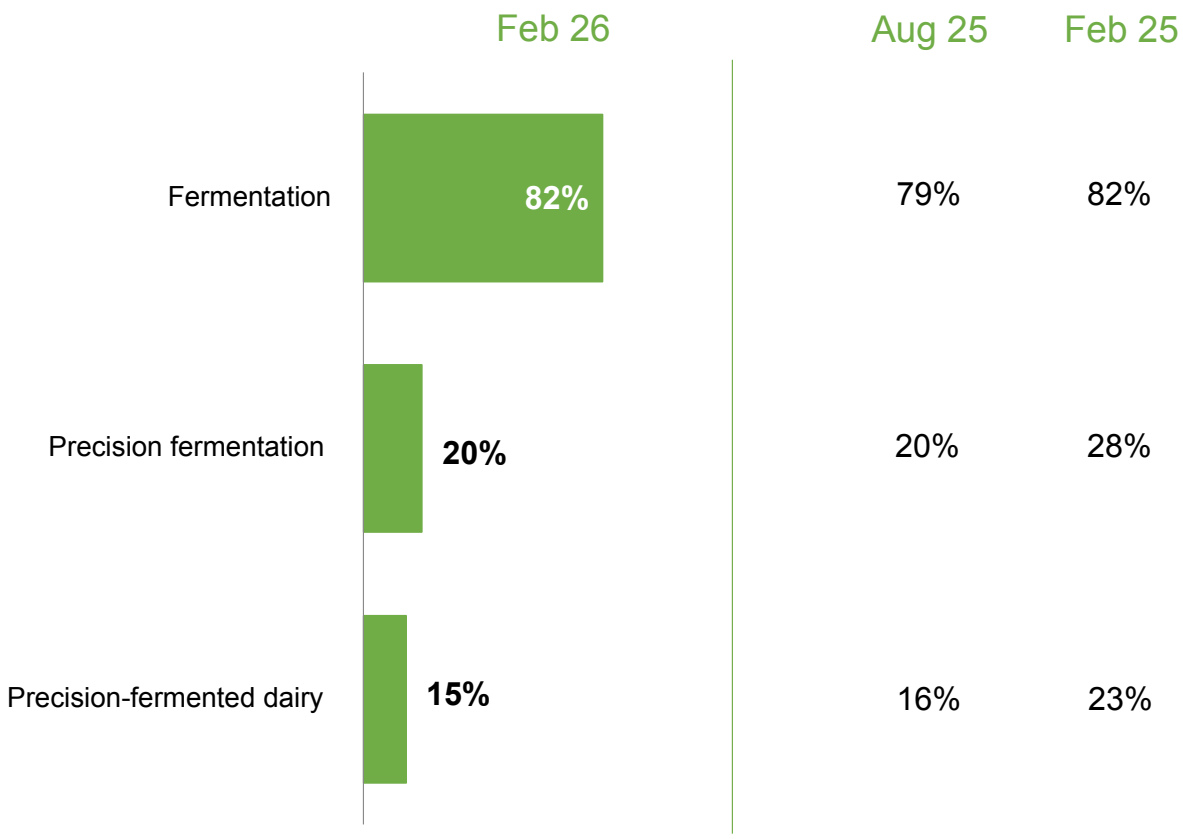

Figure 9. Proportion who have heard of precision fermentation terms before

Note: QPF1. Before taking part in this survey had you heard of... This question was only asked in February and August 2025, and February 2026. Figures shown in the chart are the proportion who said 'Yes, and I knew what it was' or 'Yes, but I didn't know what it was'. Differences compared to August 2025 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in February 2026 (n=2,170), August 2025 (n=2,201) and February 2025 (n=2,097).

Figure 10 shows respondents in February 2026 had mixed views on whether precision fermented dairy should (26%) or should not (30%) be on sale in the UK in the future with the largest proportion saying they don't know (44%), as in previous waves.

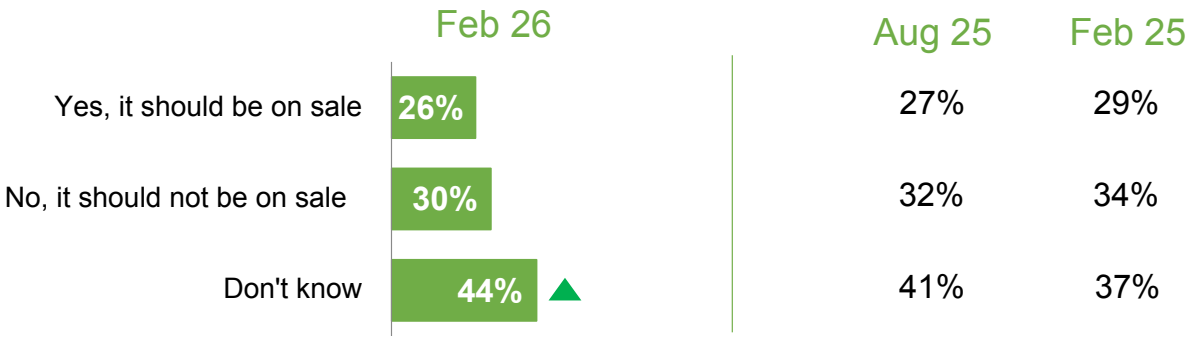

Figure 10. Should precision fermented dairy be on sale in the UK in the future

Note: QPF2. Do you think that precision-fermented dairy should or should not be sold in the UK in the future? This question was only asked in February and August 2025, and February 2026. Differences compared to August 2025 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in February 2026 (n=2,170), August 2025 (n=2,201) and February 2025 (n=2,097).

Figure 11 shows more respondents in February 2026 said they were not willing (44%) to include precision fermented dairy in their diet than were willing (26%), as in previous waves. 30% of respondents said they didn't know.



Figure 11. Willingness to include precision fermented dairy in diet

Note: QPF3. If it was authorised for sale in the UK, how willing or unwilling would you be to include precision-fermented dairy products in your diet? This question was only asked in February and August 2025, and February 2026. Figures shown in the chart are the proportion 'Very willing' and 'Somewhat willing' and 'Somewhat unwilling' and 'Very unwilling'. Differences compared to August 2025 shown with arrows, see notes for interpretation for more information. Base: All in February 2026 (n=2,170), August 2025 (n=2,201) and February 2025 (n=2,097).

In February 2026, safety continued to be the most important factor when deciding whether to buy precision fermented food (84%), followed by proper regulation (82%), as shown in Figure 12. Factors considered less important were environmental consideration (66%) and recommendations from trusted people (58%).

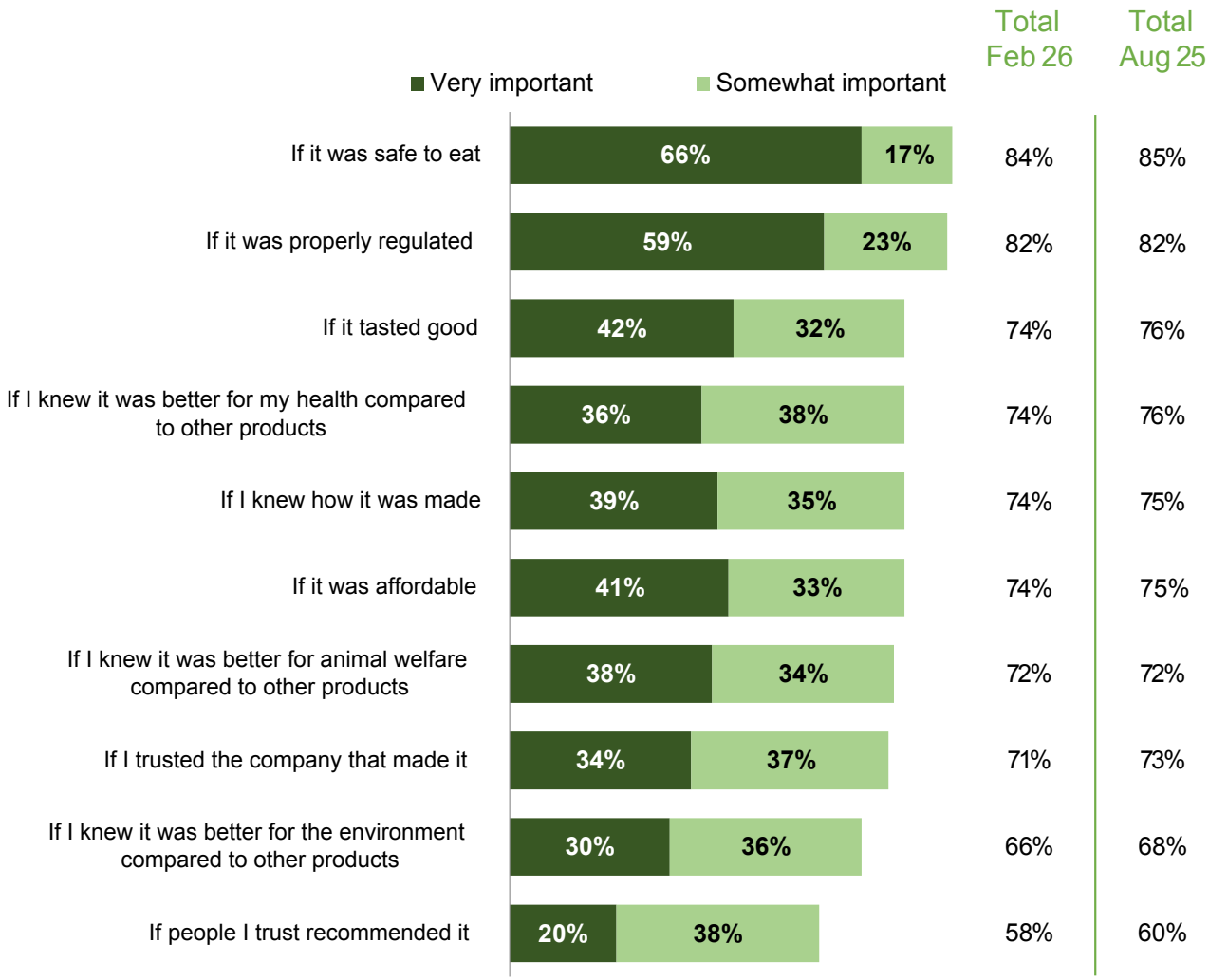

Figure 12. Important factors when deciding whether to buy precision fermented food

Note: QPF4. How important, if at all, would each of the following be to you when deciding whether to buy a food product made using precision fermentation? This question was only asked in February and August 2025, and February 2026. 'Total' figures in the chart are net of 'Very' and 'Somewhat' important. Base: All in February 2026 (n=2,170) and August 2025 (n=2,201).

Further information

For more information:

- Visit our Consumer Insights Tracker webpage
- View the Consumer Insights Tracker data tables
- Contact the FSA's Analytics Unit

Acknowledgements

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Supplementary Materials

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