FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY

Annual Report of Incidents 2007

Welcome to the second Annual Report of Incidents from the Food Standards Agency

Our role at the Agency is to protect consumers, and to give advice on – and maintain – food standards and safety. The Agency is the lead body for the Government response to incidents involving the contamination of food. We have also been increasingly involved in the cross-departmental Government response to major incidents that require advice on food-related issues. In 2007, we investigated 1,312 incidents and, where necessary, took action to inform consumers and gave advice to ensure that standards were maintained.

We recognise the importance of engaging with our stakeholders – local authorities, industry and the consumer – whether it is by responding to an incident, or by helping to prevent incidents occurring. In 2007, we actively sought feedback from stakeholders and we are always looking for ways to improve our responses. Through all of our actions we hope to build and maintain the trust of our stakeholders in our handling of food safety issues.

Learning lessons

We regularly conduct internal reviews to learn lessons from our handling of past incidents. This year we have looked at broadening our approach to enable external stakeholders to contribute to our reviews.

Developing skills

It is important for our staff to develop their skills and for us to practise our joint response to larger incidents with other agencies and Government departments. This has led us to develop a programme of joint exercises with our stakeholders.

Analysing data

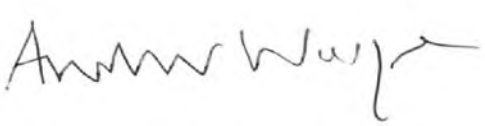
As the first phase of our Data Analysis Project nears completion, we are in a better position than ever before to make our responses evidence-based by analysing historic data to see where, and why, incidents happen and to help prevent them in the future.

Reporting incidents

Notifications have come from a wide range of businesses, Government departments and other organisations this year. But there are gaps in the reporting of incidents, and one of the purposes of this report is to encourage reporting to enable the Agency to construct an accurate picture of food and environmental contamination in the UK.

We can only act to protect consumers if we are aware of an incident as it develops, so we are always seeking to simplify the process for notifiers, to encourage dialogue, and to make our response appropriate and proportionate.

Even so, incidents still go unreported – so I would urge all food business operators to make reporting a top priority. Working together we can ensure the public is protected and increase consumer confidence in food safety.



Andrew Wadge
Chief Scientist and Director of Food Safety

May 2008

Contents

1 Executive Summary

In 2007, the Agency investigated 1,312 incidents in the UK. Where appropriate we took action to ensure that consumers' interests in relation to food safety were protected and standards maintained.

There have been a number of high-profile incidents, such as the avian influenza outbreaks in East Anglia, the widespread flooding in the UK and the grounding of the *MCS Napoli* off the south coast, where the Agency has been involved in a wider Government response, working effectively with other Government departments and agencies to provide food safety advice.

The major categories of incidents in 2007 were: environmental contamination (fires, spills and leaks) 17%; natural chemical contamination (mycotoxins, algal toxins and others) 16%; microbiological incidents 12%; and on-farm incidents, 12%.

Action taken by the Agency in 2007 included the issue of 115 Food Alerts, four of which required action from local authorities (two original alerts and two updates). In March 2007, the Agency introduced the Allergy Alert Notice system for allergy incidents that do not need enforcement action. From March until the end of the year, a total of 58 such alerts, which give consumers the information that they need directly by email or SMS text message, were issued.

As a part of the Agency's work to make it easier to report incidents, an enhanced online incident report form was launched in August so that food and feed businesses could more easily notify the Agency of product recalls or withdrawals. The Agency is also developing workshops for local authorities and industry, in response to their needs, to encourage them to use the Agency and its systems to help them deal with any problems.

The Agency regularly conducts internal reviews to learn lessons from the handling of past incidents. This year, the Agency was involved in two external reviews, both of which have helped to inform the external review strategy. The Agency will continue to broaden its approach to enable external stakeholders to contribute to reviews.

The Agency's Data Analysis Project has this year, for the first time, delivered an analysis of historic and current data to identify trends in reported incidents. This is helping the Agency to work towards formulating evidence-based policies for the future.

To reduce the impact of food safety incidents, the Agency is developing an incident prevention strategy. Data from the analysis project and the results of workshops held this year with industry stakeholders are being used to inform this process.

Finally, a successful response to an incident requires not only a wide variety of skills but also depends upon the effective and timely interface between the Agency and its stakeholders. Hence, the Agency is developing a series of cross-cutting practice exercises designed to optimise Government response.

Overall, 2007 was a year for preparation and planning. In 2008 the Agency will begin to implement those plans.

2 What is an incident?

The Agency uses the following definition of an incident:

"Any event where, based on the information available, there are concerns about actual or suspected threats to the safety or quality of food that could require intervention to protect consumers' interests." [1]

Incidents fall broadly into two categories:

- Incidents involving contamination of food or animal feed in the processing, distribution, retail and catering chains. These incidents may result in action to withdraw the food from sale and, in certain circumstances, to recall, alerting the public not to consume potentially contaminated food; and
- Environmental incidents e.g. fires, chemical/oil spills, radiation leaks which may involve voluntary or statutory action (e.g. orders made under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985).

1 Food Incidents Task Force 'Preventing and Responding to Food Incidents' – March 2007

3 What is our role?

Investigating incidents to ensure that consumers' interests with regard to food safety and food standards are protected and maintained is a key part of the Agency's work.

Where the scale and complexity of an incident is such that some degree of Government co-ordination and support is necessary, a designated 'lead' Government department, or where appropriate, devolved administration, will be responsible for the overall management of the response. The Agency is the lead Government department for widespread accidental or deliberate contamination of food. In addition, it has a key supporting role providing food safety and standards advice in relation to a range of other incidents, such as chemical spills, oil leaks and large fires. The Agency also has a role in ensuring that any clean-up operation following an incident takes account of food safety issues.

Where the severity of the incident has led the police to set up a strategic co-ordinating centre or, gold command[2], the Agency may send staff to the centre or act through another organisation present at the centre. The Agency may also provide representation at outbreak control team (OCT) meetings during a regional or national foodborne illness outbreak.

2 For major emergencies an off-site gold command will normally be set up, for example at the local police headquarters. The group will comprise senior officers from the emergency services, senior managers from local authorities and other organisations involved in the response.

Case Study 1 – Flooding

Background

In June and July 2007, the UK was subject to widespread and severe flooding. Many homes and businesses were affected by the flood waters or had their water supply cut off. The Agency has a food safety advisory role in the UK Government response to such incidents.

Risks to consumers

Flood water may contain microbial contaminants and chemical pollutants that could pose a risk to human health. As a result, flood water can contaminate items in the home and may lead to cross-contamination during food preparation. Foods stored in the home may also be at risk.

In addition to the risks of flooding in the home, flood waters have the potential to affect industrial and agricultural premises that may be involved in the production of foodstuffs.

Action taken

- The Agency was invited by the Health Protection Agency to be a part of the Science and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) set up to advise on the consequences of the flooding.
- Cross-agency work by Agency divisions, with expertise in chemical safety and microbiology, provided advice to the STAC on a range of food safety issues. This information was used in the public health advice notices issued by the STAC.
- The food safety advice was also posted on the food.gov.uk website.
- This was the first time that the HPA had coordinated the production of public health advice in an emergency situation supported by multi-agency teams.

4 Why and how should I report an incident?

By reporting incidents to the Agency at the earliest opportunity, the Agency and the notifier are able to work together to minimise the impact of the incident. In any event, industry has a statutory obligation to report incidents. European legislation[3] lays down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety.

Food business operators are required, under Article 19 of this regulation, to inform the competent authorities where they have reason to believe that a foodstuff that they have imported, produced, manufactured or distributed is not in compliance with food safety requirements. In the case of the UK, the competent authorities are the Agency and the food authorities (local and port health authorities).

Industry can report incidents to the Agency online. The online report form is available via the Agency's website:

www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/foodfeedform

Local authorities have an agreement to notify the Agency of food incidents under the Food Law Code of Practice. The code of practice sets out instructions and criteria to which the food authorities should have regard when engaged in the enforcement of food law. Food authorities must follow and implement the provisions of the code that apply to them.

Incidents can be reported to the Agency in a variety of ways. Local authorities regularly undertake inspections of premises and sample products from wholesale/retail outlets. Where breaches of food safety requirements are identified, the authority will contact the Agency's Incidents Branch via an incident report form. Notification forms for local authorities are available online at

www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/worddocs/lafoodincidentreportform.doc

Other organisations (e.g. European Commission, Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Environment Agency) have tried and tested channels in place for notifying the Agency in the event of an incident.

3 Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002

5 Who tells us about incidents?

The list below shows the wide range of organisations that notify the Agency of incidents:

Industry	Local authorities	Fire Service
European Commission	Environment Agency	Member states
Members of the public	British Nuclear Group	Police
Maritime & Coastguard Agency	Department of Health	Laboratories
Scottish Agricultural College	National Health Service	Agency surveys
Veterinary Laboratories Agency	Border Inspection Posts	
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	

For further details of how these incidents were notified see Appendix 1.

In 2007, more incident reports were received from local authorities (20% of the total, 259) than from any other stakeholder. The number of reports from the fire services fell from 20% (263) in 2006 to 12% (158) in 2007.

The upward trend in reports from industry, visible since 2005, continued in 2007, rising to 132 incidents. Of that 132, 86% (114) were in the physical contamination, allergens or microbiological incident categories. Very few notifications from industry were received in other categories.

Looking at the historic data for 2000 to 2007 (6581), more notifications were received from the fire service (26%, 1,686) than any other. The next highest notifying organisation was the local authority (22%, 1,414) followed by the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (9.1%, 596), border inspection posts (8.3%, 546), industry (6.5%, 430) and EU member states (6.5%, 426).

There is likely to be some under-reporting of food and environmental contamination incidents to the Agency. The under-reporting rate will vary between types of notifier. This will affect the trends we see in the data because different types of notifiers have been helped to improve their notification procedures at different times.

Case Study 2 – Contaminated guar gum

Background

In July 2007, the European Commission notified the Agency of the discovery, in Switzerland, of a contamination of guar gum, originating from India, by dioxins and pentachlorophenol.

Guar gum is an edible thickening agent commonly used to produce good texture in reduced-fat products. It has widespread use in many pre-prepared foods.

Dioxins are chemicals that get into our food from the environment. They have no immediate effect on our health but can cause problems if they are absorbed into our bodies at high levels for long periods.

Pentachlorophenol is used as a fungicide and wood preservative but it, and its associated dioxin contaminants, should not be present in food.

As a precaution, the Commission requested that member states identify, hold and test all batches of guar gum imported from the Indian supplier. Testing was also stepped up for other imports of guar gum from India.

Risks to consumers

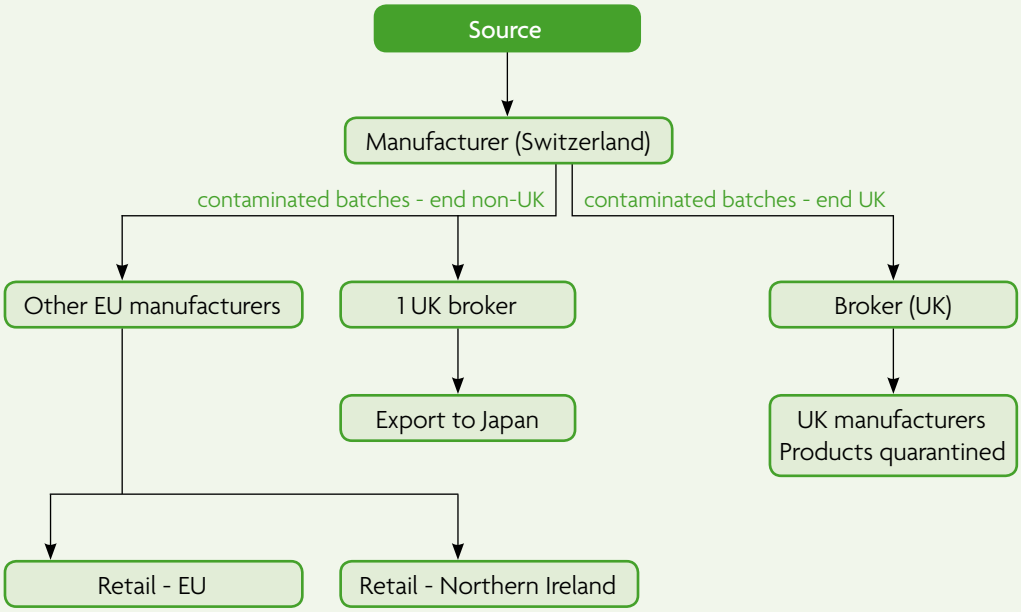
Exceeding the Tolerable Daily Intake for dioxins does not represent an immediate risk to health, but is undesirable over a longer period.

There are no regulatory limits for pentachlorophenol or dioxins in guar gum. However, the EU has specified maximum levels for dioxins in foodstuffs.

Action taken

- The Agency, working with trade organisations, discovered the distribution of the contaminated guar gum in the UK. Two companies were found to have received affected batches. One of these exports directly to Japan. The other supplied two UK manufacturers, but prompt intervention by the Agency helped them to quarantine the affected batches.

Case Study 2 – continued...



- FSAI in the Republic of Ireland informed FSANI that a brand of yoghurt had been withdrawn from sale as a result of use of an affected batch of guar gum. This product was also sold in Northern Ireland. FSANI contacted a number of retail outlets to verify the complete withdrawal.
- Trade associations were reminded of their responsibilities to check the quality of their supplies before beginning the production of food or animal feed.
- Advice to the food industry on sampling and testing of guar gum was formulated.
- Port health authorities were advised on sampling and testing of guar gum imported from India.
- Information about the incident was published on the FSA website and circulated to all local authorities.

6 How do we manage incidents?

The Agency has set procedures (contained in its incident response protocol) that it follows for all incidents. The protocol covers, among other things, incident notification, the roles and responsibilities of Agency staff during an incident, incident classification, record-keeping procedures, incident closure and review procedures. The protocol is reviewed on a regular basis and, where appropriate, updated in the light of review findings.

All incidents are recorded on the Agency-wide incidents database. The incidents statistics included within the annual report have been taken from this database.

Once an incidents notification is received by the Agency, it is immediately circulated to the relevant internal policy division for a risk assessment.

Risk assessment

The Food Standards Agency has a wide range of in-house scientific and policy experts at its disposal during incidents. These experts provide advice on risks to human health, risk to the food chain and applicable legislation during incidents. This advice is used to formulate risk management options and determine a risk management strategy during each incident.

The Agency also has access to various independent scientific committees, which comprise individuals with recognised expertise within their field. These committees provide independent, expert advice to the Agency on research and policy when requested. Further details regarding the work of the committees are available via the Agency's website:

www.food.gov.uk/science/our advisors/

Risk management

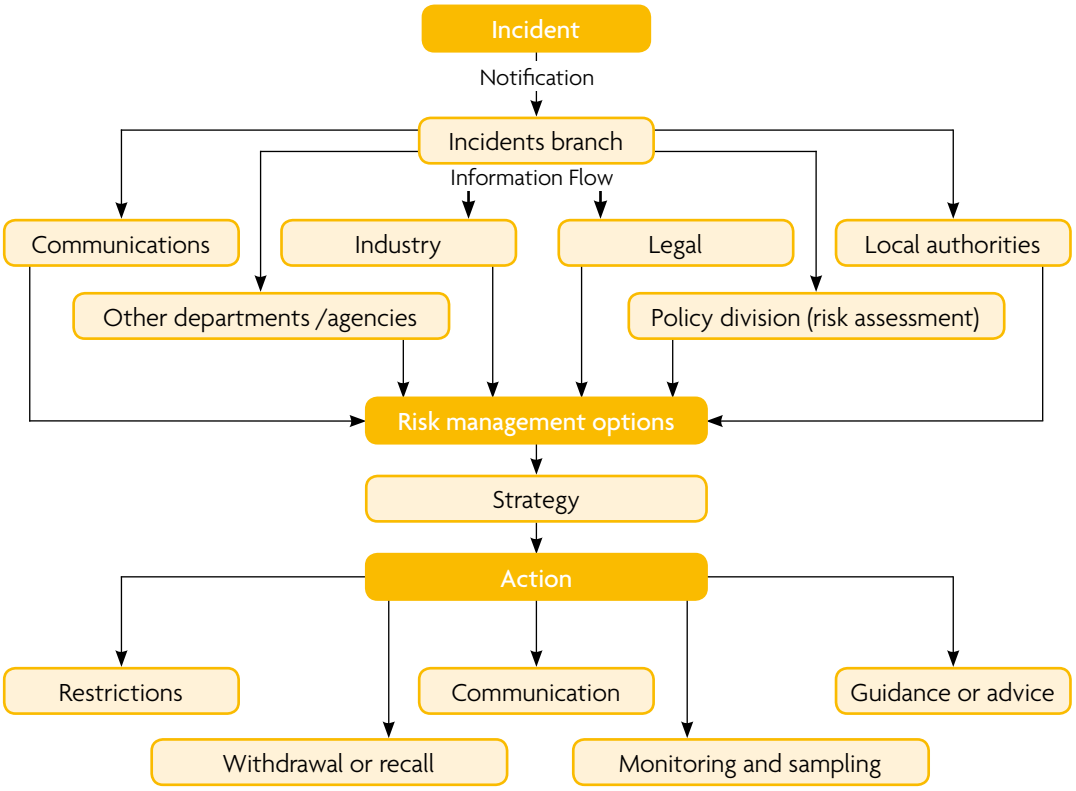
Risk assessment is used to inform the risk management options during each incident. The Agency will liaise with the relevant local authorities, industry, other Government departments and agencies in order to arrive at an appropriate risk management strategy.

The strategy will take into account:

- risk assessment
- risk communication
- proportionality
- legislation
- the precautionary approach.

Once a strategy is decided upon by all parties actions will be apportioned to teams within the Agency, local authorities, industry and others as appropriate. Above all, ensuring that food safety is protected and food standards are maintained is paramount during incidents.

The Agency's incident handling strategy is illustrated in the following process diagram.



7 What will we do with the information received?

The Agency will use the information received to inform its risk assessment. This in turn will be taken into account when considering its risk management and risk communication options. Dialogue between industry, the Agency and local authorities is encouraged at all stages to ensure our risk management advice is proportionate and practical.

The Agency may, in the light of the information received, issue a food alert to local authorities, who enforce food law. These alerts are used during incidents where, for example, the distribution of a product is wide and will potentially involve many local authorities.

These alerts are also simultaneously published on the Agency's website to alert consumers and are routinely picked up by the national press. However, the Agency only issues food alerts for a fraction of the incidents it deals with – in 2007, there were 115 food alerts issued out of a total of 1,312 incidents. The following section provides further information regarding food alerts.

8 What actions can we take to protect consumers' interests

There are a number of different actions that the Agency can take to protect food safety and consumers.

Food alerts

Food alerts are the Agency's way of letting local authorities know about problems associated with food and, in some cases, they provide details of specific action to be taken.

There are two categories of food alerts. Food Alerts for Information (FAFI) are issued to bring an incident to the attention of local authorities, whilst Food Alerts for Action (FAFA) are issued when an incident requires enforcement action from them.

Food alerts are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal or recall by a manufacturer, retailer or distributor.

Food alerts are also copied to Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, Trading Standards Officers and food trade organisations, to alert them to current food issues.

During 2007 the Agency issued 115 food alerts, 4 of which required action from local authorities.

During 2008, the Agency plans to review the way it communicates with stakeholders including the terminology used (See Looking ahead section, p39).

Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed

The purpose of the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), established in 1979, is to provide EU member states with an effective tool for exchange of information on measures taken to ensure food safety.

In 2007, 23% (85) of the RASFF notifications supplied by the UK concerned nuts, nut products and snacks and a total of 18% (66) concerned fruit and vegetables. The major hazard category was mycotoxins (36%, 132)*.

* Data courtesy of the European Commission

The Agency uses the European Commission's RASFF system to:

- obtain information about matters that the Agency needs to act on
- inform the Commission and other member states of matters that they need to act on.

RASFFs are divided into 'border rejections', 'market notifications' and 'news' notifications. This system automatically alerts border inspection points (sea ports and airports) enabling them to target their checks on imported food. The Commission also has a procedure in place to alert third countries (outside the EU) about problems affecting food and will, where appropriate, contact third countries via their embassies.

Publish advice/guidance

The Agency issues statements and precautionary advice, where necessary, to consumers and farmers, informing them about issues affecting the human food chain and advising action they should take. The Agency aims to issue advice, where necessary, within hours of being notified of an incident/emergency. However, in some cases we may need to seek further advice, for example, from our scientific advisory committees, which may add some time to the process. This advice, when placed on the Agency's website (www.food.gov.uk) is reviewed as new information comes to light. During a high-level incident, the Agency may also decide to open up a hotline to deal with calls from the general public about the emergency.

Where food is imported, the Agency will issue advice and instructions to local authorities and port health authorities at sea ports, airports and border inspection posts, and will work with Customs to identify consignments.

Case Study 3 – Avian influenza

Background

Avian influenza is an animal health issue dealt with in the UK primarily by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). However the Agency has a food safety advisory role in the Government response to such incidents.

In February 2007, an outbreak of the virulent H5N1 strain of avian influenza was confirmed at a poultry plant in Suffolk, and there was concern that meat from a restricted zone in Hungary could have been the source of the infection. During June and July 2007, a number of European H5N1 outbreaks in farmed poultry were confirmed in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Germany. In November, there was a second UK outbreak, at a poultry processing plant on the Norfolk/Suffolk border.

Risks to consumers

There has been concern among consumers about the transmission of avian influenza from birds to humans through eating infected meat and eggs. On the basis of current scientific evidence avian influenza does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers. For people, the risk of catching the disease comes from being in close contact with live poultry that have the disease and not through eating cooked poultry or eggs.

Action taken

- DEFRA acted to contain the February and November outbreaks in the UK, and the Agency, along with other parties and particularly the Health Protection Agency (HPA), participated in the Government response.
- By briefing the media and placing information on the food.gov.uk website, the Agency was able to reassure consumers that there was no food safety threat to human health if eggs and poultry were cooked properly.
- After the February outbreak, the Agency found no evidence that any meat entered the UK food chain illegally from the restricted zones in Hungary. And the risk to food processing workers and other personnel working in and around the plant was assessed by the HPA as being very low.
- During the H5N1 outbreaks in Europe, DEFRA confirmed that no live poultry had been imported from the Czech Republic to the UK within three months and the Agency repeated its advice that avian influenza does not pose a food safety risk to UK consumers.

- The Agency's food safety advice stayed the same during the November outbreak and was based on the best available evidence, constantly reviewed.
- Avian influenza has implications for both animal health and public health, requiring integrated working from several government departments and agencies. During 2007, the series of avian influenza incidents tested that working relationship, and the Agency was able to give advice on the implications for food safety.

On the recommendation of the Agency, a temporary closure notice to close shellfish harvesting areas may be issued by local authorities. This measure is applicable where an incident is localised.

The Agency also issues guidelines. For example, the Food Incidents Task Force, set up by the Agency in the wake of the Sudan I incident, published draft guidelines for preventing and responding to food incidents in 2006. The finalised guidelines were published in March 2007.

In relation to remedial issues (for example the clear-up operation following environmental contamination incidents), where lead responsibility jointly rests with DEFRA and the Environment Agency, the Agency will participate in the process and offer advice. This ensures that any remedial strategy takes full account of food safety issues.

Voluntary restrictions

These are measures agreed verbally and in writing with the producer or product purchaser. For example, three-month movement restrictions may be placed on potentially affected livestock following a lead poisoning incident.

Statutory restrictions

Subject to Ministerial approval, the Agency may implement an order under the Food and Environment Protection Act (FEPA) to 'ring-fence' an area. This restricts the sale or movement of food or agricultural produce. This order will be reviewed periodically as new details come to light. The FEPA order will contain prohibitions regarding the use of affected food throughout the UK. A FEPA could be activated, for example, following a large-scale oil spill. There were no FEPA orders issued by the Agency in 2007.

In contrast to those powers under FEPA, provisions in the Food Safety Act 1990 will be used to deal with emergencies on a narrower scale in relation to a particular class of food.

Section 13 of the Food Safety Act 1990 empowers the Secretary of State (in England) to make emergency control orders in relation to the carrying out of commercial operations in regard to food, food sources (including imported food) or contact materials of any class or description that involves, or may involve, imminent risk of injury to health. Powers under the Food Safety Act are different to the powers in FEPA, in that it is not necessary under FEPA for there to be an imminent risk of injury to health before an order can be made.

By notifying the Agency promptly of an incident, external stakeholders can ensure that, where necessary, action will be taken by the Agency to protect food safety.

Sampling and analysis

The Agency may decide to initiate a sampling and analysis programme to complement any sampling and analysis being carried out by other departments/agencies. Analysis will be carried out by the most competent laboratory available. The Agency's sampling programme will be reviewed as new information comes to light.

How do we learn from experience?

All incidents notified to the Agency are reviewed. Routine reviews of incidents may generate lessons learned, which will be recorded and shared within the Agency. Lessons are recorded on a rolling basis and combined, where appropriate, with lessons learned from exercises carried out to test Agency responses to emergency scenarios.

The Agency selects a number of incidents, a maximum of six each year, for a wider, formal internal review. To broaden the scope of our review process we are developing an external review programme (see page 32).

The Agency also holds quarterly incident review meetings (eg. with the Veterinary Laboratories Agency). These meetings may concentrate on particular incident types (such as on-farm incidents). They may also be used to review trends, statistics or procedures.

9 Achievements in 2007

A similar number of incidents were reported in 2007 to the agency as had been reported in 2006. There were a number of high-profile incidents, such as the *MCS Napoli* and Avian influenza incidents (see case studies) where the Agency was involved in a wider government response, working effectively with other departments and agencies to provide food safety advice.

The need for data to underpin the Agency's decision making was recognised in our 2006 report. In 2007, we have been able to analyse all the data collected by the Agency since its inception in 2000. The data are set out in Appendix 3 – Statistics of this report. Analysis of trends in the data is helping the Agency to work towards formulating evidence-based policies for the future. For further information, please refer to the Incident Prevention Strategy Consultation section (page 36).

Case Study 4 – *MCS Napoli*

Background

In January 2007, the container ship *MCS Napoli* was damaged in storms off the Devon coast. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency was involved in the rescue of her crew and *MCS Napoli* was eventually grounded in Lyme Bay, a fishing area. This resulted in the loss of about 200 cargo containers and a relatively small amount of oil. A disaster on this scale required a far-reaching Government response.

Risks to consumers

The grounding of the *MCS Napoli* had widespread implications for the public.

MCS Napoli had the potential to pollute local shellfish fisheries with her fuel and any hazardous cargo. Unfit produce from containers aboard the ship could enter the food chain.

Action taken

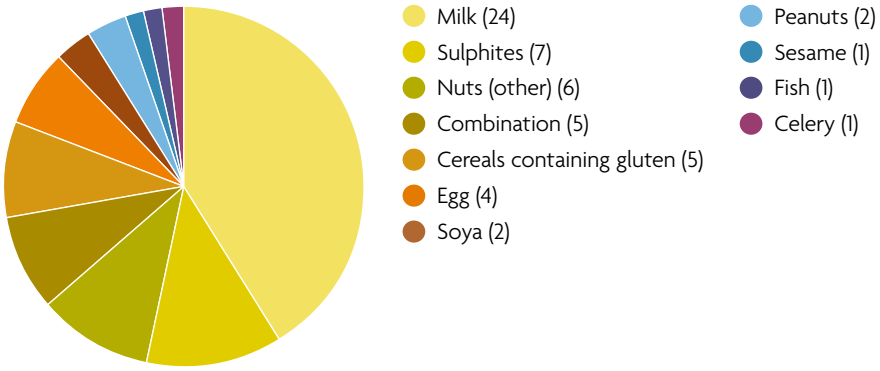
- There was a cross-Government response, co-ordinated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- The agency was involved in joint working with the Environment Agency, police, local authorities, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, HM Revenue and Customs, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Secretary of State's Representative for Salvage and Intervention, RSPCA, RSPB, Natural England, and the Marine Fisheries Agency.
- Local shellfish beds were identified and a food safety advice press release was issued, including advice for fishermen.
- By checking the ship's manifest the Agency was able to identify all containers with food in and arrange for them to be treated appropriately by all responders.

Joint working with local authority enforcement officers ensured that all recovered food containers were checked by environmental health officers and the contents either destroyed or reintroduced into the food chain, as appropriate.

Allergy Alert system

In 2006, as a result of feedback from both authorities and consumers, the Agency concluded that the food alert system was not the most effective way of contacting allergic or food-intolerant consumers who may have purchased a product that was the subject to a recall or withdrawal. Consequently, in March 2007, the Agency introduced the Allergy Alert Notice system for incidents that do not need enforcement action. The first allergy alert was issued on 19 March.

Since the inception of the system, the Agency has issued 58 allergy alerts and 3 update alerts to consumers. Between April 2000 and March 2007, 53 food alerts for information were circulated as a result of allergen incidents. Of the 58 original alerts, 42% were a result of milk, either due to cross-contamination or to a labelling error.



Of the 58 alerts, 78% resulted from notifications to the Agency by industry.

The Agency can now issue an allergy alert at any time. In the past, Food Alerts from the Agency were issued during normal working hours as they were intended for local authorities. However the Allergy Alert system is aimed at providing information to consumers and so the Agency now issues alerts as soon as possible after receiving the information, and in the most appropriate format for the recipient.

A free Allergy SMS Text Message Service was launched in March 2007. It means people with food allergies no longer need to access a computer and log on before finding out that there is a problem. Subscribers receive a text message whenever an Allergy Alert Notice is issued. The text message system also helps reduce the information overload on local authorities and is more sustainable than the paper mail system used at present by consumer support organisations. Initial feedback following the introduction of the new allergy alert system has been positive.

Allergy Alerts are placed on the allergy pages of the food.gov.uk website (www.food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/alerts/) and in the news section of the Agency's homepage (www.food.gov.uk). Consumers can subscribe online to an email alert system.

Revised online incident report form for industry

Work to make it easier to report incidents to the Agency has continued in 2007, with the launch in August of an enhanced online incident report form, so that food and animal feed businesses can notify us if they need to recall or withdraw products. The revised report form, which was requested by industry stakeholders in 2006, means they can quickly submit relevant information on new incidents and the products affected. Users can save and print the data they are submitting and they get an electronic acknowledgement. Informal feedback from industry about the revised online incident form has been positive.

On receipt of an online form, we verify the data and then it is included in the Agency's Incidents Database. This improves greatly the handling and bringing together of food incident information, particularly where long lists of products are involved. Improved incident reports help us gauge better any risk to the public, and give the Agency and local authorities more information to act thus increasing consumer protection.

External incident reviews

The Agency conducts internal reviews of incidents using the Incidents Response Protocol in order to learn lessons, but has not regularly carried out external incident reviews. However, the Agency was involved in two external reviews in 2007, both of which have helped inform our external review strategy.

In February 2007, the Judicial Review of a 2006 incident involving unauthorised GM rice committed the Agency to an external review of its handling of the incident. This was structured as a modified internal review inviting comments from external stakeholders, and was followed by an open meeting held in November 2007. The results of this review are not yet available, however the discussion of the response to the incident between all the parties involved is helping the Agency to continue to develop its external review strategy and act to better protect consumers.

Second, there was a review of the 2005 Sudan I incident – the largest ever recall of food products in the UK resulting from contamination with the illegal dye, Sudan I. The independent review panel's recommendations, published in September 2007, concentrated on four main areas: incident prevention, incident handling, communications and relationships. As a result the Agency has:

- strengthened its early warning systems by working more closely with European and World Health Organization incident networks
- developed an incident prevention strategy
- developed a national Food Fraud Database, providing local authorities with an effective resource to help with their investigations.

Data Analysis Project

The Agency's Data Analysis Project that was set up to carry out a detailed examination of all the incidents data the Agency holds stretching back to its inception in April 2000 is nearing completion of its first phase.

The aim of the DAP is to provide the evidence base to underpin the Agency's work towards delivering its strategic plan targets.

The first output from the project was the production of the statistics section of the 2006 Annual Report of Incidents last year, which reported on the incidents that occurred in 2006. Since then a more detailed analysis of all the data since 2000 has been carried out and the trends are reported here in the statistics section of the 2007 Annual Report of Incidents. A more detailed report will be made available on the food.gov.uk website in 2008.

The data from the DAP is already being used by many areas within the Agency in order to achieve their objectives. Results from the DAP will feed into the Agency's work on monitoring food and feed safety patterns across the UK and establishing a future incident prevention strategy. The final DAP report will be published in 2008.

Analysis of the high-level incidents reported to the Agency has identified poor traceability as one of the key underlying factors – in particular, traceability in the meat sector and for the import and distribution of low-cost, high turnover products.

The DAP has identified several types of incidents that arise primarily from preventable causes – 74% of allergens incidents, for example, resulted from labelling or packaging errors, while 90% of metal poisoning incidents on farm resulted from adventitious (batteries, paint etc) rather than geochemical (high soil concentration) sources.

Imported ingredients were identified by the DAP as a major source of incidents. Discounting consignments rejected at the border, 93% of mycotoxin incidents, 95% of unauthorised ingredient incidents and 91% of veterinary medicine residues incidents were a result of imports.

Incident Prevention Strategy

The Agency sees a clear need to reduce the impact of food safety incidents as they cause public health risks, undermine consumer confidence and are costly to the economy. Part of our work to achieve this is to develop an Incident Prevention Strategy to reduce the number and severity of incidents over the next two years. To do this we need to improve our knowledge of the food chain, build trust with the food industry and engage with our stakeholders.

The themes of our incident prevention strategy are: to improve our intelligence gathering and horizon scanning; to build trust and partnerships with stakeholders; and to use better science to achieve better regulation.

In the last year we have worked to develop the strategy in cooperation with internal colleagues and industry stakeholders, including holding a workshop with industry stakeholders. Outputs from the Data Analysis Project will also feed into our Incident Prevention Strategy.

Exercise programme consultation

A successful response to an incident or a major emergency requires a variety of skills, both technical and organisational, that are already available within the Agency and our stakeholders. However, the staff with such skills are not always used to working together on an incident, so in 2007 an Emergency Exercise Stakeholder Group, with representation from enforcement bodies, representative organisations, the food industry and consumers was formed to develop a programme of exercises to practise these cross-cutting responses.

The Agency is working to diversify the types of exercise undertaken, changing from its historic emphasis on radiological incidents to include more chemical and microbiological exercises. We will also include events that involve key external stakeholders, including those with whom we work on a daily basis. This will help to build relationships and optimise incident response generally.

10 Looking ahead

A similar number of incidents were reported to the agency in 2007 as had been reported in 2006, and there were several high level and complex investigations, that were subject to extensive media interest.

The need for data to underpin our decision making continues to be recognised, and in 2007 the Incidents Database Project delivered further information to help inform the Agency's strategy for incident prevention in the future.

The year 2007 was a time for preparation and planning. In 2008 we will begin to implement those plans.

Incident Prevention Strategy consultation

The Agency will launch a full stakeholder consultation on the Incident Prevention Strategy (IPS) in 2008 to capture the views of all those involved. We will be considering the IPS in the context of sustainability, although our initial assessment suggests that there are unlikely to be adverse sustainability implications given its potential benefits in terms of reduced food waste and enhanced consumer safety. We are also looking at using the results from our quarterly incident review meetings to identify the root causes of incidents. This data can then help to inform the IPS.

To assist the Agency's internal programme board, a stakeholder consultation group will be established in 2008 to provide technical expertise and advice on how best to ensure the delivery of the IPS.

The Agency sees the strategy as a living document to which additional activities will be added as we engage with more businesses during the delivery phase. We intend to provide a progress report in 12 months', time.

Workshops (for local authorities and industry)

Local authorities are the Agency's major partners in incident investigation. They have asked the Agency for more opportunities to understand the Agency's processes and needs better – particularly regarding general food law and the Agency's risk assessment process. In 2008 we intend to put in place a detailed programme for local authorities, to be delivered in 2009.

In 2008 we will be organising two pilot workshops for industry, concentrating on our risk assessment process and the prevention of incidents. Once we have reviewed these events and learned from them we intend to roll them out more widely in the UK.

Exercise Programme

There is a clear appetite from stakeholders to take part in exercises in incident response to test that protocols and skills are in place. The Agency has identified an out-of-hours call-out exercise as its first priority, with the emphasis on local authority response. This pilot exercise will be run in 2008. We are also developing a three-year programme of exercises. As well as working with external stakeholders, we are also providing support within the Agency to those wishing to take part in, or run, exercises so that the Agency can address a much wider range of scenarios than it has in the past.

External incident reviews

We would like to give our external stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to our incident reviews, so we are developing a strategy for conducting external reviews. This is tied in with the Agency's Strategic Plan target of building and maintaining the trust of stakeholders in our handling of food safety issues. This process will contribute to making the actions of the Agency more open and transparent and will increase engagement with stakeholders.

In 2007, the Agency was involved in independent reviews of the Sudan I and GM rice incidents. We have looked closely at the structure of these reviews and defined some important points including timing (soon after closure), participation, scope and the benefits of an independent chair for external reviews.

Looking ahead to 2008, the Agency intends to carry out three reviews, with both an internal and external element and taking place soon after the incidents are closed. We intend to learn from these and refine the external review process accordingly during 2008.

Protocol for communicating during an incident

Communicating clearly during an incident is absolutely vital. Consumers need to know what the potential risk to them might be, and what they need to do to avoid it. And the companies, local authorities and regulatory bodies involved in any incident also need to have a clear idea of what the Agency is going to do, why it's going to do it, and when.

The Agency has devised a protocol, with stakeholders, on how it will communicate during a food incident. This is not a rigid code that the Agency will impose during a food incident – each one is different and has its own particular pressures, issues and challenges – but it does set a framework for the Agency's actions. The protocol is embedded in the Agency's principles for preventing and responding to food incidents which is available on our website. We expect to publish the protocol in 2008, following consultation with external stakeholders.

Review of food alert system

The Agency's Food Alert System is our key route for communication with Local Authorities, but feedback from them suggests that the system is not fully meeting their needs. Also, industry stakeholders see the emotive connotations of the use of the word 'alert' in food alerts and the permanence of the alerts on the Agency's website as penalising the companies involved. Although food alerts provide important information to consumers via the local authorities, the Agency is increasingly using other forms of communication, such as web stories, to alert people to incidents. So in 2008 we plan to review the food alert system.

Revised online incident form

Feedback from users of the revised online incident form for industry, which went live in 2007, was positive. Work to make it easier to report incidents to the Agency continues, and in 2008, after a period of testing, we aim to roll out a revised online form to local authorities, who should notify the Agency of incidents under the code of practice. The revised form will replace the current code of practice form that local authorities complete.

Annual Report 2008

The Agency aims, as part of its policy of openness and transparency, to publish an Annual Report of Incidents in 2009. This target is reflected in the Agency's Corporate Plan. As with previous reports we would be grateful for feedback from external stakeholders on its content and what they would like to see included in future. Contact details are set out in appendix 4 of this report.

Appendix 1
Notifying organisations

Local authorities

Local authorities regularly undertake inspections of premises and sample products from wholesale or retail outlets. Where breaches of food safety requirements are identified, the authority will contact the Incidents Branch via an incident report form.

Local authorities provide information to the Agency under the Single Liaison Body (SLB) system. The Agency is the SLB for the UK as designated under Article 35 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

The Single Liaison Body

- Assists and coordinates communication between EU member states on food issues
- Forwards complaints and requests for information to member states
- Receives incoming requests for assistance and directs these to the appropriate home authority (local authority)
- Resolves difficulties in communication and liaison.

Industry and food business operators

Food business operators are required by law (Article 19 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002) to inform the competent authorities where they consider or have reason to believe that a foodstuff is not in compliance with food safety requirements. In the case of the UK, the agency and enforcement authorities (local and port health authorities) are the competent authorities.

The European Commission

The European Commission operates the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed. The RASFF system is a network of member states, The European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority. Whenever a member of the network has any information relating to the existence of a serious direct or indirect risk to human health, this information is immediately forwarded to the Commission using a rapid alert form. The Commission then immediately transmits this information to the members of the network.

Members of the public

Occasionally, we will receive notification of food incidents and quality issues from members of the public, although we stress that the public should always contact their local environmental health office first.

Emergency services

Notifications are regularly received from the police, fire service and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. These notifications usually relate to fires, spills or leaks where there is the potential for contamination in the food chain.

Other Government departments/agencies

Notifications may be received from many Government departments or agencies; for example, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, the Health Protection Agency, the Veterinary Laboratories Agency and Government Offices for the Regions.

Devolved administration departments

Both the Scottish Agricultural College and the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland supply notifications to the Agency.

Border inspection posts

Border inspection posts (BIP) in the UK routinely sample incoming consignments of foodstuffs to ensure compliance with legislation. Adverse results are notified to the Agency and action is taken to ensure that the incoming consignment is destroyed or re-exported where permissible.

Border rejection notifications are sent by the Agency to the European Commission via RASFF and circulated to all member states. Information circulated in this manner is used by BIPs to determine which incoming consignments to sample. Following the rejection of a consignment at a BIP, the manufacturer or exporter concerned can expect to have further consignments sampled to ensure compliance with legislation.

Miscellaneous organisations and facilities

Groups such as the Anaphylaxis Campaign and Allergy UK will notify the Agency if they become aware of any issues relating to food allergies. Nuclear power stations and independent laboratories will also notify the Agency of incidents.

Appendix 2
How do we classify an incident?

The Agency classifies all incidents using a combination of the severity of the incident and the complexity of the investigation. A number of parameters contribute to these high-level criteria. But the overall assessment or output is simply high, medium or low.

Severity	Complexity
Extent of health effects	Numbers of reports received
Numbers and/or groups of consumers affected	Numbers of products/locations
Public health risk assessment	Number of agencies involved
Perceived risk by consumers	Traceability
Perceived risk by the media	

Each heading contains a range of scores and is weighted to produce a final score that equates to high, medium or low. The system enables rapid and consistent categorisation of incidents, once notified, and as they develop. Thus allowing incidents to be effectively scoped, resourced and managed. The system is not designed as a risk assessment tool, but a means to aid the agency in planning and management decisions.

Low

These are minor incidents, with localised effects and few, if any, food safety implications. Neither the public, nor the media would be concerned. Examples of such incidents include barn fires, vehicles in rivers, or minor oil spills.

Medium

These include incidents involving evidence of illness, impact on vulnerable groups (babies, pregnant women or older people), breaches of statutory limits for example of mycotoxins. In some cases the public or the media are likely to express some concerns.

High

These are severe incidents with the potential to cause serious illness or deaths. They are complex, with a large number of products affected and a high level of resources required to manage. They are widespread and likely to generate a high level of concern among the public and the media.

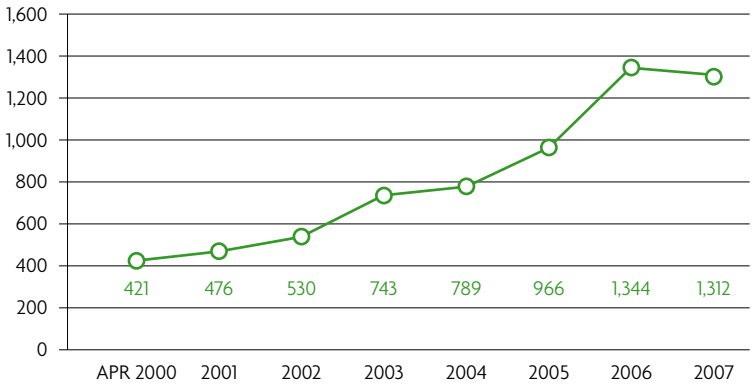
Appendix 3
Statistics

Total number of incidents

In 2007, the Agency dealt with 1,312 incidents – a slight fall compared with 2006.

Since April 2000, there have been 6,581 food incidents recorded by the Agency.

Recorded incidents April 2000-2007



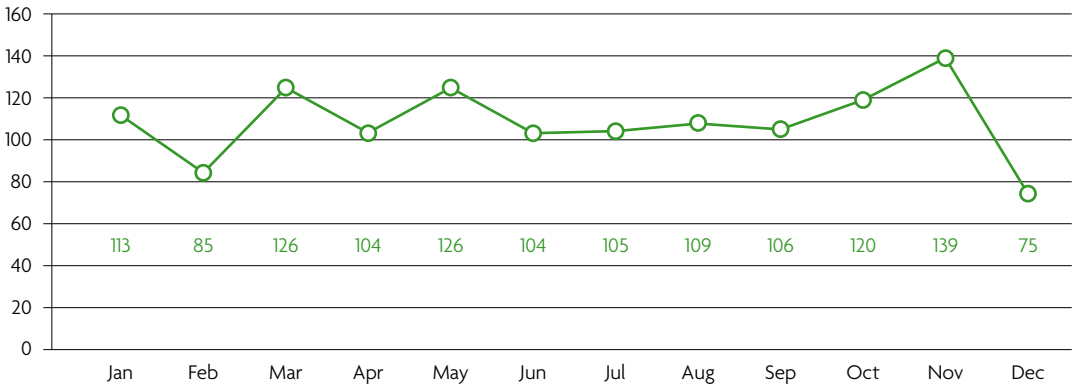
The number of incidents recorded per year increased from 421 in 2000 to 1,344 in 2006 before falling to 1,312 in 2007. The increase in recorded incidents from April 2000 can be chiefly attributed to:

- Improved reporting and recording systems for incidents within the Agency
- A wider definition of an incident
- The implementation of European Commission Regulation (EC) 178/2002 ('General Food Law') in the UK on 1 January 2005
- Improved engagement with stakeholders such as local authorities, industry, the blue light services and other Government departments and agencies.

Note: The 2006 Annual Report of Incidents gave the total number of incidents in 2006 as 1,342. During the validation of historical data, one incident was uncovered that had been given an incorrect notification date and should, therefore, have been included with the 2006 data. One incident was also discovered without a record, therefore a record was created and the incident added to the 2006 total, which now stands at 1,344. (All the 2006 data has undergone a second verification exercise as part of the Data Analysis Project, resulting in small changes to the 2006 data presented here compared with that presented in the 2006 annual report.)

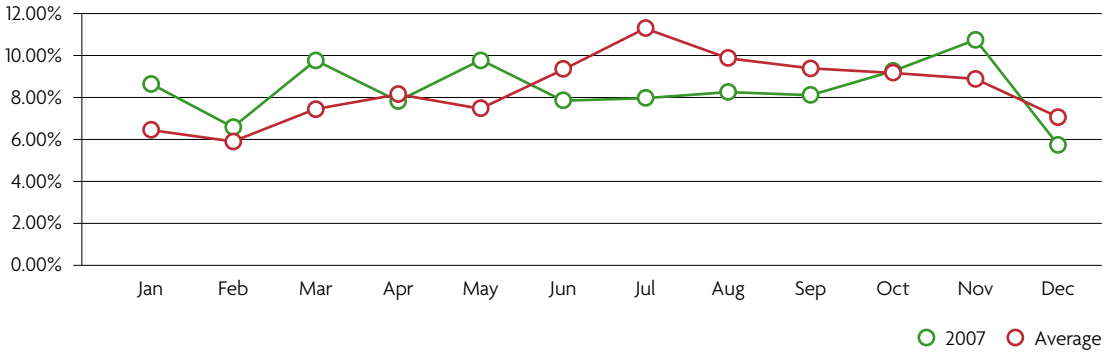
Month-by-month breakdown

The month-by-month breakdown of incidents for 2007 shows four separate reporting peaks: January, March, May and November.



Comparing the reporting profile for 2007 with the average reporting profile for 2001-2006 (see graph) shows that the reporting of incidents during 2007 followed a different pattern to the preceding years. One of the major factors affecting the reporting in 2007 was the weather. Since the inception of the Agency, 19% (1,264) incidents have resulted from fires, with more reports in the summer months as a result of the warmer, drier conditions. The wet summer months of 2007 resulted in far fewer notifications for fires when compared with previous years. During May to August 2006, the Agency received 116 reports of fires. This number dropped to 35 for the same period in 2007.

Percentage of incidents reported per month 2007 compared to 2001-2006 average



Incidents by classification level

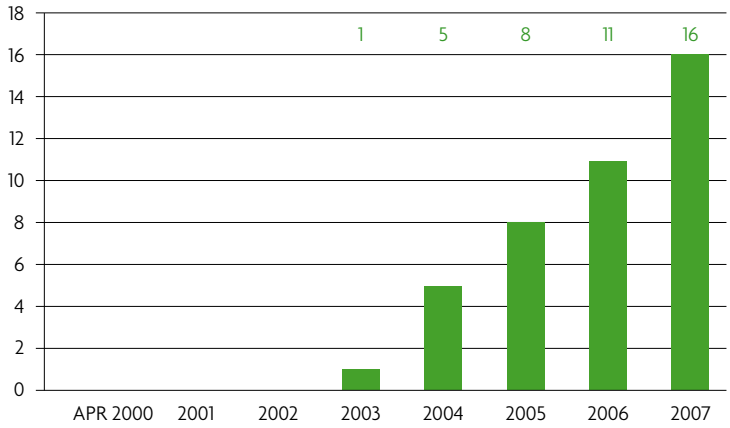
The Agency classifies incidents as low, medium or high. Incidents are classified using a matrix combining the severity of the incident with the complexity of the investigation. The matrix has been applied retrospectively to incidents predating its inception in 2004.

In 2007, the Foods Standards Agency handled 16 incidents that were classified as high (1.2% of the total number). This represented a slightly higher figure than in 2006 (10), which can be attributable to a more consistent use of the classification matrix and a greater number of complex incidents. Incidents classifying as high included

- The Agency's role in the cross-governmental responses to flooding, avian influenza in Suffolk, foot-and-mouth disease, raw sewage discharge into the Firth of Forth and the sinking of the *MSC Napoli*
- An outbreak of *E.coli* 0157 in Scotland
- Dioxin contamination in guar gum from India
- A joint HPA/LACORS survey into salmonella in herbs

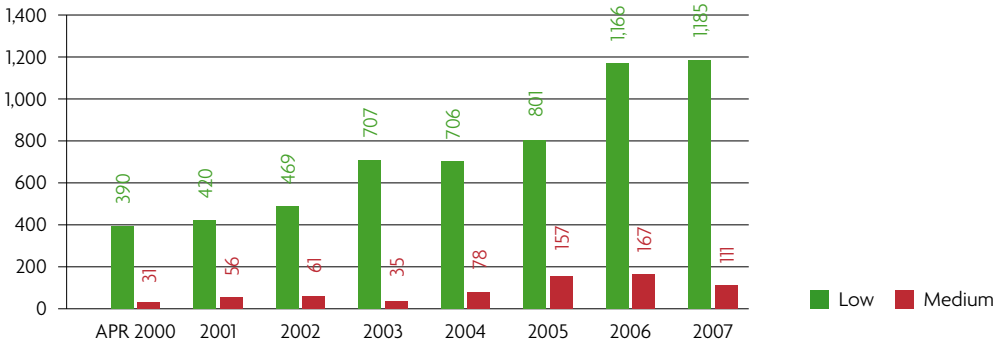
The first incident ever to be classified as high on the Agency's matrix took place in 2003 (Sudan I in spice mix) and the numbers have increased year on year since then to 16 in 2007. The number of incidents classed as medium has also risen since 2000, despite a drop in 2007. This increase in high and medium incidents is a reflection of the increasing role played by the Agency during incidents and the increasing number of incidents notified to the Agency as a result of a wider definition, engagement with stakeholders, improved recording systems and the implementation of general food law.

High incidents 2000-2007



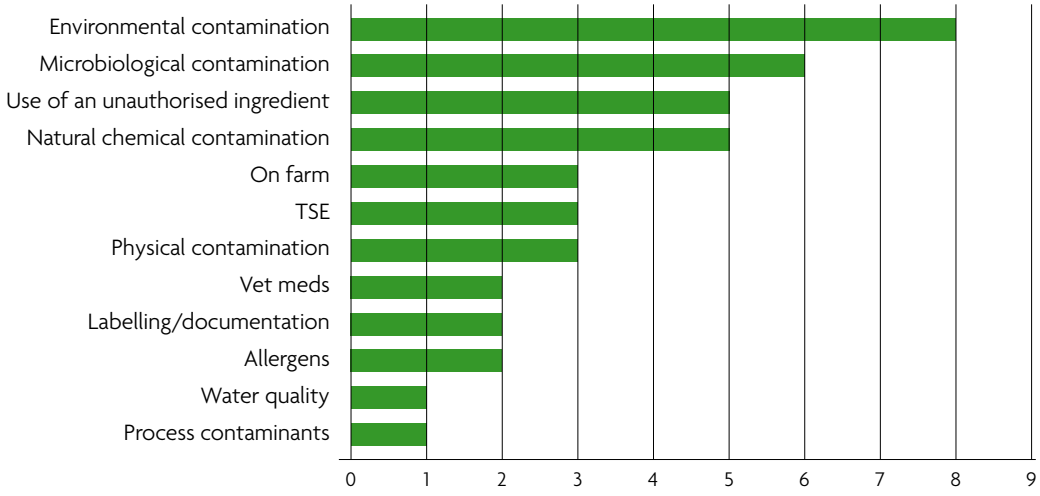
The number of medium-level incidents recorded by the Agency has decreased from 167 in 2006 to 111 in 2007. The number of low incidents reported per year has continually increased since the inception of the Agency reaching 1,185 in 2007.

Low and medium incidents 2000-2007



Since April 2000, there have been more environmental contamination incidents classified as high than any other category. Those eight incidents are, however, only 0.34% of the total environmental contamination incidents (2,388). There have been three transmissible spongiform encephalopathy incidents classified as high since April 2000. However, as a percentage of the total number of TSE incidents, this is 11%.

Category of high incidents April 2000-May 2007



Incidents by category

In 2007, there were several notable differences from previous years in the categories of incidents reported.

- There was an increase in the number of on-farm incidents. The number of reports of suspected or confirmed botulism in cattle more than doubled from 32 in 2006 to 71 in 2007.
- There was a continued increase in the number of allergen incidents resulting from the Agency's engagement work and increased media profile.
- The number of environmental contamination incidents resulting from fires, spills and leaks fell from 316 in 2006 to 194 in 2007.
- The increase in natural chemical contamination incidents compared with 2006 was due to increased reports of aflatoxin contamination.

The main categories and numbers of incidents per category for the years 2000-2007 are summarised in the table.

A total of 6,581 incidents have been notified to the Agency since April 2000. Environmental contamination incidents account for 36% (2388) of the total incidents dealt with by the Agency. Microbiological incidents are the next highest category of incident (12%, 783), followed by on-farm incidents (11%, 697), natural chemical contamination (9.4%, 615) and physical contamination (7.4%, 487).

The table also shows that very few incidents have been received concerning biocide contamination (0.11%, 7), counterfeit products (0.30%, 20), contamination of animal feed on the market (0.41%, 27) and TSEs (0.43%, 28).

Reported incidents from 2000-2007: by category

Category	Apr 2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Allergens	3	3	11	11	16	42	61	86	233
Animal feed (on market)	0	0	1	1	3	3	9	10	27
Biocides	0	0	2	1	0	2	2	0	7
Counterfeit products	0	0	2	4	1	4	6	3	20
Environmental contamination	216	257	250	345	330	389	376	226	2,389
Food contact materials	4	3	2	2	4	12	15	26	68
Illegal import/ export	0	1	6	3	2	3	16	17	48
Irradiated ingredient	2	1	0	2	4	3	14	23	49
Labelling/ documentation	3	8	4	9	19	19	93	82	237
Microbiological contamination	70	58	63	67	101	114	147	163	783
Natural chemical contamination	19	31	25	19	50	87	169	215	615
On-farm	62	38	61	93	86	98	99	160	697
Pesticides	4	10	7	12	8	15	20	35	111
Physical contamination	28	45	42	29	36	45	139	123	487
Process contaminants	2	2	7	10	4	8	15	21	69
Radiological	1	3	6	3	15	14	11	14	67
TSE	0	3	2	1	4	0	10	8	28
Use of an unauthorised ingredient	4	6	6	53	52	49	52	46	268
Veterinary medicines	2	4	29	76	42	50	78	45	326
Water quality	1	3	4	2	12	9	12	9	52
Total	421	476	530	743	789	966	1,344	1,312	6,581

Detailed analysis of incident categories

Allergen Incidents

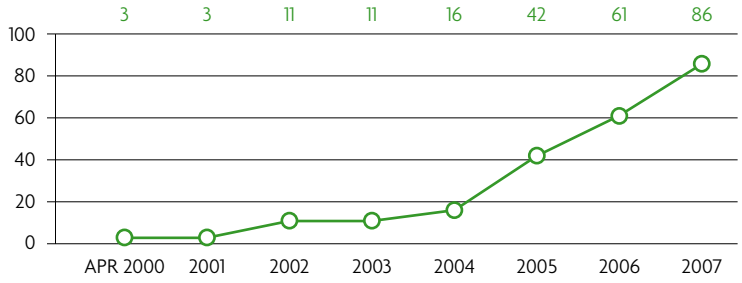
There were 86 allergen incidents in 2007.

Since 2005, there has been a rise in the number of allergen incidents reported to the Agency. This is an effect of the implementation of food labelling regulations and general food law with its obligation on industry to report suspected food law breaches to their competent authority and the specific provision relating to vulnerable groups such as allergic consumers.

With the increase in reporting, media profile and consumer awareness, the Agency has modified and refined its risk management systems for allergen incidents, with the creation of Allergy Alerts to specifically target the at-risk consumers. This work, alongside Agency guidance to industry on allergen issues, has helped to drive this reporting increase by fostering Agency-industry-authority working relationships.

Of the 233 total allergen incidents reported to the Agency, most (76%, 176) have been the result of labelling or packaging errors, some (24%, 56) the result of cross-contamination and one a result of malicious tampering.

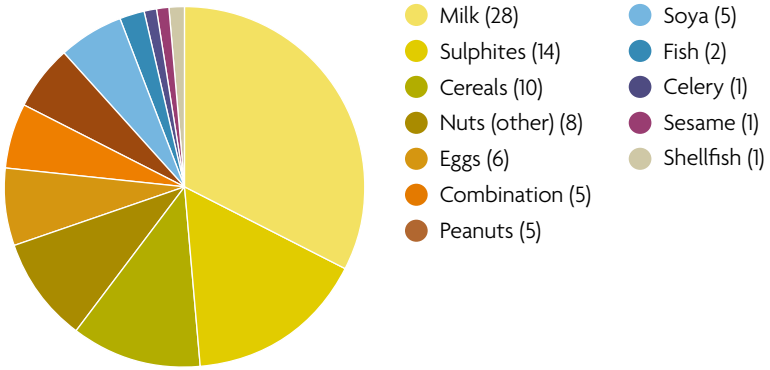
Allergens incidents April 2000-2007



The breakdown of allergen incidents by allergen type is shown below for 2007.

The major type of allergen incident in 2007 was milk (or dairy) related (33%, 28), followed by sulphites (16%, 14), cereals containing gluten (12%, 10), and nuts (other than peanuts – 9.3%, 8).

Allergen incidents 2007



Animal feed (on market)

Animal feed is manufactured and marketed in accordance with EC legislation on composition and labelling. Breaches of legislation or adverse analytical results are notified to the Agency.

In 2007, there were 10 animal feed (on market) incidents notified to the Agency, one more than in 2006. The source of those incidents is shown below.

Source of animal feed (On market) incidents	2007
Use of unauthorised ingredient	4
Metals	2
Natural chemical contamination	2
Dioxins	1
Microbiological incident	1

Biocides

A biocide is a product typically used to kill micro-organisms. There were no incidents in 2007 classified under the biocide category. All incidents involving biocides related to on-farm poisonings and appear in the on-farm category.

Counterfeit products

The Agency provides food safety advice to enforcement authorities investigating counterfeit products. Of the three incidents reported in 2007, two related to counterfeit vodka and one to ready-to-eat products.

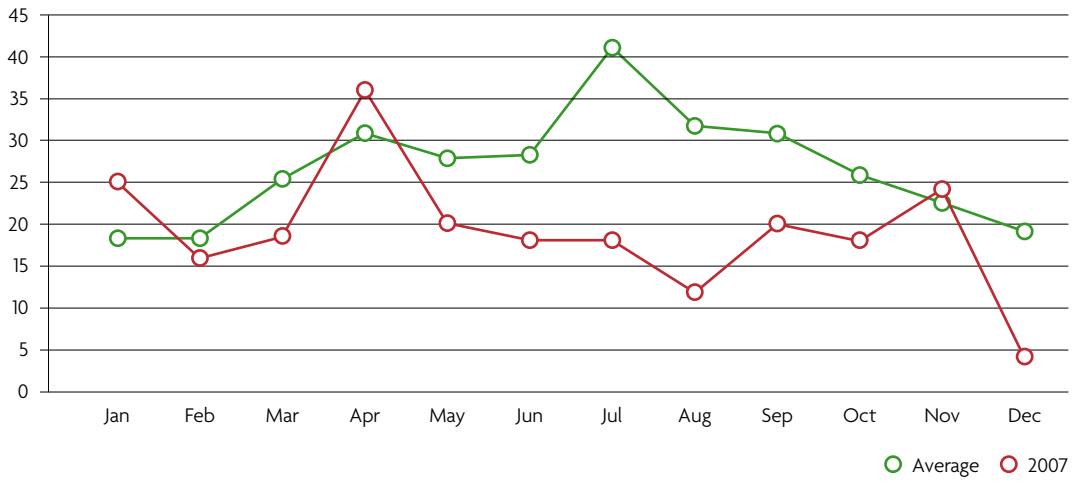
In total, there have been 20 counterfeit product incidents since April 2000; 14 concerning vodka and the potential for unsafe levels of methanol to be present.

Environmental contamination

Despite a drop from a total of 376 incidents in 2006 to 226 incidents in 2007, environmental contamination was the major incident category in 2007.

Since 2000, 53% (1,264) of all environmental contamination incidents have been reported as a result of fire.

The pattern of reporting of environmental contamination incidents in 2007 compared with the 2001-2006 average, shown in the graph, reflects the effect of the wet weather in summer 2007, which reduced the reporting of fires. Notifications resulting from spills and leaks also fell in 2007.

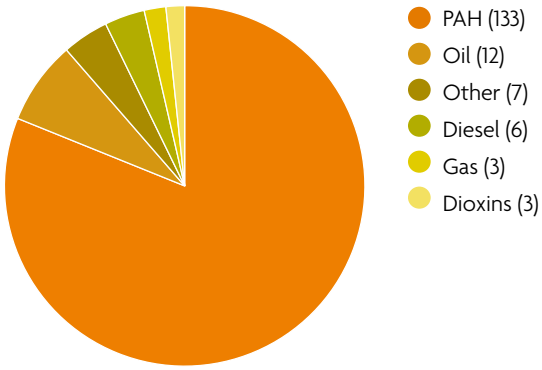


Environmental incidents are categorised by the Agency as organic contamination, inorganic contamination, sewage contamination or other contamination (chemicals/compounds that are not easily classified as organic or inorganic). Both the organic and inorganic sub categories can be divided further. Organic into polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), gas, oil, diesel, dioxins and other (organics that cannot be grouped as above). Inorganic into lead, copper, cadmium, mercury, tin and other (inorganic compounds). Fires are the main source of organic contamination. Chemical spills or leaks are the major source of inorganic contamination.

In general, fires, spills and leaks do not have a direct impact on food safety, however, this can only be determined by assessing each and every one. In 2007, there was Agency involvement in the wider cross-government response to spills, leaks and other accidents such as the sinking of the *MSC Napoli*, raw sewage discharge into the Firth of Forth and the widespread UK flooding, a number of which required significant food safety advice.

Excluding fires, spills or leaks, there were eight incidents of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in smoked products, three dioxin contamination incidents, six incidents of lead contamination, six incidents of cadmium contamination, five incidents of mercury contamination and four other inorganic contaminants.

Organic contamination incidents 2007



Food contact materials

Contamination of foodstuffs can occur because of the migration of chemicals from utensils and packaging materials or migration from household products such as cleaning agents stored in direct contact.

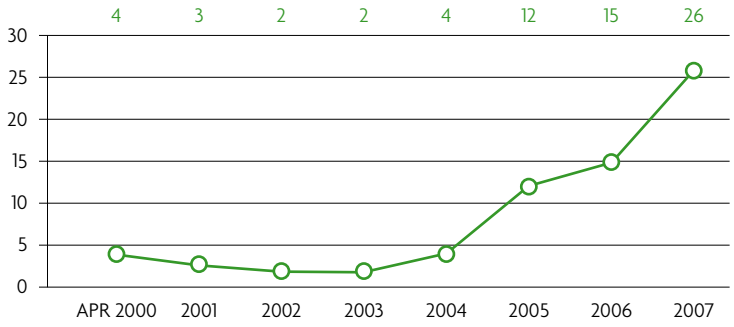
In 2007, there were 26 reported food contact materials incidents.

Source of food contact materials incidents	2007
Migration of chemicals from metal packaging and utensils	6
Migration of chemicals from plastic packaging and utensils	5
Migration of chemicals from paper and board packaging	4
Migration of chemicals from other packaging	7
Spills/leaks/production fault	4

The number of food contact materials incidents increased between 2000 and 2007, reflecting the increase in research and surveys undertaken by the Agency into chemical migration.

For example, in 2007, six adverse sample results were received for the presence of semicarbazide in imported goods. Though not confirmed, it is likely that the presence was due to migration from the gaskets of jar lids and not from the use of an unauthorised veterinary medicine in the foodstuff.

Food contact materials incidents April 2000-2007



Illegal import/export

In 2007, there were 17 recorded incidents arising from illegal imports. These imports were received from Japan, Thailand, Burma, Guyana, China, Brazil and Italy. The illegal imports were of banned or restricted products and ingredients or due to incorrect labelling or fraud.

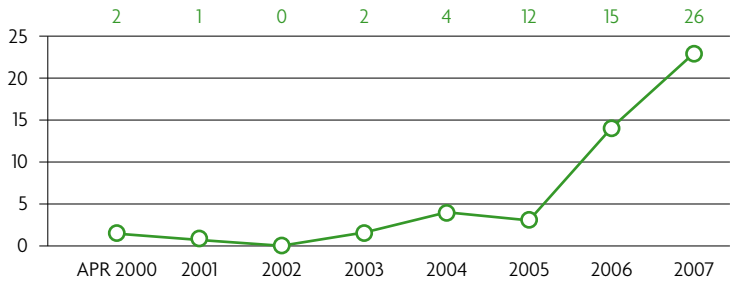
Irradiated ingredients

Food irradiation is regulated by the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1990 (as amended) which implements European Directives. The regulations govern what food groups are permitted to be irradiated, where that irradiation is permitted to take place and the labelling of irradiated ingredients.

There were 23 incidents involving irradiated ingredients in 2007.

The increase in incidents since 2005 is due to the work of the Agency to support sampling at border inspection posts, commissioning of surveys of produce on the UK market in collaboration with local authorities, providing guidance to local authorities on food irradiation and engaging with industry and other stakeholders to raise the profile. One reason behind this work is the specific directive from the EU requiring member states to submit returns for all sampling for food irradiation.

Irradiated ingredients incidents April 2000 to 2007



Labelling/documentation

The rise in incidents from 2006 is a result of the inclusion of single liaison body (SLB) function incidents. The SLB is a communication pathway between local authorities and authorities in other countries and vice versa. Authorities wishing to gather information on a product or to report a complaint to the home authority for an overseas product will do so via the SLB. Similarly an overseas authority wishing to do the same will do so via the SLB. The recording of SLB communications began in 2006 and totalled 121 for the year. Of that 121, 60 were labelling or documentation queries between authorities.

In 2007, the SLB function was the source of 53 of the 82 labelling or documentation incidents.

Source of labelling/ documentation incidents	2007
Labelling or packaging	72
Unauthorised premises/process	6
Fraud	2
Human error	1
Malicious tampering	1

Microbiological incidents

Microbiological incidents fall into one of five different categories in the Agency's recording system. The category 'microbiological incidents involving foods' in the table below includes all microbiological incidents other than those involving, scombrotoxin (histamine production), algal toxins, bottled water, animal feed and microbiological incidents on farm (such as botulism in livestock). Although incidents involving algal toxins and scombrotoxin are included in the table below, they are considered in more detail in the category of natural chemical contamination. Microbiological incidents involving bottled water are dealt with in more detail under water quality. Microbiological incidents categorised as on-farm or involving animal feed are also dealt with in more detail in the appropriate sections elsewhere in the report.

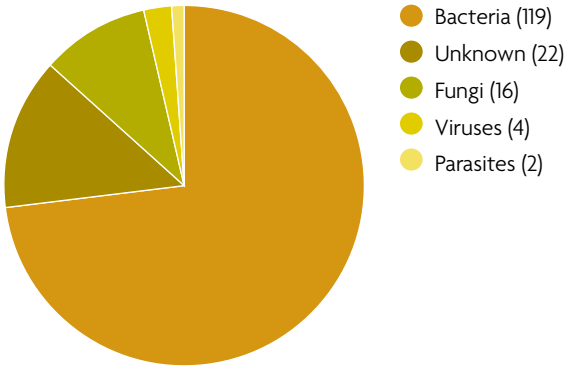
In 2007, 277 microbiological incidents were reported.

A total of 163 incidents were a result of microbiological contamination of foods resulted in 163 incidents in 2007, compared with 147 in 2006 and 114 in 2005.

Source of microbiological contamination incidents	2007
Microbiological contamination of foods	163
Microbiological contamination on farm	79
Algal toxins and scombrotoxin	28
Microbiological incidents involving bottled water	6
Microbiological incidents involving animal feed	1

The sub-categories of the microbiological contamination of foods incidents are shown below. 73% of these were classified as bacterial, 9.8% were due to fungi, 2.4% involved viruses and 1.2% were due to parasites. In 14% of incidents the specific microbiological agent involved was unknown.

Microbiological contamination of foods incidents 2007

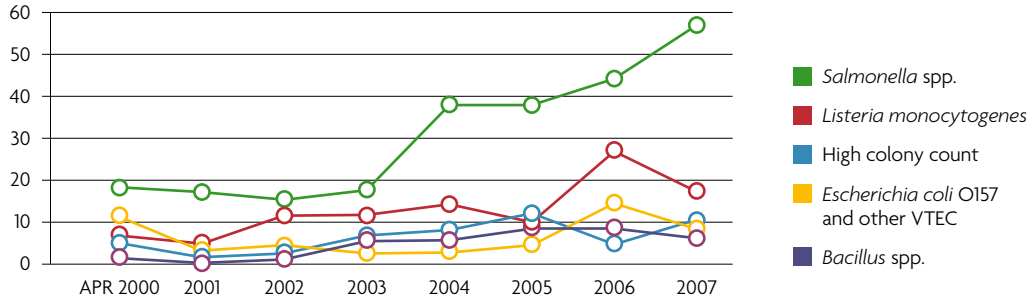


Type of bacterial contamination	2007
Salmonella spp.	57
Listeria monocytogenes	17
High colony count	11
Escherichia coli O157 and other VTEC	8
Bacillus spp.	5
Campylobacter spp.	5
Enterobacter sakazakii	5
Clostridium botulinum	4
Bacterial spoilage	4
Staphylococcus aureus	1
Yersinia enterocolitica	1
Listeria innocua	1

Salmonella was linked to 48% of all bacterial incidents in 2007.

As shown in the graph, the number of recorded salmonella incidents has increased significantly since 2003. Also the number of incidents involving *Listeria monocytogenes* appears to have increased over recent years. These increases could be due to a number of factors, including real effects, improved reporting, themed food surveys and changes in legislation.

Number of microbiological incidents per year April 2000 to December 2007



In 2007, only five incidents involving campylobacter were reported to the Agency, and in total there have only been eight campylobacter incidents reported to the Agency since April 2000. Although Campylobacter is the major bacterial pathogen causing foodborne illness in the UK the organism tends to cause sporadic illness rather than outbreaks and it is perhaps not unexpected that the Agency sees so few food incidents involving this organism.

Natural chemical contamination

Of the 215 natural chemical contamination incidents in 2007, 153 were rejections of consignments at border inspection posts, 49 were adverse samples from imported food found on sale and 13 were adverse samples from UK products. The wetter summer months in 2007 provided improved growing conditions for fungi, which resulted in increased reports of the mycotoxin deoxynivalenol (DON) in UK milling wheat.

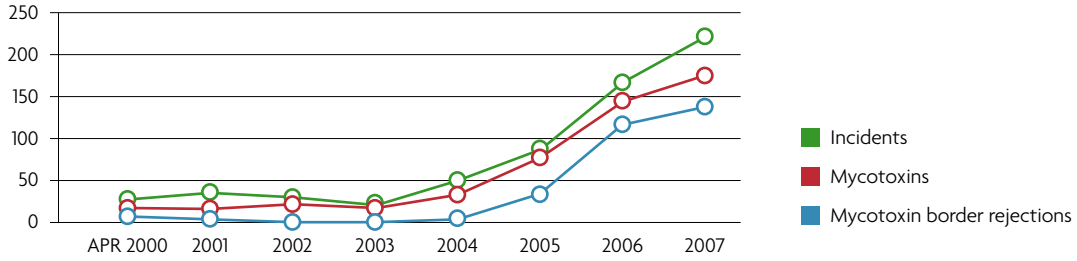
Source of natural chemical contamination incidents	2007
Mycotoxins	177
Histamine	18
Algal toxins	10
Erucic acid	6
Other	4

Type of mycotoxins	2007
Aflatoxins	162
Ochratoxins	9
Tricothecenes	3
Zearalenone	2
Patulins	1

Type of algal toxins	2007
Diarrhoeic shellfish poisoning (DSP) toxin	5
Blue-green algae	3
Amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP) toxin	1
Paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxin	1

In July 2005, the Agency began routinely recording border inspection post notifications. The effect of this on the number of incidents reported can be seen in the graph.

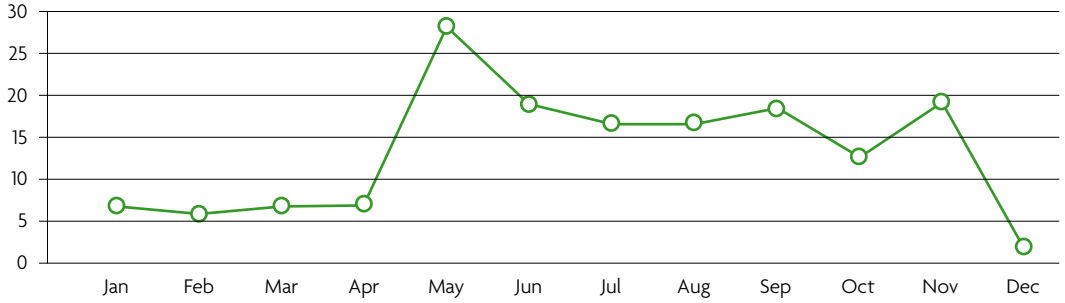
Natural chemical contamination incidents April 2000 to 2007



On farm

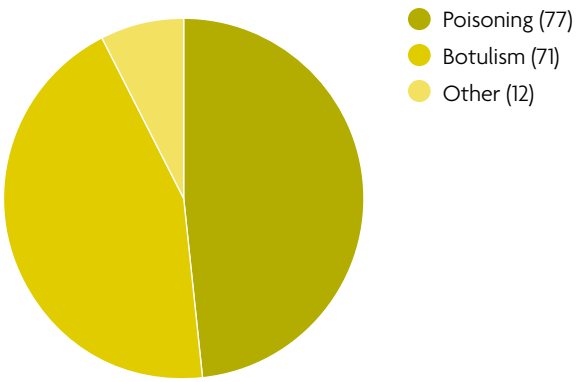
In 2007 there was an increase in the number of on-farm incidents reported compared with previous years, and several high profile incidents, with the avian influenza, foot-and-mouth disease and bluetongue disease outbreaks. The reporting profile for 2007 shows an increase in reporting during May, reflecting the fact that cattle stored over the winter are put back out to pasture in the early spring, increasing their exposure to metal sources and other factors resulting in incidents.

On farm incidents 2007



There was an increase in the number of on-farm incidents reported in 2007. The number of reports of suspected or confirmed botulism in cattle more than doubled from 32 in 2006 to 71 in 2007.

On farm incidents 2007



In 2007, 46 of the 60 metal poisoning incidents were as a result of livestock gaining access to sources of lead such as paint or batteries. Of the 71 incidents involving suspected on-farm botulism, 38 were characterised by the presence of poultry litter on the farm. It should be noted that only circumstantial evidence suggests that access to broiler litter is a risk factor in outbreaks of suspected or confirmed botulism.

On-farm incidents: source of poisoning	2007
Metal	60
Animal feed	8
Other	9

On-farm incidents: source of botulism	2007
Attributed to poultry litter	38
Unknown	33

Pesticides

There were 35 pesticide incidents reported during 2007. Of those, 34 resulted from the use of unauthorised pesticides on crops: the other resulted from a spill.

Physical contamination

In 2007, there were 123 incidents resulting from physical contamination.

The diversity of foreign objects and compounds that contaminate food is reflected in the fact that 'other' is the major type of contaminant. Also all malicious tampering incidents involving physical contamination are recorded as 'other' in order to preserve confidentiality.

Source of physical contamination incidents	2007
Pests	25
Metal	17
Glass	15
Plastic	13
Animal origin	9
Wood	3
Suffocation risk	2
Hair	1
Other	38

Process contaminants

In 2007, there were 17 incidents resulting from high levels of benzoic acid in soft drinks, one incident of 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol in soy sauce, one incident of high acidity in a soft drink and two incidents of other process contaminants in custard and potato products.

The increasing number of reported benzoic acid incidents is a result of an Agency survey in 2006 and the subsequent increase in sampling at border inspection posts. Of the 17 incidents in 2007, 15 were from sampling at border inspection posts.

Radiological

In 2007, the Agency monitored six incidents at nuclear licensed sites, six incidents where radiation was detected in fruits from Europe and two incidents of radiation from other sources.

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies

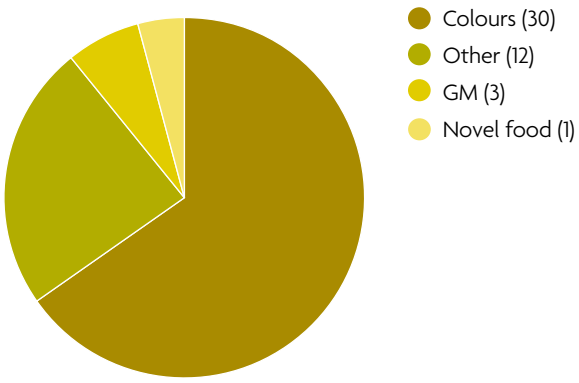
Cattle, sheep and goats can be susceptible to a group of brain diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). The best known of these diseases is bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, in cattle.

In 2007, there were six reported breaches of the over thirty month (OTM) rules and two reported breaches of the specified risk material (SRM) rules.

Use of an unauthorised ingredient

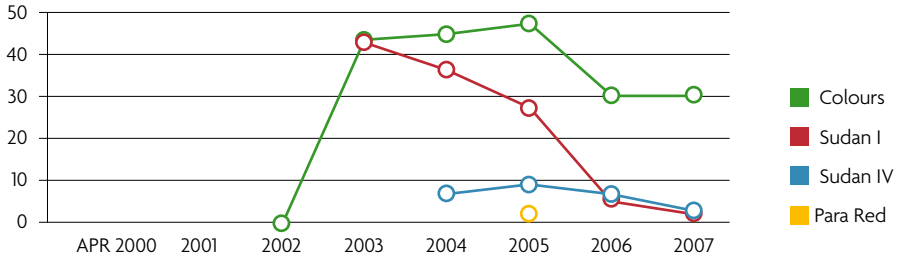
In 2007, there were 30 incidents of unauthorised colours, 12 where other ingredients (such as yohimbine, monosodium glutamate, carbon monoxide and carageenan) were used, three incidents where the use of unauthorised genetically modified ingredients were uncovered and one incident involving the import of Kava.

Use of an unauthorised ingredient 2007



The effect of the widespread publicity during the Sudan I incidents between 2003 and 2005 and the resulting importation requirements has been to decrease the use of the unauthorised colour. The same can be said for Sudan IV and Para Red, both of which resulted in widespread recalls during 2005.

Unauthorised colours April 2000-2007



What is being seen now, however, is the increased use of other unauthorised colours.

Source of unauthorised colour incidents	2007
Orange II	12
Rhodamine	3
Erythrosine	3
Tartrazine and Ponceau Red	3
Bixins	2
Acid Red 52	2
Sudan I	1
Sudan IV	1
Tartrazine	1
Other	2

Veterinary medicines

Of the 45 reported veterinary medicine incidents in 2007: 16 resulted from the use of nitrofurans; 13 from chloramphenicol; three incidents resulted from the use of ionophores; two each from tetracyclines, malachite green and crystal violet. There were also seven other incidents resulting from the use of banned or inappropriate use of veterinary medicines.

The increase in chloramphenicol incidents (from four in 2006) can be attributed to the 2007 survey of royal jelly by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). Notifications from the VMD statutory and non-statutory surveillance schemes resulted in 26 of the 45 incidents.

Water quality

There were five incidents in 2007 of bacterial contamination of water. Fungal contamination and the presence of sulphur dioxide, excessive mineral content and hydrocarbons each resulted in one incident.

Incidents by notifier

Incident notifications are received by the Agency's Incidents Branch. Notifying organisations for 2000-2007 are shown in the table below.

- More incident reports were received from local authorities (20% of the total, 259) than from any other stakeholder, in 2007.
- The number of reports from the fire services fell from 263 in 2006 to 158 in 2007.
- The upward trend in reports from industry, visible since 2005, continued in 2007, rising to 132 incidents.

Note: Despite the Agency's work with stakeholders to improve procedure, there is likely to be some under-reporting of incidents, which will affect the trends seen in the data. Also, Agency funded sampling at retail and border inspection posts will have had an impact on the recorded incident profile.

In the period 2000-2007, more notifications were received from the fire services (26%, 1,686) than any other. The next highest notifying organisation was local authorities (22%, 1,414) followed by the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (9.1%, 596) border inspection posts (8.3%, 546) industry (6.5%, 430) and EU member states (6.5%, 426).

Reported incidents from 2000-2007: by notifier

Category	Apr 2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Agency survey	1	3	11	4	13	3	5	4	44
Border Inspection Posts	2	2	4	5	9	67	203	254	546
Customs and Excise	–	–	–	2	–	–	1	1	4
DARD	–	1	1	–	–	5	6	39	52
DEFRA	14	17	5	11	13	21	26	19	126
Environment Agency	34	27	22	82	45	53	26	23	312
EU Member States	9	18	39	41	60	72	94	93	426
European Commission	–	1	–	3	3	1	4	5	17
Fire Services	139	176	190	241	241	278	263	158	1,686
General public	3	2	2	5	8	9	14	12	55
Government Offices of the Regions	12	11	1	1	6	8	3	0	42
Health Protection Agency	8	7	2	2	4	6	18	20	67
Industry	8	32	17	19	27	91	104	132	430
Laboratories	2	2	6	2	1	4	7	8	32
Local Authority	103	110	146	156	195	178	267	259	1,414
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	5	4	7	3	3	7	5	4	38
Meat Hygiene Service	–	1	–	–	–	–	3	5	9
NHS	3	–	1	1	5	0	5	1	16
Nuclear power station	1	2	2	2	9	10	5	6	37
Other	5	6	6	8	9	3	6	5	48
Police	13	20	8	5	18	13	12	10	99
Scottish Agricultural College	1	–	–	1	–	1	21	15	39
Single Liaison Body request	–	–	–	–	–	–	121	103	224
Veterinary Laboratories Agency	58	33	54	86	84	92	79	110	596
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	–	1	6	63	36	44	46	26	222
Total	421	476	530	743	789	966	1,344	1,312	6,581

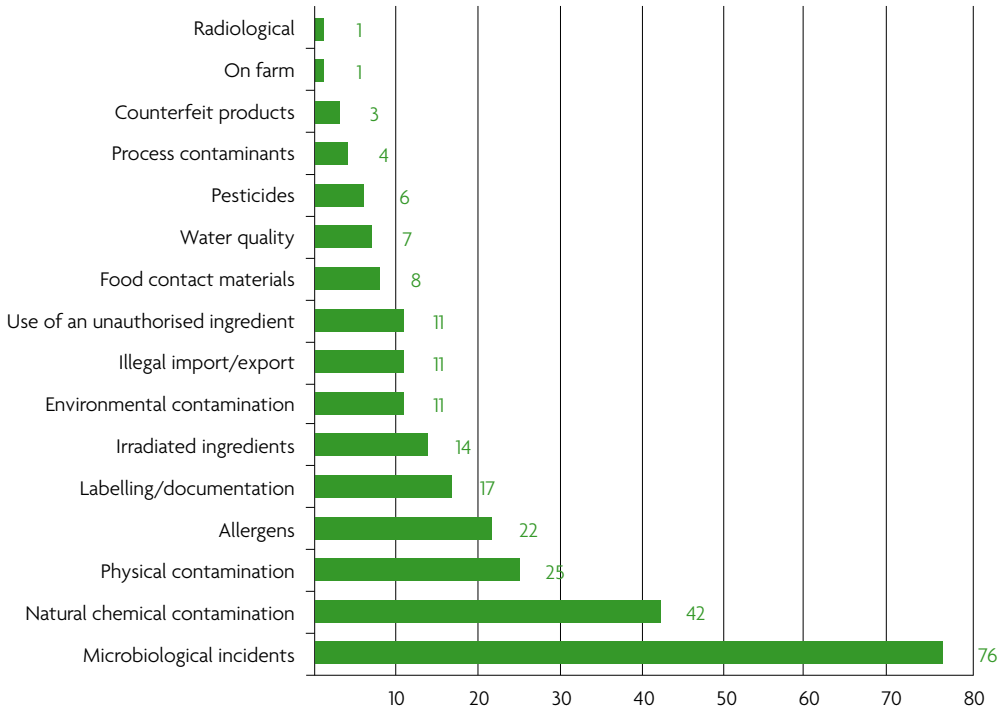
Local authorities

The number of notifications from local authorities has increased steadily from 2000 through to 2007. From its inception in April 2000, the Agency has worked to increase its profile with local authorities, encouraging reporting and advancing the benefits of collaborative working during food safety incidents through engagement work and liaison with the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) and its own local authority steering group on incidents.

Notifications from local authorities April 2000-2007

The large proportion of microbiological contamination incidents (in total 32% of all incidents reported by local authorities since April 2000) reflects the primacy of microbiological sampling in local authority sampling profiles. Natural chemical contamination sampling has always been an important component of their sampling profiles given the frequent incident occurrence and volume of susceptible imported spices, grains, nuts and nut products. Many of the physical contamination incidents arise from consumer complaints to local authorities; while the large amount of sampling undertaken during Sudan I returned many adverse results for unauthorised colours.

Notifications from local authorities 2007: by category

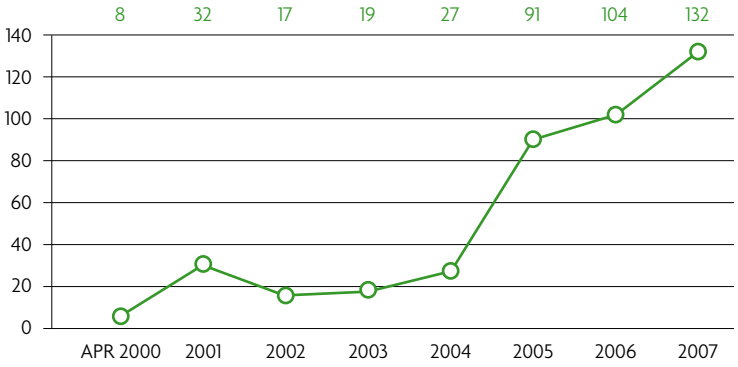


Notifications from local authorities: by category	April 2000-2007
Microbiological incidents	448
Physical contamination	206
Natural chemical contamination	173
Use of unauthorised ingredient	141

Industry

The increase in notifications from industry from 2005 onwards reflects the effect of the introduction of general food law. Allergens, microbiological incidents and physical contamination incidents amount to 75% of all incidents reported by industry since 2000.

Notifications from industry April 2000 to 2007



Notifications from industry: by category	2000
Allergens	51
Microbiological incidents	34
Physical contamination	29
Labelling/documentation	11
Irradiated ingredients	2
Natural chemical contamination	2
Food contact materials	1
Pesticides	1
Process contaminants	1

Notifications from industry: by category	April 2000-2007
Allergens	109
Microbiological incidents	106
Physical contamination	105
Others	110

EU member states and other countries

In 2007, notifications from EU member states and other countries contributed 93 incidents. Information on the RASFF system is presented in a separate section.

Notifications from EU and other countries: by category	2007
Use of an unauthorised ingredient	15
Microbial incidents	12
Allergens	10
Environmental contamination	10
Food contact materials	9
Physical contamination	9
Natural chemical contamination	8
Veterinary medicines	6
Animal feed (on market)	5
Pesticides	5
Illegal import/export	1
Irradiated ingredients	1
Labelling/documentation	1
Water quality	1

Blue light services

As described earlier, the prolonged wet weather during 2007 resulted in fewer notifications of fires from the fire service. There has also been a decrease in the notifications of spills and leaks in 2007.

Source of notifications from blue light services	2007
Fire services	158
Police	10
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	4

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Scottish Agricultural College and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency

On-farm incidents, such as suspected botulism or livestock poisoning, are notified to the Agency by the VLA in England and Wales, the SAC in Scotland and DARD in Northern Ireland. On occasion, on-farm incidents may be categorised differently (such as TSE or animal feed). Reporting from these organisations peaks during May and June (see on-farm incidents).

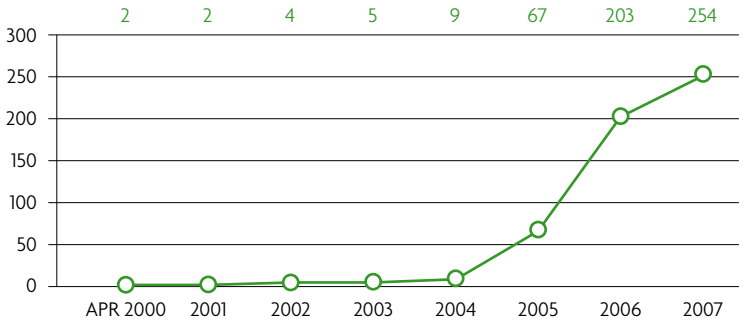
Source of on-farm notifications	2007
Veterinary Laboratories Agency	110
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	39
Scottish Agricultural College	15

Border Inspection Post rejections

The effect of recording border inspection notifications from July 2005 has been to increase the total number of incidents reported to the Agency. In 2005, BIP rejections amounted to 6.9% of the total, rising to 15% in 2006 and 19% in 2007.

In 2007, the primary cause of incoming consignments being rejected at borders was natural chemical contamination (60%, 153). Since April 2000, 298 of the 546 rejections (55%) have been due to natural chemical contamination with mycotoxins.

Border rejection notifications April 2000-2007



Border rejection notifications: by category	2007
Natural chemical contamination	153
Use of unauthorised ingredient	18
Microbiological contamination	16
Process contaminants	15
Environmental contamination	11
Veterinary medicines	10
Pesticides	8
Food contact materials	6
Physical contamination	6
Illegal import/export	4
Irradiated ingredients	3
Allergens	2
Animal feed (on market)	2

Health Protection Agency

Of the 20 reported incidents from the Health Protection Agency in 2007, 18 were as a result of microbiological contamination. Of those 18, 11 were due to *Salmonella* spp. four to *Listeria monocytogenes*, two to *E. coli* O157 and one to histamine-producing bacteria.

Environment Agency

Notifications from the environment agency peaked in 2003 with 82 notifications. However, they have fallen since then to 23 in 2007.

Notifications from the Environment Agency: by category	2007
Environmental contamination	18
Natural chemical contamination (algal)	3
Pesticides	1
Radiological	1

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Of the notifications from DEFRA in 2007, eight were reported by the Pesticides Safety Directorate, five were a result of environmental contamination (including the grounding of the *MSC Napoli*), five were on farm incidents (including both avian influenza outbreaks and foot-and-mouth disease) and one concerned water quality. Despite being few in total number, there were, therefore, several very high profile incidents reported in 2007.

European Commission

The European Commission notifies the Agency of incidents when specific information relating to widespread contamination in Europe is received from another country, when emergency decisions against ingredients or products are passed into law or from the findings of Food and Veterinary Office evaluations of a country's food safety controls and compliance with EU legislation.

In 2007, incidents reported by the EC have included contamination of guar gum from India with dioxins, salmonella in shark cartilage capsules from the US and mercury in chilled swordfish from Brazil.

A total of only 17 incidents have been reported by the EC since April 2000, of which four were classed as high and three as medium.

Single Liaison Body function

As with border rejection notifications above, the recording of SLB requests from 2006 has served to increase the total number of incidents.

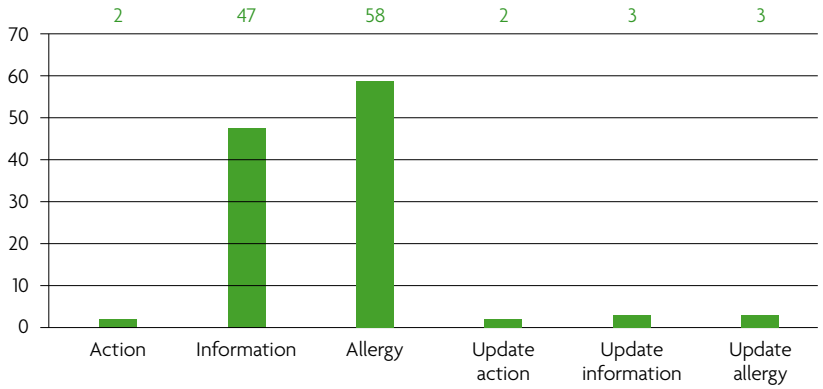
In 2007, the Agency received 87 food complaints and 16 requests for assistance as the designated single liaison body. Of these, 53 (52%) concerned labelling irregularities and 41 (40%) physical contamination of products.

Food alerts

In 2007, the Agency circulated 115 alerts, four of which required action from local authorities (two original alerts and two updates). Of the total, eight were updates, leaving 107 original alerts.

The original two Food Alerts for Action requested local authorities to:

- remove yoghurt products from sale due to their production in unhygienic and unapproved premises and,
- contact certain companies to ensure the removal from sale of meat products due to the possible presence of veterinary medicine residues.



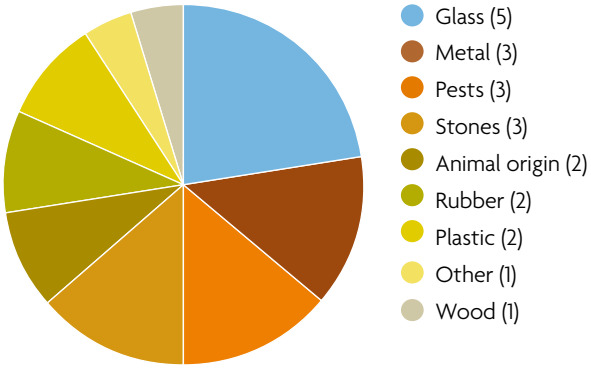
2007 alerts

The launch of the Allergy Alert System in March resulted in 58 Allergy Alerts being circulated. Prior to the launch, two alerts for information concerning allergen incidents had been circulated. These two are included below: Allergy Alerts are discussed separately.

As with 2006, in 2007 physical contamination resulted in more alerts than any other category. An increase in alerts resulting from microbiological contamination was also observed, in part driven by the Health Protection Agency/Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) surveys into herbs and seeds.

Original food alerts: by category	2007
Physical contamination	22
Microbiological contamination	19
Allergens	2
Labelling/documentation	2
Veterinary medicines	2
Natural chemical contamination	1
Use of unauthorised ingredients	1

Physical contamination 2007

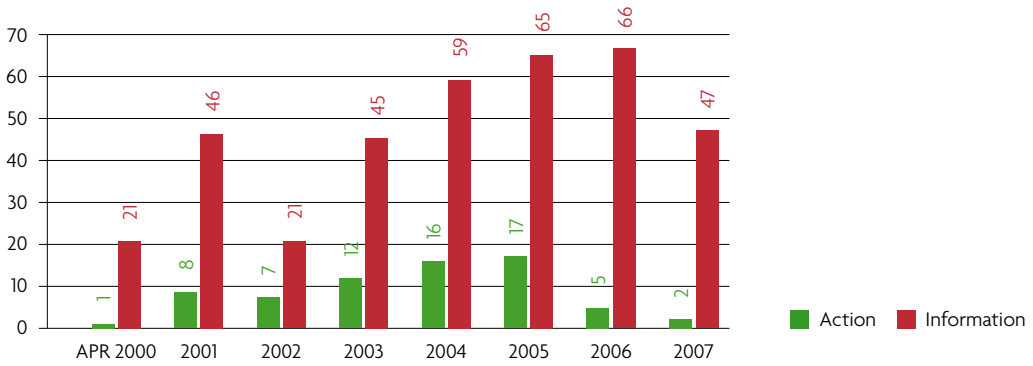


The high profile Sudan I incidents began in the second half of 2003 and resulted in an increase in reporting of incidents associated with increased vigilance. In 2003, 27 original alerts were the result of product recalls for Sudan I contaminated products, 15 in September and October. A further 5 resulted from local authority and criminal investigations into counterfeit vodka.

In 2004, the number of Sudan I alerts fell to 17 overall. However, the Sudan IV palm oil incident began at the end of the year which resulted in 20 alerts between July and December.

The Sudan I and Sudan IV alerts continued during 2005 and with the introduction of another illegal colour, Para Red resulted in six alerts between April and May 2005. In 2005 there was also an increase in notifications from industry and local authorities arising from the implementation of EC Regulation 178/2002. One effect of the implementation of this regulation was an increase in notification of allergen incidents by industry. In 2005, 21 alerts were circulated as a result of allergen incidents compared with four in 2004. Twenty alerts were circulated in 2006, eight of which came in November. The allergy alert system was born from this increase in allergen incident reporting.

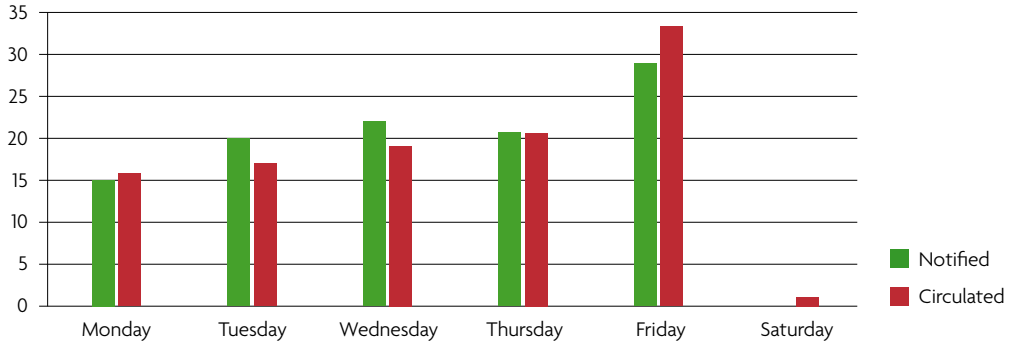
Original alerts 2000 to May 2007



Circulation of alerts

More alerts, whether for action, for information or allergy alerts were circulated on Friday than on any other day. Also more incidents are notified to the Agency on Friday, necessitating, where practicable, alerts before the weekend. With allergy alerts being consumer rather than local authority focused, their circulation over weekends where necessary is appropriate in order to ensure that the message is delivered as soon as possible rather than waiting for Monday.

Notification and circulation of food alerts 2007



RASFF

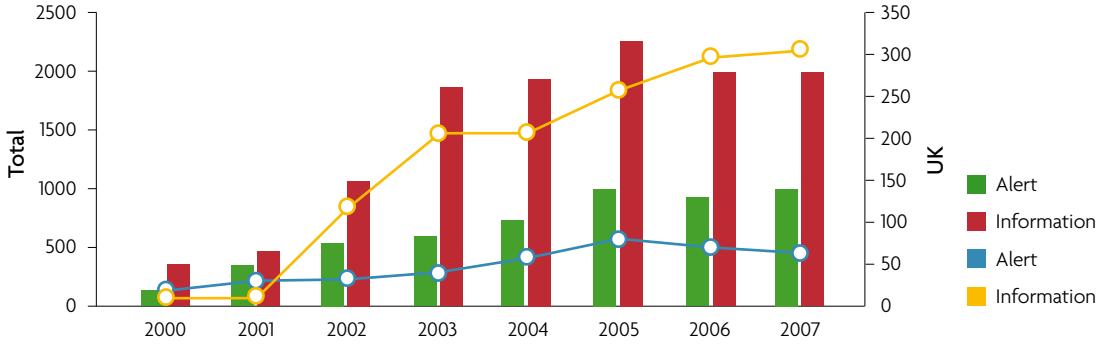
The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) is a communication tool used by European Union member states to exchange information on measures taken to ensure food safety. The system also allows exchange with countries outside the EU (such as Switzerland).

Incidents via the RASFF system are:

- adverse sample results from other countries on products from the UK (either UK origin or those imported to the UK before further distribution),
- information on distribution to the UK of products subject to measures in other countries.

The data below is courtesy of the European Commission Rapid Alert team.

Use of Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed 2000-2007



The use of the rapid alert system has increased since 2000.
Information on the 2007 notifications submitted by the UK is given overleaf.
Note: nine notifications were given multiple hazard categories; therefore appear twice in the data.

RASFF Notifications sent by UK in 2007: product category

Product category	2007
Nuts and nut products	85
Fruit and vegetables	66
Confectionery, honey and royal jelly	34
Fish and products thereof (other than crustaceans and molluscs)	33
Herbs and spices	27
Non-alcoholic beverages	21
Cereals and bakery products	18
Crustaceans and products thereof	13
Dietetic foods, food supplements and fortified foods	13
Prepared dishes and snacks	8
Soups, broths and sauces	8
Pet food	7
Cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	6
Bivalve molluscs and products thereof	5
Feed for food-producing animals	4
Meat and meat products (other than poultry)	4
Other food product/mixed	4
Eggs and egg products	3
Fats and oils	3
Poultry meat and poultry meat products	3
Food additives	1
Food contact materials	1
Natural mineral water	1
Wine	1

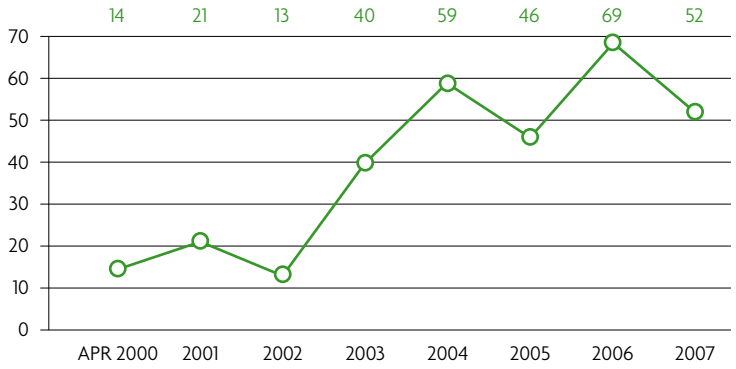
RASFF Notifications sent by UK in 2007: hazard category

Hazard category	2007
Mycotoxins	132
Food additives	41
(Potentially) pathogenic micro-organisms	31
Residues of veterinary medical products	26
Foreign bodies	24
Pesticide residues	21
Allergens	19
Not determined/other	14
Radiation	14
Heavy metals	9
Biocontaminants (other)	8
Composition	6
Chemical contamination (other)	5
Microbiological contamination	4
Organoleptic aspects	4
Biotoxins (other)	3
Packaging defective/incorrect	3
Industrial contaminants (other)	2
Bad or insufficient controls	1
GMO/novel food	1
Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies	1

Country of origin (UK notifications)					
Nigeria	46	Italy	4	Peru	2
India	35	Japan	4	Poland	2
China	33	The Philippines	4	Sierra Leone	2
United Kingdom	30	Vietnam	4	Uganda	2
Thailand	22	Argentina	3	Country of origin not mentioned	1
Turkey	22	Chile	3	Cyprus	1
Ghana	15	Sri Lanka	3	Denmark	1
Pakistan	15	The Netherlands	3	Dominican Republic	1
The United States	15	Australia	2	Fiji	1
Malaysia	12	Canada	2	Hungry	1
Lebanon	10	Costa Rica	2	Iran	1
Spain	10	Egypt	2	Mexico	1
Belgium	6	Gambia	2	Republic of Korea	1
Morocco	6	Germany	2	Saudi Arabia	1
Bangladesh	5	Greece	2	South Africa	1
Brazil	4	Indonesia	2	Syria	1
China (Hong Kong)	4	Ireland	2	Zimbabwe	1
France	4	Jamaica	2		
Israel	4	Myanmar	2		

In 2007, 52 UK products were notified by member states. 30 of these notifications were raised by the UK. In three cases, multiple hazard categories were given, giving 55 records.

Number of UK products notified by RASFF system 2000-2007



RASFF notifications on UK products: product categories

Product category	2007
Bivalve molluscs and products thereof	6
Cereals and bakery products	6
Confectionery, honey and royal jelly	5
Meat and meat products (other than poultry)	5
Crustaceans and products thereof	4
Food contact materials	4
Herbs and spices	4
Prepared dishes and snacks	4
Fruit and vegetables	3
Dietetic foods, food supplements and fortified foods	2
Fish and products thereof (other than crustaceans and molluscs	2
Other food product/mixed	2
Cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	1
Fat and oils	1
Feed additives	1
Nuts and nut products	1
Soups, broths and sauces	1

RASFF Notifications sent by UK in 2007: hazard category

Hazard category	2007
(Potentially) pathogenic micro-organisms	9
Allergens	9
Food additives	8
Foreign bodies	6
Migration	5
Biotoxins (other)	3
Industrial contaminants (other)	3
Residues of veterinary medical products	2
Chemical contamination (other)	1
Composition	1
Heavy metals	1
Microbiological contamination	1
Mycotoxins	1
Organoleptic aspects	1
Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies	1

Appendix 4
Contact Details

Incidents branch

The Incidents Branch acts as the central hub for the Agency's incident work. It maintains the official audit trail for the investigation, co-ordinating the logging, collation and distribution of information required during the investigation. The branch arranges the issue of food alerts to local authorities, other Government departments, trade organisations and so on, and RASFF notifications to the Commission.

The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own Agency offices, and take responsibility for co-ordinating their own food-related incidents. Any issues relating to food in these areas will be led by the devolved administration.

The incidents branch can be contacted as follows:

Incidents Branch
Food Protection Division
Food Standards Agency
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6NH

Tel: (020) 7276 8448

Fax: (020) 7276 8788/8446

Email (Food Contamination): foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Email (Environmental Contamination): irbemergency@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Food Incidents should be reported using an incident report form located at:
www.**food**.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/foodfeedform

Out of office hours contact should be made through the DEFRA duty room,
Tel: 020 7270 8960, Fax: 020 7270 8125.
The DEFRA duty officer will contact the appropriate officer 'on-call' in the incidents branch.

FSA Scotland

6th Floor, St Magnus House
25 Guild Street
Aberdeen AB11 6NJ

Tel: (01224) 285 194/196

Email: andrew.morrison@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or neil.leitch@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone: 07881 1516867

FSA Wales

11th Floor, Southgate House
Wood Street
Cardiff CF10 1EW

Tel: (029) 2067 8923/8961

Email: heather.lewis@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or richard.smith@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone: 07789 926573

FSA Northern Ireland

10c Clarendon Road
Belfast BT1 3BG

Tel: (028) 9041 7700

Email: sharon.gilmore@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
or anne-marie.chambers@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone: 07770 700030

Appendix 5
Glossary of terms

ACAF	Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs
ACMSF	Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food
ACNFP	Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes
Ad-hoc Group	List of Agency staff involved in a particular incident
BIP	Border Inspection Post
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CEFAS	Centre for the Environment Fisheries and Aquatic Science
CHEMET	Notification of a chemical incident normally generated by Blue Light Services and issued by the Met Office
COC	Committee on Carcinogenicity
COM	Committee on Mutagenicity
COT	Committee on Toxicity
DAP	Data analysis project
DARD	Department for Agriculture and Rural Development
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
EC	European Commission
EMB	Executive Management Board
ESFA	European Food Safety Authority
FAFA	Food Alert – For Action
FAFI	Food Alert – For Information
FEPA	Food and Environment Protection Act (1985)
FPD	Food Protection Division
FSAI	Food Safety Authority of Ireland
FSANI	Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland
GOR	Government Offices for the Regions
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs
HPA	Health Protection Agency
IB	Incidents branch (part of Food Protection Division)

Incidents response protocol	A guide for Agency staff to the procedures that should be followed during incidents
IPS	Incident Prevention Strategy
LA	Local authority
Lead Division	Policy Division that leads a particular incident
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MHAC	Meat Hygiene Advisory Committee
MoU	Memoranda of Understanding
OCT	Outbreak control team
POLREP	Incident notification from either HM Coastguard, the MCA, the EA, DEFRA or CEFAS
POLFAX	Incident notification from the Environment Agency
PSD	Pesticides Safety Directorate
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
SAC	Scottish Agricultural College
SACN	Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition
SEAC	Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SEERAD	Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department
SLA's	Service Level Agreements
SWANI	Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
TCN	Temporary closure notice
TPO	Temporary Prohibition Order
TSE	Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy
VLA	Veterinary Laboratories Agency
VMD	Veterinary Medicines Directorate

For more information and advice about food,
visit the Food Standards Agency's websites:
eatwell.gov.uk
food.gov.uk
salt.gov.uk

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