Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Annual Report of Incidents 2010

Foreword

The Food Standards Agency has managed more than 10,000 food incidents of varying complexity and nature during its lifetime. The case studies in this report are examples of incidents handled during 2010, and is work that contributed to the FSA's overall strategic objective of safer food for the nation.

We play a key role in protecting consumers from eating unsafe food. This involves leading the Government response to food contamination incidents and increasingly being part of the cross-Government response to wider national incidents – such as flooding, fires, chemical leaks and oil spills – that call for advice on food safety.

Everything we do to tackle incidents – whether that is at ports, during production or in shops – supports our strategic outcomes of food produced or sold in the UK and imported food is safe to eat.

As the case studies show, a day's work might involve sharing information with local authorities during food fraud investigations, scrutinising a complex distribution chain during an outbreak or assessing toxin levels in shellfish. These incidents demand a considerable amount of our resource and effort.

We're always looking to improve the way we operate – for example we refined our food alert system, after listening to concerns from industry and local authorities. And this year, as in previous years, we will again carry out incident reviews and exercises with food business operators, local authorities and other key players to learn lessons for the future and embed further good practice into our ways of working. We also regularly review our Incident Response Protocol.

To improve incident handling and partnership working, we provided local authority training workshops. We plan to build on this work in future by developing e-learning modules on incident handling for local authority staff. We also continued to receive crucial intelligence from local authorities on food fraud that helped us piece together the jigsaw and enabled local authorities to bring about prosecutions.

Ahead of us are the challenges and opportunities of new technologies, our ongoing work to identify and reduce the impact of potential new and re-emerging risks, and our continued collaborative working with other organisations in the run-up to the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics. Throughout the Games we will work to ensure food in London and other venues is safe to eat.

Our online incident report form makes it easier for local authorities and food businesses to notify us of incidents, which is vital, because we know many incidents go unreported. To narrow this gap, we hope this annual report encourages you to quickly tell us of incidents and any other potentially useful intelligence you may have. This will enable us to act promptly to protect the public and the food industry, and increase consumer confidence in food safety.

Tim J Smith
Chief Executive
Food Standards Agency
May 2011

Contents

1 Executive summary

In 2010 we investigated 1,505 incidents in the UK. Where needed, action was taken to ensure consumers were protected from eating unsafe food.

Between 2000 and 2006 there was an increase in the number of incidents, due, in part, to legislative changes, the introduction of a wider definition of what a food incident is and increased incident reporting. Since 2006 there has been a plateau in the number of incidents, followed by an increase in 2010. This increase was due to increased reporting in a range of incident categories, such as environmental contamination and natural chemical contamination (for further details see Table 15 on page 35).

Notification of an incident can be received from a variety of sources, including Government departments, organisations and a wide range of businesses. The top three reporters of incidents to us in 2010 were local authorities (376), border inspection posts (233) and fire services (223).

The major categories of incident in 2010 were:

- environmental contamination – 23%
- microbiological contamination – 18%
- natural chemical contamination (mycotoxins, algal toxins and others) – 15%
- on-farm incidents – 8%
- physical contamination – 8%

Risk assessment, management and communication lie at the heart of the Agency's incident response protocol. The Agency works in partnership with enforcement authorities, food business operators and other key stakeholders in order to manage incidents appropriately and proportionately.

Our incident handling workshops with local authorities in 2010 have helped ensure that there is a shared understanding of our incident procedures and, in the future, we plan to use methods such as e-learning to communicate our messages on incident response to as many stakeholders as possible.

Action taken by us to protect consumers' interests in relation to food safety included issuing 49 alerts[1] and 21 information notices to local authorities (all were published on www.food.gov.uk) and sending 270 notifications to the European Commission, via the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF).

[1] Figure excludes updates.

We keep our systems under regular review. In 2010, following a formal consultation, we made changes to our food alert system to speed up our response, reduce the burden on local authorities (by issuing less alerts) and address concerns voiced by some parts of the food industry regarding the terminology we have previously used (e.g. our prior use of the words 'food alert' when all the required action had been taken by a food business operator following an incident).

To test our incident procedures in conjunction with others, we routinely participate in cross-Government emergency exercises such as Exercise Baneberry in 2010. Outputs from our incident/exercise reviews may result in changes to our incident procedures, in order to deliver a more efficient and consistent approach.

We are making increasing use of our incidents' data to help us identify new and re-emerging risks – a key part of the Agency's refreshed Strategy to 2015.

2 What is an incident?

An incident is defined as:

'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.' [2]

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.
- Environmental pollution incidents, for example, fires, chemical/oil spills, radiation leaks, which may involve voluntary or statutory action (such as orders made under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985).

[2] Food Incidents Task Force 'Preventing and Responding to Food Incidents' – April 2008

3 What is our role?

Our role is to protect consumers from eating unsafe food. A key part of this work involves investigating food and environmental contamination incidents to determine whether there are any food safety implications and then, where appropriate, take action to safeguard the public.

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 will be responsible for the overall management of the response. We are the lead government department for widespread accidental or deliberate contamination of food and feed. In addition, we have a key supporting role providing food safety advice in relation to a range of other environmental incidents, such as chemical spills, oil leaks and large fires. We also have a responsibility for 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,[3] we may send staff to that centre, or act through another organisation present at that centre. We may also provide representation at outbreak control team (OCT) meetings, during a foodborne illness outbreak.

[3] 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.

4 Why and how should you report an incident?

By reporting incidents to us at the earliest opportunity, we can work together to minimise their impact. Food business operators have a statutory obligation to report incidents. European legislation[4] 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 Food Standards Agency and the food authorities (local and port health authorities).

Under the Food Law Code of Practice[5] local authorities have a requirement to notify us of food incidents. The code of practice provides instructions and criteria that food authorities should have regard to when engaged in the enforcement of food law. Food authorities must follow and implement the provisions of the code that applies to them.

Local authorities regularly undertake inspections of food premises and sample products from manufacturers, wholesalers and retail outlets. Where breaches of food safety requirements are identified, the authority will, where appropriate, contact our Incidents Branch.

Both industry and local authorities can report incidents to us online. The online report form is available on our website at:

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

Other organisations (for example, the European Commission, UK agricultural departments and environmental agencies) also have procedures in place for notifying us in the event of an incident.

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

[5] We publish this document, which provides instructions and criteria to which local authorities should have regard when carrying out their food law regulatory and enforcement duties

5 Achievements in 2010

Data Analysis Project

Work on the Data Analysis Project (DAP) continues. This project was set up to carry out a detailed examination of all the incidents data we hold, going back to our inception in April 2000. Outputs from DAP will continue to be fed into our emerging risks work.

Local authority workshops

In September 2010 we delivered two one-day incident handling training events in Edinburgh and Glasgow. All Scottish local authorities were represented, with nearly 70 officers attending over the two days. The event built on previous training events held in Wales and Northern Ireland in 2009.

The format for the training included five presentations, one scenario and two case studies, focusing on the practical aspects of completing incident report forms and the reporting mechanisms, highlighting the importance of dialogue between all parties. Delegates reported that the delivery of the course was informative, with a relaxed atmosphere that allowed officers to interact and engage at every opportunity during the scenarios and case studies.

Feedback from this course was excellent, with the vast majority of delegates advising that the course fully met their expectations and that they would recommend the course. Further requests have been received to run a similar type of course again, concentrating on the practical elements of the course.

Food fraud work programme

Food fraud is the deliberate placing on the market, for financial gain, of foods that are falsely described or otherwise intended to deceive the consumer. It includes the substitution and adulteration of foods with cheaper, often inferior, ingredients and the sale of foods that may have public health implications, such as foods that are unfit for human consumption or are knowingly contaminated.

Our food fraud programme seeks to improve the assistance we are able to give to local authorities, through raising awareness and take-up of the existing resources (both advisory and financial) that are available to assist local authorities in their investigations into food fraud activity.

In 2010 we continued to develop our National Food Fraud Database, which provides intelligence based on information gathered from various sources. The intelligence is used to assist existing local authority investigations and instigate new ones.

The success of the Food Fraud Database relies on local authorities, industry and consumers sending information on known or suspected food fraud, which could include any illegal activity relating to food, to our dedicated mailbox (foodfraud@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk) or answer phone (020 7276 8527). In response to our continued programme over the past year to raise awareness of the Food Fraud Database, and the need to share information concerning fraudulent activity, the amount of information being submitted by local authorities has increased considerably. In 2010, there were nearly 900 records created on the Food Fraud Database, a comparable amount to that for 2009 and more than twice the number for 2008. It is important that this trend continues and we would encourage local authorities, industry and consumers to routinely send us any information concerning food fraud, irrespective of how insignificant it may appear.

Through the analysis of a significantly larger data set, we have been able to produce better intelligence, enabling us to provide greater assistance with local authority investigations. Additionally, in times of budgetary restraint, the intelligence that we have provided has proved to be invaluable in helping local authorities effectively target their food law enforcement work. In turn, this has resulted in a number of successful operations. Details of one such successful operation can be found in case study 1 on page 17.

Exercise programme

We continued to develop the exercise programme in 2010 to rehearse our response to high-level incidents. In addition to all-Agency Exercise Baneberry which took place in early 2010 and was reported in the 2009 Annual Report of Incidents, we also held Exercise Comfrey in December 2010. This was to ensure our out-of-hours arrangements work effectively, with notified information relayed to the on-call officer in an accurate and efficient manner, and it was successfully demonstrated.

Changes to the FSA's food alert system

Last year's report provided details of a 12-week consultation we carried out to review the way we communicate during incidents.

Changes to our food alert system were proposed to:

- increase our speed of response during incidents – this is because information notices are quicker for us to produce and issue

- increase the impact of food alerts issued to local authorities – some local authorities indicated that they were receiving too many alerts (mainly of the type where no action needed to be taken)
- address concerns voiced by some parts of the food industry over the terminology we previously used, particularly when all the required actions by food business operators have been carried out following an incident.

Under our proposals, we would introduce a new system whereby a Product Withdrawal Information Notice (WIN) or a Product Recall Information Notice (RIN) would be issued to let consumers and local authorities know about problems associated with food. These new notices would replace Food Alerts for Information (FAFI). Under the proposals Food Alerts for Action (FAFA) would continue to be issued – this alert is used to provide local authorities with details of specific action to be taken on behalf of consumers. Allergy Alerts would also continue to be issued in the same way.

The majority of respondents to the consultation were in favour of the above proposals, and we therefore revised our procedures, with the changes taking effect from June 2010.

Details about the latest product withdrawals and recalls, as well as an archive of previous alerts, can be found at:

www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/alerts/

Emerging risks

Key results from our Incident Prevention Strategy 2005–2010 strongly suggested that we should develop an 'Emerging Risks' programme encompassing data gathering, intelligence assessment and improved networking with stakeholders. The use of statistical analysis and intelligent software would then be used to identify new or re-emerging risks within our global food web.

As a result, the Emerging Risks programme commenced in April 2010 and is planned to run for a five-year period. It aims to provide a co-ordinated approach to the collation and analysis of intelligence relating to food safety, providing a clearer picture of when, why and how food safety issues develop. The analyses will be used to predict new and re-emerging risks to food safety and to build knowledge of new technologies and novel foods.

The Emerging Risks programme specifically aims to deliver the strategic priority:

- *'Increase horizon scanning and improve forensic knowledge of, and intelligence on, global food chains to identify and reduce the impact of potential new and re-emerging risks – particularly chemical contamination.'*

The programme will also contribute to activities under this strategic outcome: 'Imported food is safe to eat' and support this strategic priority:

- *'Ensure risk-based, targeted checks at ports and local authority monitoring of imports throughout the food chain.'*

Additionally, the programme supports Evidence Theme 6 of our Science & Evidence Strategy entitled 'Strategic and cross-cutting evidence and analysis'.

Further to a recent pilot study, the following are key areas that are being progressed in the initial phase of the Emerging Risks programme:

- development of 'root cause' analysis methodology
- assessment of the 'global food chain' for potential new and re-emerging risks
- identification of 'economically motivated' risks to food safety
- 'targeted stakeholder engagement' for the detection of emerging risks and the identification of appropriate incident prevention activities
- development and implementation of the 'national intelligence model'
- development of appropriate IT systems for data acquisition, storage and intelligence evaluation.

6 Looking ahead

Emerging risks

- **New technologies**

Our food chain continues to expand due to the emergence of new technologies based on novel foods and processes. Examples include genetically modified food and animal cloning. Although generally welcomed, each of the technologies may have the potential to introduce new safety risks into our food chain or trigger emotive responses from consumers. Hence there is a need for us to be able to react in a timely, considered and decisive manner to new technological needs and advancements.

New technologies and novel foods are already being identified using expert judgement, our scientific advisory committees, stakeholder engagement, current affairs literature and other relevant sources. Input from the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) is providing specialist knowledge and recommendations relating to the approval of novel foods and new technologies.

Intelligence surrounding specific technologies will be used to inform the Emerging Risks programme so that targeted research, surveillance and stakeholder engagement programmes can be planned as with other food chains.

- **New risks**

The detection of new food safety risks hitherto unknown represents the greatest challenge. These 'unknown unknowns' have been responsible for a number of the larger and more challenging incidents we have experienced. Examples tend to be financially motivated and include contamination incidents involving Sudan I in 2005 and melamine in 2008.

The detection of 'unknown unknowns' will be driven by global chain analysis of foods and processes using horizon scanning and gap analysis to identify previously unrealised areas of concern. Additionally, stakeholder networking, including the assessment of hot intelligence such as 'whistle-blower' information, will also play a role in detecting new safety risks.

Specifically, the potential for economically motivated food safety risks arising from, for example, fraudulent practices, will be assessed as each global chain is investigated. This will enable the implementation of early and targeted corrective or preventative actions.

Incident handling e-learning project

Following on from this year's incident handling workshops for local authority staff (see the Achievements section on page 10), further training events for local authorities are planned for 2011. The events in Wales will include field staff from our operations group and follow the format of previous events, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties during incidents and emphasise the support and tools available for managing food incidents in an effective and efficient way.

We are also looking to develop a series of e-learning modules for local authorities. These modules are expected to cover both incident prevention and response. At the time of going to press work on the project had just commenced.

Incident reviews

In 2011 we will continue to conduct incident reviews with external stakeholders to learn lessons for the future. External reviews will focus on communications, roles and responsibilities, procedures and overall management, proportionality of response, root causes of incidents and how to make the process better for the future.

For further details of our incident review procedures and previous external reviews please refer to out website at:

www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/incidents/monitorprevent/reportsreviews/

Exercise programme

To rehearse and embed lessons learnt from prior exercises, Exercise Nightshade was held in February 2011. The exercise was designed to test our response to a microbiological scenario involving *Listeria monocytogenes* in cooked ham. This was a success and we continue to evaluate and learn from the outcomes. A series of exercise events is currently in development for the remainder of 2011, which will look to further refine our procedures and to demonstrate that lessons from previous events have been consolidated.

Stakeholders play an important part in our exercise programme, as they continue to assist with the development of, support and participation in our exercises.

London Olympics and Paralympics 2012

In preparation for the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have begun work with a number of key stakeholders[6], to ensure that:

- food safety is considered and given suitable prominence during the various planning stages
- food business operators represented at the Olympic venues, and in the vicinity, fully comply with food safety and food hygiene legislation

In 2011, as part of this work, we intend to hold an exercise with host local authorities to rehearse our joint response to a food incident at the Games. Throughout the Games period we will be providing support and expert advice to local authority enforcement staff operating at the sites.

The next Annual Report of Incidents

We aim, as part of our policy of openness and transparency, to publish an Annual Report of Incidents in 2012 covering the calendar year 2011. As with previous reports, we would be grateful for feedback from you on its content and what you would like to see included in future. Contact details are set out in Appendix 4 of this report.

[6] These include the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), the Joint Local Authority Regulatory Services (JLARS), the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), Defra, Cabinet Office and other Government departments, or agencies.

7 Case studies

Case study 1:

Food fraud investigations

Background

In June 2010 Salford City Council, as part of its pre-Football World Cup clamp down on illicit alcohol, carried out a large scale investigation that resulted in the seizure of large amounts of counterfeit product. The five-day operation was partly funded by our Fighting Fund.

The investigation targeted 71 shops and pubs, some of which were known to have previously sold illegal alcohol. Some of the seized vodka contained high levels of potentially harmful methanol. The investigation is a good example of how local authorities can successfully use our resources when tackling food related fraud.

Risk assessment

Methanol (wood alcohol) is a substance formed naturally during the production of many alcoholic drinks and, at the low levels normally present, is not harmful to health. However, the elevated levels found in this instance could cause serious harm to someone drinking the affected products.

Effects include severe abdominal pain, drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision, and, in severe cases, leading to blindness and the risk of coma with breathing difficulties. Symptoms of methanol poisoning can be delayed for several hours, so anyone who has drunk this product may not be immediately aware of the dangers.

Action taken

- Salford City Council seized, over 400 litres of counterfeit vodka and whisky, as well as 19,000 cans of lager. Separate seizures were also made from 25 other pubs and off-licences.
- Intelligence gained from the June 2010 raids led to further raids taking place in December 2010, where additional quantities of alcohol were seized by Salford City Council due to duty evasion and evidence was found of greater compliance[7].
- Intelligence obtained during the investigation was submitted to us to update our Food Fraud Database, and hopefully assist other local authorities undertaking similar investigations.

Further details about the investigation can be found at:

www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2010/jun/fraudwcfans

[7] Out of the 20 premises revisited in December 2010 following the earlier raid, only 5 of those who offended in June 2010 re-offended in December 2010

Case study 2:

Primary aromatic amines in kitchen utensils

Background

Primary aromatic amines (PAAs) are chemical substances that can be found in some plastic food contact articles such as nylon kitchen utensils. In recent years, many notifications to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) have been made for migration of PAAs from nylon kitchen utensils imported from the Far East. In August 2010, we published a survey that investigated PAA migration from nylon kitchen utensils to further investigate this issue.[8] This was the second of a four-year rolling series of surveys on the chemical migration of substances from food contact materials and articles. Results showed that of the 107 samples tested, 35 were not compliant with the legislation.

Risk assessment

Many PAAs are considered toxic and some are considered to be possibly able to cause cancer in humans. Exposure to genotoxic carcinogens, such as PAAs, is undesirable and should be avoided if possible, the ALARP (as low as reasonably practical) principle should be applied. The risk to consumers at the levels of PAAs reported in non-compliant samples from the surveillance work was considered to be low but avoidable.

Action taken

- We took immediate action, working with local enforcement officers and suppliers, to ensure that non-compliant goods were withdrawn from the market.
- The European Commission and other European Union member states were informed, so that they could take any necessary action should these articles be on the market in other member states.

Future activities

- In response to the alerts raised via the RASFF system, legislation on requirements for melamine ware and nylon cookware imported from China is due to come into force in summer 2011. The key aspects of this draft regulation will require 10% of consignments to be checked. Each consignment will also need to be accompanied by a Declaration of Compliance confirming that the product satisfies the legal requirements.
- We will be providing funding to local authorities for the 2011 surveillance of imported food and feeds programme. Part of this work will involve testing nylon kitchen utensils for PAA migration.
- It is proposed that continuing surveillance and risk-based, targeted checks at ports and local authority monitoring of imports in this area will assist in ensuring that food in the UK is safe to eat, as mentioned in our current Strategy to 2015.

[8] A four-year rolling programme of surveys on chemical migrants from food contact materials and articles, survey 2: primary aromatic amine migration from nylon kitchen utensils: www.food.gov.uk/science/surveillance/fsisbranch2010/fsis0110

Case study 3:

Salmonella Bareilly outbreak associated with bean sprouts

Background

During 2010, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) identified a national increase in the number of human cases of *Salmonella* Bareilly infection in the UK. Investigations into the cause of the outbreak found an association with the consumption of raw bean sprouts.

Risk assessment

Between 1 August and mid December 2010, the HPA identified 241 laboratory confirmed outbreak cases[9] of *Salmonella* Bareilly infections across the UK. Epidemiological and microbiological investigations implicated bean sprouts as a vehicle of transmission for the *Salmonella* Bareilly outbreak strain. A case-control study showed a significant association between cases and the consumption of raw bean sprouts. The outbreak strain was identified in samples of bean sprouts obtained in England and Scotland. A further sample of bean sprouts obtained in England during a snapshot survey was also positive for the outbreak strain.

Investigations during the outbreak identified mishandling of bean sprouts at catering establishments as a potential cause. This may be because of confusion or misinterpretation of the information on the packs. For example, some of the 'non ready-to-eat' bean sprouts were labelled as 'washed and ready-to-use' which may have led users interpreting this as 'ready-to-eat' rather than 'ready-to-cook'.

Action taken

- We worked jointly with the HPA, Health Protection Scotland (HPS) and local authorities to investigate this outbreak, in particular in investigating a complex distribution chain.
- We issued advice to food business operators suggesting that they consider reviewing the labelling of bean sprouts to ensure that the information provided to the users is clear.
- We issued letters to enforcers advising on safe handling and use of bean sprouts, and requested that relevant food business operators in their area are advised of the importance of providing clear labelling that is not misleading for the consumer/caterers. A similar letter was also sent to the relevant Trade Associations.
- The HPA, HPS and ourselves have issued web stories to stress to consumers that bean sprouts intended for cooking before use are safe to eat, provided they are washed and cooked in accordance with the producers' instructions before consumption.

[9] Those infections that were not travel related and were not shown to be other strains.

Case study 4:

ASP in whole King Scallops

Background

Marine toxins are naturally occurring chemicals produced by phytoplankton. These chemicals can accumulate in filter feeding live bivalve molluscs, or shellfish such as mussels and scallops. As a result, the European Union hygiene legislation[10] sets limits for the main groups of toxins that all molluscan shellfish placed on the market must meet. This includes a limit for Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning (ASP).

ASP is a type of food poisoning caused by a marine bio-toxin (domoic acid) in contaminated shellfish. Domoic acid is formed by marine phytoplankton and can accumulate within shellfish that filter phytoplankton from seawater. In recent years, there have been notifications to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) relating to the presence of ASP toxins in whole King Scallops. Early in 2010 we issued two RASFFs relating to ASP in King Scallops. Following intervention, there were a further three incidents but these were caught before the product was placed on the market.

The RASFFs for ASP in whole King Scallops resulted in withdrawal of products across Europe, with the associated damage to reputation and costs.

Risk assessment

ASP toxins are known to be a particular issue in whole King Scallops. King Scallops accumulate the toxins readily, but do not relinquish them easily. Symptoms of ASP include vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps and loss of short term memory which may be permanent.

As the majority of toxins are contained within the hepatopancreas, the risk can be reduced by proper shucking. Shucking is the process which removes the inedible parts (the hepatopancreas) from the edible parts (the adductor muscle and the gonad).

Action taken

- We have written to local authorities, to highlight the requirement for food business operators to have an appropriate system of own checks to ensure that any whole King Scallops placed on the market meet the required standard.
- We have also written to industry to remind them of the requirements for whole King Scallops.
- We are in the process of revising our guidance on shucking.

[10] Regulations (EC) 853/2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for products of animal origin.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1

Statistics

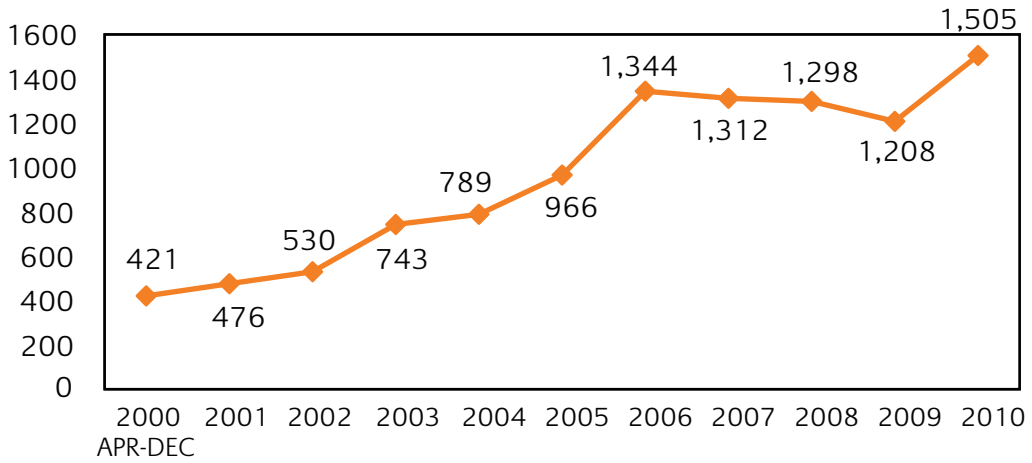
Total Number of Incidents

In 2010, 1,505 incidents were investigated by the FSA. This was nearly 300 more than the number of incidents investigated in 2009.

Figure 1 shows the recorded annual number of incidents since April 2000.

The increase in the number of incidents to 2006 was largely due to improved reporting and stakeholder engagement, as well as changes in the law and the definition of an incident.

Figure 1: Recorded incidents April 2000 – December 2010



Three high level incidents were handled in 2010, compared to one high level incident in 2009. There were fewer medium level incidents in 2010, compared to 2009. Table 1 details the classification composition of incidents recorded since 2006.

Table 1: Low, medium and high level Incidents 2006 – 2010

Year	Low	Medium	High	Total Incidents
2006	1166 (86.8%)	167 (12.4%)	11 (0.8%)	1,344
2007	1185 (90.3%)	111 (8.5%)	16 (1.2%)	1,312
2008	1176 (90.6%)	108 (8.3%)	14 (1.1%)	1,298
2009	1135 (94.0%)	72 (5.9%)	1 (0.1%)	1,208
2010	1437 (95.5%)	65 (4.3%)	3 (0.2%)	1,505

The three high level incidents related to the following:

- the detection of morpholine as an unauthorised ingredient in fresh fruit wax coatings
- the detection of milk and meat from the offspring of cloned cattle
- on-farm cattle identify fraud

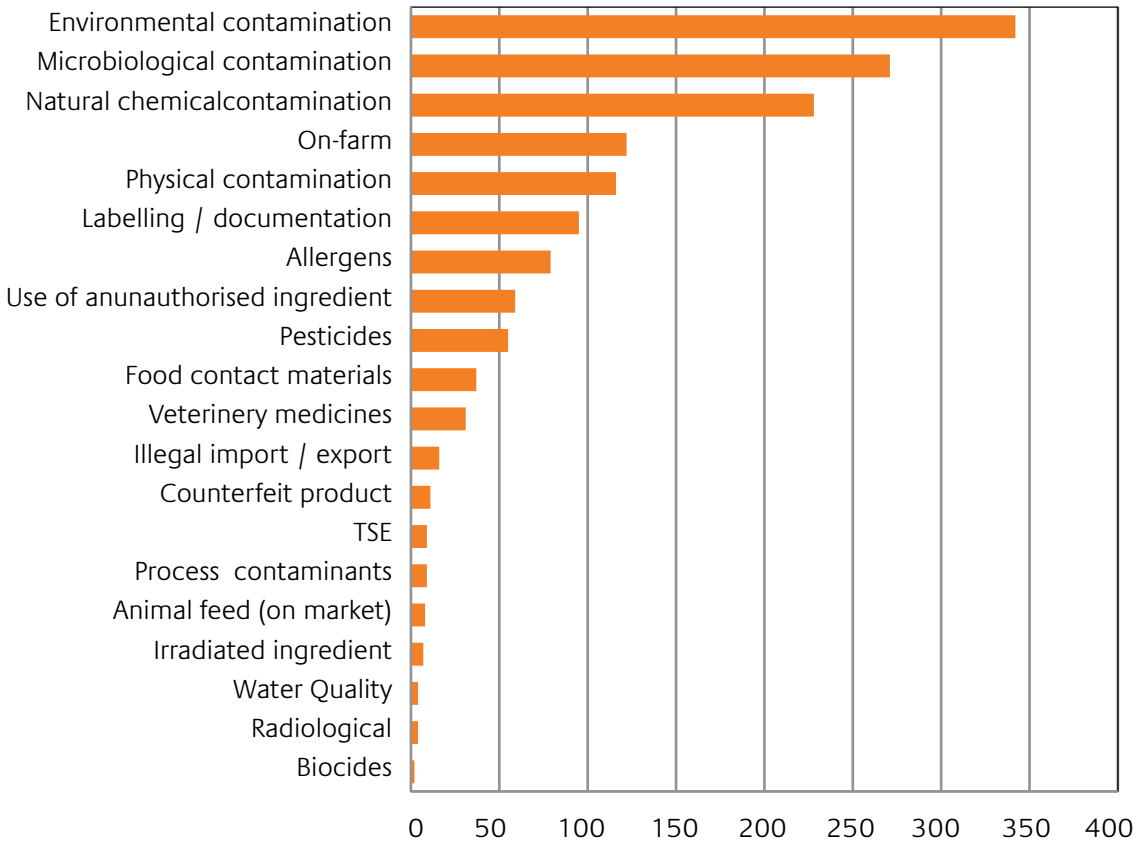
Incidents recorded by the Agency are categorised in Table 2.

Table 2: Incidents by category						
Category	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total incidents since April 2000
Allergens	61	86	84	86	79	482
Animal feed (on market)	9	10	13	10	8	58
Biocides	2	0	1	2	2	12
Counterfeit product	6	3	6	7	11	44
Environmental contamination	376	226	186	211	342	3,128
Food contact materials	15	26	35	50	37	190
Illegal import /export	16	17	7	14	16	85
Irradiated ingredient	14	23	10	6	7	72
Labelling /documentation	93	82	126	77	95	535
Microbiological contamination	147	163	186	218	271	1,458
Natural chemical contamination	169	215	230	150	228	1,223
On-farm	99	160	139	144	122	1,102
Pesticides	20	35	16	28	55	210
Physical contamination	139	123	110	56	116	769
Process contaminants	15	21	14	19	9	111
Radiological	11	14	6	7	4	84
TSE	10	8	4	9	9	50
Use of an unauthorised ingredient	52	46	66	70	59	463
Veterinary medicines	78	45	47	36	31	440
Water quality	12	9	12	8	4	76
Total	**1,344**	**1,312**	**1,298**	**1,208**	**1,505**	**10,592***

* In total, 10,592 incidents have been notified to the FSA since April 2000

During 2010, environmental contamination issues were the largest contributor to the total number of incidents recorded and showed the greatest increase in numbers from 2009 of all categories (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Incidents by category 2010



Food Alerts and Information Notices

If there is a problem with a food product that means it should not be sold, then it might be 'withdrawn' (taken off the shelves) or 'recalled' (when customers are asked to return the product). The FSA issues information about product withdrawals and recalls to let consumers and local authorities know about problems associated with food. In some cases, a 'Food Alert for Action' is issued. This alert provides local authorities with details of specific action to be taken on behalf of consumers.

In 2010, the FSA issued a total of 77 alerts and information notices of which seven were updates. This compares to 91 allergy and food alerts (including seven updates) recorded in 2009. Only three of the 77 alerts issued during 2010 required further action.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of the 70 original alerts and information notices issued in 2010

Table 3: Categories of Food Alert and Information Notices

Category	Food Alert for Action (FAFA)	Food Alert for Information (FAFI)	Recall Information Notice (RIN)	Withdrawal Information Notice (WIN)	Total incidents
Physical contamination	0	9	13	0	22
Microbiological contamination	1	3	6	0	10
Labelling / documentation	2	0	0	1	3
Food contact materials	0	0	0	1	1
Allergy Alerts	–	–	–	–	34
				Total	**70***

* Excludes updates

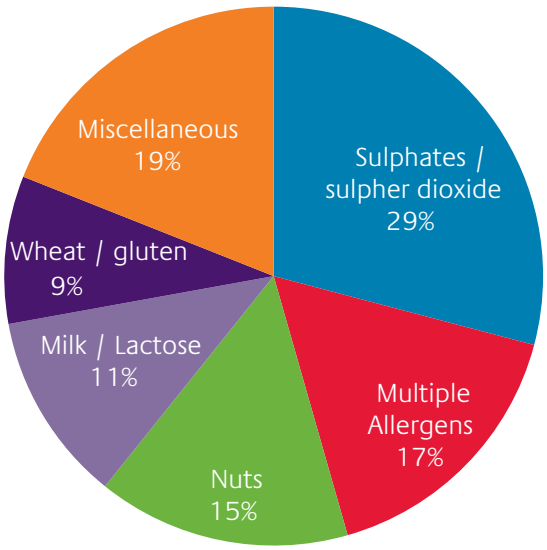
Detailed Analysis of Incident Categories

Allergens

The total number of allergen incidents in 2010 was 79 compared to 86 recorded in 2009. These are sub-categorised by allergen type in Table 4 and demonstrated a similar profile to that observed in 2009.

Table 4: Allergen incidents by sub-category 2010

Allergen sub-category	Number of incidents
Sulphites/sulphur dioxide	23
Multiple allergens	13
Nuts	12
Milk and lactose	9
Wheat and gluten	7
Egg	4
Peanuts	3
Shellfish	2
Barley	1
Mustard	1
Soya	1
Celery	0
Fish	0
Sesame seeds	0
Other	3
Total	**79**

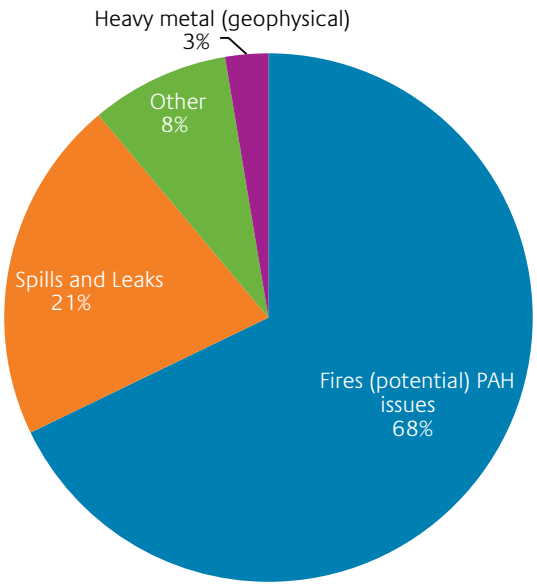


Environmental contamination

The number of environmental contamination incidents recorded during 2010 increased to 342 compared to the 211 incidents documented in 2009. This represents an increase of 131 and accounts for just over 44% of the overall year-on-year increase observed across all categories. Table 5 shows the environmental contamination incidents recorded in 2010 by sub-category.

Table 5: Environmental contamination incidents by sub-category 2010

Environmental contamination	Number of incidents
Fires (potential PAH issues)	232
Inorganic spills	12
Organic spills	15
Sewage	18
Diesel spills	9
Gas leaks	8
Oil spills	6
Dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)	4
Heavy metal (geophysical)	9
Other	29
Total	**342**

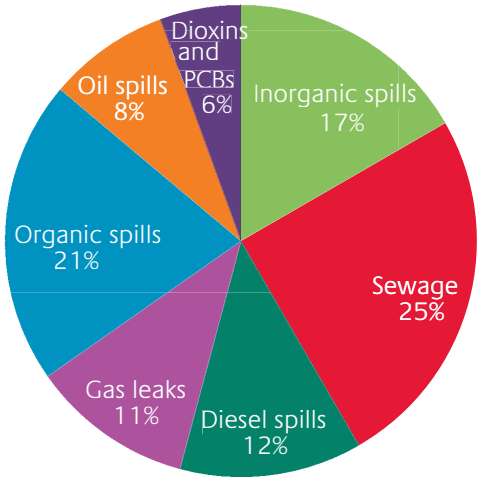


Incidents involving fires comprise 68% of this sub-category. Such incidents may represent potential risks to food safety through contamination to crops or food stores by exposure to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are produced as by-products of the combustion of organic and fossil fuels and are potentially carcinogenic. When compared to figures for 2009, the number of fires reported in 2010 increased by 127 and, as such, is largely responsible for the observed increase in total environmental contamination incidents.

Figure 3 details the sub-categories relating to spillages and leaks. Eighteen incidents relating to sewage spills were recorded in 2010 compared to two incidents in 2009.

Although of little risk to food safety, naturally occurring events of interest in 2010 included several instances of flooding in the UK and ash from the Icelandic volcano eruption.

Figure 3: Incidents relating to environmental spills and leaks 2010



Food contact materials

The number of reported food contact material incidents decreased from 50 in 2009 to 37 in 2010. Table 6 shows the number of incidents documented in 2010 by sub-category.

Table 6: Food contact material incidents by sub-category 2010

Food contact material	Number of incidents
Primary Aromatic Amines (PAAs)	18
Heavy Metals	6
Formaldehyde	4
Epoxidised soybean oil (ESBOs)	3
Benzophenone	2
Other	4
Total	**37**

Labelling and documentation

The number of reported incidents relating to labelling and documentation increased from 77 in 2009 to 95 in 2010. Table 7 shows the number of incidents documented in 2010 by sub-category.

Table 7: Labelling and documentation incidents by sub-category 2010

Labelling and documentation sub-category	Number of incidents
Labelling declaration incorrect	27
False claims	21
No approval number on packaging	21
Unapproved premises	8
Date coding incorrect	6
Fraud	4
Documentation incorrect	4
Other	4
Total	**95**

Microbiological contamination

Figure 4 shows that the numbers of incidents relating to microbiological contamination have increased since 2006.

Figure 4: Microbiological contamination incidents 2006 – 2010

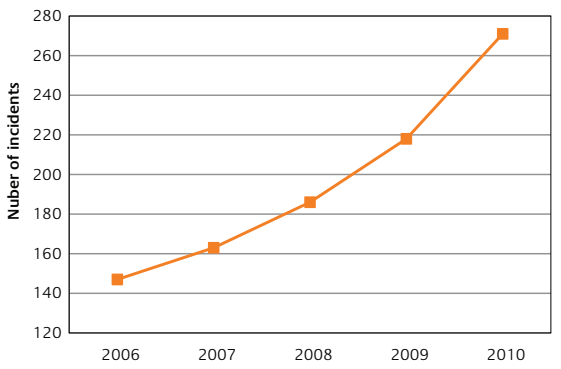


Table 8 details the microbiological contamination incidents reported to the FSA during 2010.

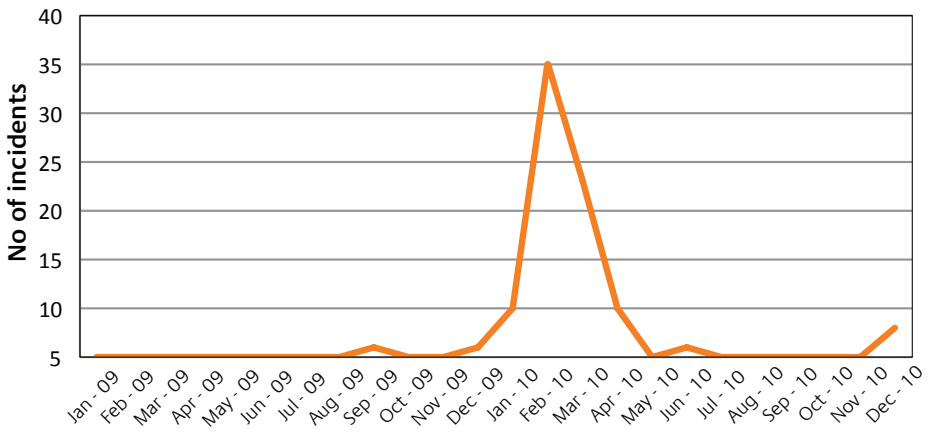
Table 8: Microbiological contamination incidents by sub-category 2010*

Microbiological contamination	Number of incidents
Identified bacterial contamination	128
Yeasts and moulds	16
Viruses (e.g. confirmed and suspected norovirus)	62
Parasites (*Anisakis spp.*)	9
Poor hygienic state including high colony counts	56
Total	**271**

When compared to 2009, the number of incidents involving confirmed and suspected norovirus increased sharply between January and April 2010. It is not known how much of the increased reporting was due to raised awareness of local authorities once the initial problem was identified. By December 2010, the frequency of such incidents declined to the low level experienced before January 2010 (see Figure 5).

More incidents relating to yeast, moulds and parasites were reported in 2010 than 2009.

Figure 5: Incidents involving confirmed and suspected Novovirus Jan 2009 – Dec 2010



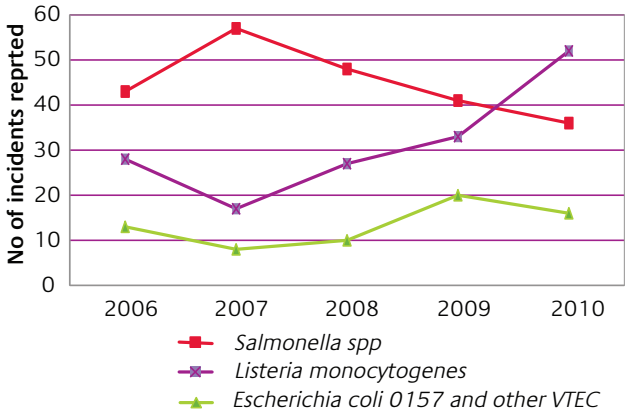
*Does not include incidents relating to 'on-farm' microbiological incidents (see Table 11) and 'natural chemical contamination' incidents such as those involving histamines, algal toxins and scombrotoxins (see Table 10)

The FSA monitors a number of key types of bacterial contamination as listed in Table 9. While the total numbers of such incidents are similar in 2009 and 2010, data since 2007 suggests that *Salmonella spp*. incidents are steadily declining, while those involving *Listeria monocytogenes* are progressively increasing.

Table 9: Identified bacterial contamination incidents 2010

Type of bacterial contamination	Number of incidents
Listeria monocytogenes	52
Salmonella spp.	36
Escherichia coli O157 and other VTEC	16
Bacillus spp.	11
Enterobacter spp.	5
Listeria spp. (not monocytogenes)	4
Staphylococcus aureus	2
Campylobacter spp.	1
Clostridium botulinum	1
Clostridium perfringens	0
Total	**128**

Key pathogen incidents 2006 – 2010



Natural chemical contamination

The number of incidents relating to natural chemical contamination in 2010 was 228 compared to 150 in 2009. In particular, algal toxin incidents rose to 59 in 2010 compared to just 14 in 2009 and slightly lower numbers in 2006, 2007 and 2009. Diuretic shellfish poisoning (DSP) was the principal contributor to the algal toxin sub-category (47 out of 59 incidents). Amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP) and Paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) were responsible for six and two incidents respectively.

Table 10: Natural chemical contamination incidents by sub-category 2010	
Type of natural chemical contamination	Number of incidents
Aflatoxins	137
Ochratoxins	10
Other mycotoxins	6
Algal toxins	59
Scrombrotoxin	4
Histamine	7
Other	5
Total	**228**

On-farm

On-farm incidents reduced in number slightly in 2010. However, 46 more heavy metal poisoning incidents, and 43 fewer botulism incidents were reported in 2010. Between them, lead and copper are responsible for almost all of heavy metal incidents (77 and 19 incidents respectively).

Table 11: On-farm contamination incidents by sub-category 2010	
On-farm sub-category	Number of incidents
Heavy metal poisoning	98
Botulism (confirmed or suspected)	13
Other	11
Total	**122**

Pesticide residues

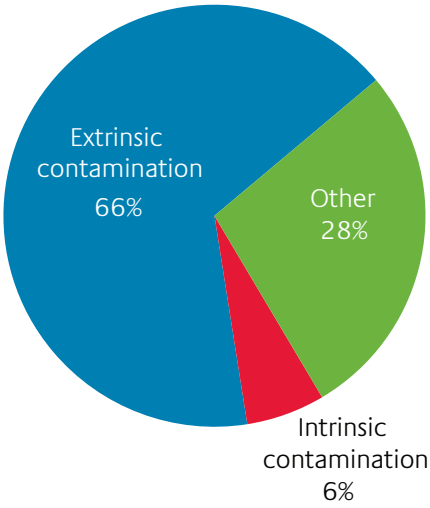
Numbers of incidents falling into this category increased from 28 in 2009 to 55 in 2010. Of the 55 pesticide residue contamination incidents recorded in 2010, the use of carbendazim was the most prevalent (9 incidents). The range of pesticides responsible for the remaining incidents was very diverse with 25 differing agents being involved.

Physical contamination

The number of incidents falling into this category during 2010 was 116. This is similar to the number in 2006, 2007 and 2008. However, fewer incidents were reported in 2009, especially for the three largest sub-categories; metal, glass and pests. Physical contamination from the presence of extrinsic materials which are not related to the food itself accounted for 66% of the total incidents in this category.

Table 12: Physical contamination incidents by sub-category 2010

Physical contamination sub-category	Number of incidents
Animal origin	7
Pests	23
Glass	21
Metal	18
Plastic	11
Hair	1
Nails	1
Paper and cardboard	1
Wood	1
Other	32
Total	**116**



Use of unauthorised ingredients

The numbers and types of incidents falling into this category were similar in 2009 and 2010 (see Table 13).

Table 13: Use of unauthorised ingredients by sub-category 2010

Use of unauthorised ingredients sub-category	Number of incidents
Colours	18
Genetic modification (GM)	14
Novel foods	8
Other	19
Total	**59**

Incidents by notifier

Figure 6 compares numbers of notifications from local authority and industry since April 2000.

Figure 6: Notifications from local Authorities and Industry 2006 – 2010

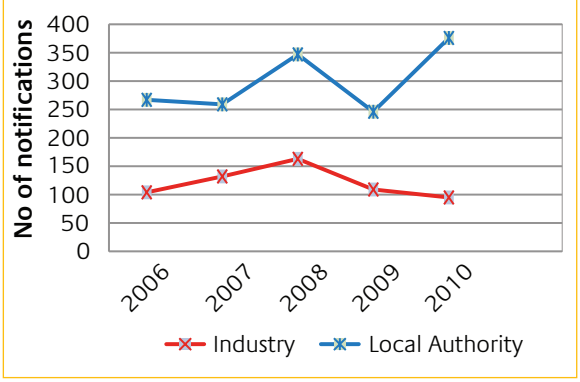


Table 14 lists the notifiers of the incidents recorded by the Agency since 2006. Local authorities were responsible for reporting almost 25% of all incidents recorded in 2010.

Table 14: Incidents by notifier 2006 – 2010

Notifier	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total incidents since April 2000
Agency survey	5	4	7	16	14	81
Border inspection posts	203	254	232	201	233	1,212
HM Revenue and Customs	1	1	1	2	0	7
DARD	6	39	33	34	6	125
Defra	26	19	22	27	35	210
Environment Agency	26	23	20	20	20	372
EU member states	94	93	87	82	120	715
European Commission	4	5	40	44	46	147
Fire services	263	158	129	136	223	2,180
General public	14	12	9	5	13	82
Government Offices of the Regions	3	0	0	0	0	42
Health Protection Agency	18	20	0	15	26	132
Industry	104	132	163	109	95	797
Laboratories	7	8	19	42	97	190
Local authority	267	259	347	246	376	2,359
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	5	4	4	0	4	46
FSA operations group[11]	3	5	3	7	5	24
NHS	5	1	2	2	5	25
Nuclear power stations	5	6	4	1	3	45
Police	12	10	8	7	7	121
Scottish Agricultural College	21	15	13	8	12	72
Single Liaison Body	121	103	28	69	83	338
Third country (a non-EU country)	0	0	0	0	3	3
Veterinary Laboratories Agency	79	110	93	82	68	839
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	46	26	12	7	9	250
Other	6	5	22	46	2	178
Total	**1,344**	**1,312**	**1,298**	**1,208**	**1,505**	**10,592[12]**

[11] Formerly the Meat Hygiene Service

[12] In total, 10,592 incidents have been notified to the Agency since April 2000

Key movements in recent years

The numbers of incidents in most categories vary considerably from year to year. There are a number of factors responsible for these movements. For instance, many types of incidents occur sporadically and so tend not to spread evenly across time. In addition, the frequency of some of the underlying problems that cause incidents may have changed. Moreover, as many possible incidents go unreported, the numbers will reflect differences in reporting and investigation. Therefore, the incidents rates can reflect much more than just the level of risk.

Table 15 identifies the main movements in incident numbers between 2006 and 2010 by category. As might be expected, the greatest changes occurred in the largest categories of incidents.

Table 15: Key movements in incidents 2006 – 2010

Category	Key movement
Environmental contamination	The number of incidents during 2010 was 342, which is similar to the number in 2006, but is greater than the figures for 2007, 2008 and 2009. This pattern reflects the reporting of fires in this period. The rate of fire-related environmental contamination incidents in 2006 and 2009 was more than twice the rate in the other years.
Natural chemical contamination	The number of incidents per year has varied considerably with no obvious pattern. One sub-category that did change was algal toxin incidents. They rose to 59 in 2010 compared to between 7 to 14 incidents annually in the previous four years.
Physical contamination	The number of incidents during 2010 was 116, which is similar to the numbers in 2006, 2007 and 2008. However, less than half this number (56) of these incidents was reported in 2009.
Microbiological contamination	The number of incidents has been continually increasing since 2006. In contrast, microbiological incidents caused by viruses have followed a different pattern. Of the 72 incidents between 2006 and 2010, over 80% occurred in the first four months of 2010.

It is not possible to make like-for-like comparisons with incident numbers for the years before 2006. This is due to the numerous changes that occurred in this period. They included:

- improvements in reporting and recording systems for incidents
- a wider definition of an incident
- the implementation of European Commission (EC) 178/2002 ('General Food Law') in the UK on 1 January 2005
- and improved engagement with stakeholders such as local authorities, industry, the emergency services and other Governmental departments and agencies

NB: While every attempt has been made to try to ensure that the data in this appendix is correct, minor errors in categorisation may be present

Appendix 2

Who tells us about Incidents?

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

Food business operators	**Local authorities**	**Fire service**
European Commission	**Environment Agency**	**Other member states**
Members of the public	**British Nuclear Group**	**Police**
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	**Department of Health**	**Laboratories**
Scottish Agricultural College	**National Health Service**	**Health Protection Agency**
Veterinary Laboratories Agency	**Border Inspection Posts**	
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs		
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development		

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 using our incident report form.

Local authorities provide information to us under the Single Liaison Body (SLB) system. We are 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 originating local authority
- resolves difficulties in communication and liaison

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, enforcement authorities (local and port health authorities) and ourselves are the competent authorities.

The European Commission

The European Commission operates the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The RASFF 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 general public, although we stress that the public should always contact their local authority first. To find your nearest food standards enforcer, use the search facility on our website at:

www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enforceessential/yourarea/

Emergency services

Notifications are regularly received from the police, fire service and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. These notifications usually relate to fires, oil or sewage spills or chemical 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 and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency[13].

[13] Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency since 1/4/11.

Organisations in devolved countries

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

Border inspection posts (BIPs)

BIPs are EU-approved entry points for products of animal origin, originating in countries outside the EU. UK BIPs routinely sample incoming consignments of foodstuffs to ensure compliance with legislation. Adverse results are notified to us and action is taken to ensure that the incoming consignment is destroyed or re-exported where permissible.

Border Rejection Notifications are sent by us to the European Commission via RASFF for circulation 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 responsible manufacturer or exporter 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 us if they become aware of any issues relating to food allergies. Nuclear Power stations and independent laboratories will also notify the FSA of incidents.

Appendix 3

How do we manage an incident and what action do we take to protect consumers?

How do we classify an incident?

We classify 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. This allows incidents to be effectively scoped, resourced and managed. The system is not designed as a risk assessment tool, but a means to aid us in planning and management decisions.

Low

These are minor incidents, with localised effects and few, if any, food safety implications. 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 the elderly) and breaches of statutory limits (for example, for 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.

How do we manage incidents?

We have set procedures (contained in our Incident Response Protocol) that we follow for all incidents. The protocol covers, among other things, incident notification, the roles and responsibilities of our 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 our incidents database. The incidents statistics included within the annual report come from this database. Once an incidents notification is received by us, it is immediately circulated to the relevant internal policy division for a risk assessment.

Risk assessment

We have a wide range of scientific and policy experts at our 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.

We also have access to various independent scientific committees that comprise individuals with recognised expertise within their field. These committees provide independent, expert advice to the FSA on research and policy when requested. Further details regarding the work of the committees are available via our website:

www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/

Risk management

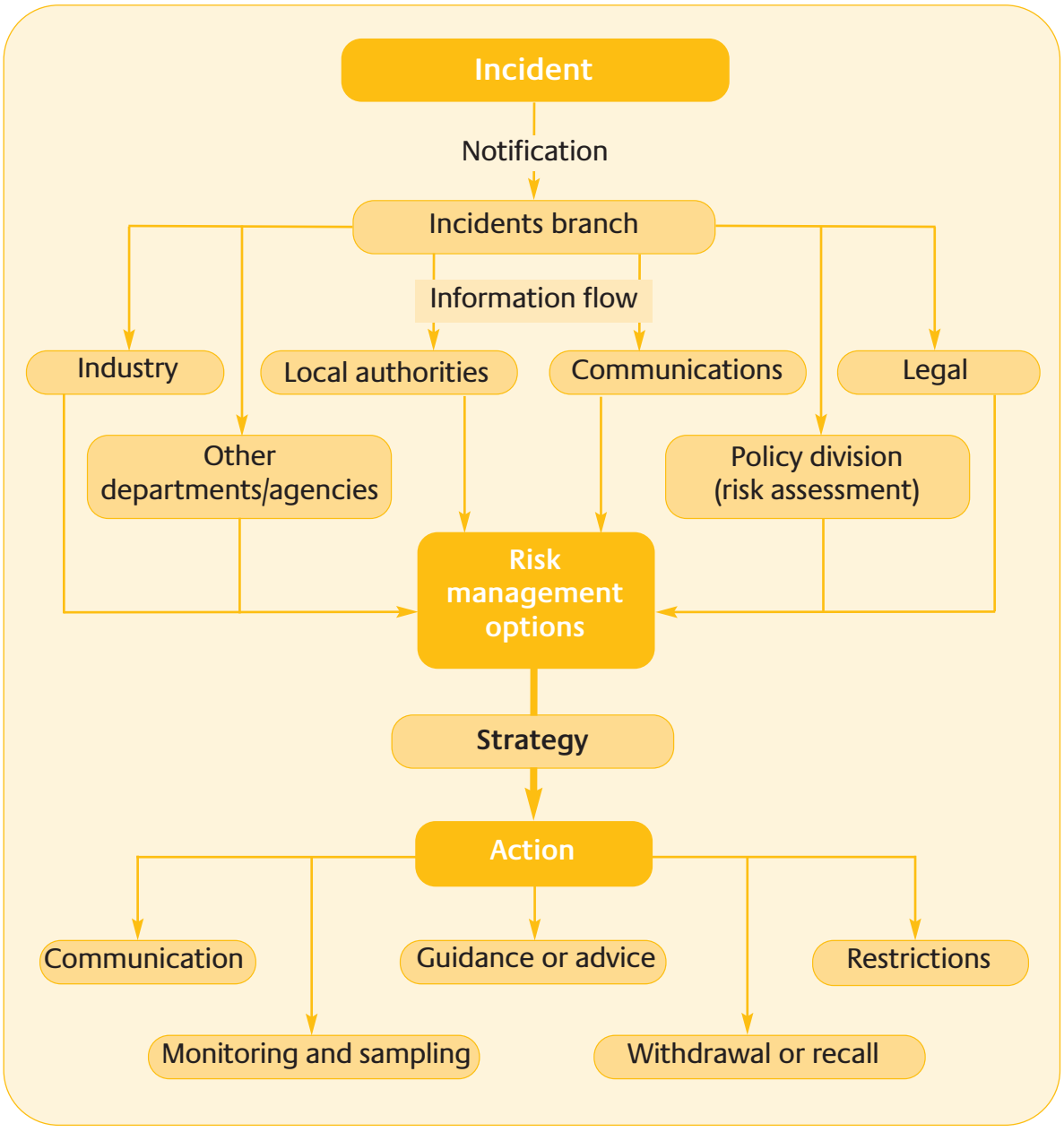
Risk assessment is used to inform the risk management options during each incident. The FSA will liaise with the relevant local authorities, industry, other government departments and agencies in order to arrive at an appropriate risk management strategy.

The strategy will take into account

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

Once a strategy is decided upon by ourselves in consultation with key external stakeholders, it will be disseminated to teams within the FSA, local authorities, industry and others as appropriate. Above all, during incidents ensuring that food safety is protected and food standards are maintained is paramount.

Our incident handling strategy is illustrated in the following process diagram.



What will we do with the information once received?

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

We 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 our website to alert consumers and may be picked up by the national media. However, we only issue food alerts for a fraction of the incidents we deal with – in 2010, there were 77[14] alerts and information notices out of a total of 1,505 incidents. The following section provides further information regarding food alerts.

What actions can we take to protect consumers' interests?

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

Food Alerts and Allergy Alerts

Alerts are our method of informing local authorities about problems associated with food and, in some cases, they provide details of specific action to be taken.

There are three categories of Alerts:

- Food Alerts for Action are issued when an incident requires enforcement action from them.
- Food Alerts for Information are issued to bring an incident to the attention of local authorities – in June 2010 these were replaced by Product Withdrawal Information Notices (WINs) and Product Recall Information Notices (RINs).
- Allergy Alerts are issued in cases where foods have to be withdrawn or recalled, if there is a risk to consumers, because the allergy labelling is missing or incorrect or if there is any other food allergy risk.

Food Alerts, RINs, WINs and Allergy Alerts are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal or recall by a manufacturer, retailer or distributor. Alerts are also copied to Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, Trading Standards Officers and food trade organisations, to alert them to current food issues.

[14] Includes updates.

During 2010 we issued 15[15] Food Alerts, 3 of which required action from local authorities. We also issued 19 RINs, 2 WINs, and 34 Allergy Alerts.

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 the exchange of information on measures taken to ensure food safety.

We use the European Commission's RASFF system to:

- obtain information about matters that we need 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 posts (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. In 2009 the Commission introduced the RASFF portal, which is a publicly available online searchable database of RASFF notifications.

Publish advice and guidance

We issue statements and precautionary advice, where necessary, to consumers and farmers, informing them about issues affecting the human food chain and advising of action they should take. We aim to issue advice, where necessary, within hours of being notified of an incident. However, in some cases we may need to seek further advice, for example, from our scientific advisory committees, which may add some extra time to the process. This advice, which is published at food.gov.uk, is reviewed as new information comes to light. During a high-level incident, we may also decide to open 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. The Agency's web-based GRAIL (Guidance and Regulatory Advice on Import Legislation) database also provides enforcement officers with a searchable up-to-date database of:

[15] Excludes updates.

- all imported food guidance and legislation relating to products not of animal origin and fish and fishery products
- a summary of import controls on specific products/countries
- an A-Z of relevant contacts
- useful web-links on imported food

GRAIL is available to all free-of-charge at https://grail.foodapps.co.uk/grail/general/home.aspx

A temporary closure notice to close shellfish harvesting areas may be issued by local authorities, on our recommendation. This measure is applicable where an incident is localised.

We also issue guidance. For example, the Food Incidents Task Force, set up by us in the wake of the 2005 Sudan I incident (involving an illegal dye in 650 food products), published draft guidance in 2006 for preventing and responding to food incidents. The finalised guidance was published in 2007 and updated in April 2008.

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, we will participate in the process and provide 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 a producer or product purchaser. For example, sixteen-week movement restrictions may be placed on potentially affected livestock following an on-farm lead poisoning incident.

Statutory restrictions

Subject to Ministerial approval, we may implement an order under the Food and Environment Protection Act (FEPA) 2005 to 'ring-fence' an area. This restricts the sale or movement of food or agricultural produce. This order will be periodically reviewed as new details come to light. The FEPA order itself 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 us in 2010.

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.

The Food Safety Act 1990 empowers the designating authority to make emergency control orders in relation to commercial operations regarding 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 1990 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 us promptly of an incident, external stakeholders can ensure that, where necessary, action will be taken by us to protect food safety.

Sampling and analysis

We 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. Our sampling programme will be reviewed as new information comes to light.

Following an incident, emergency safeguard measures may be issued at EU level where there is a potentially serious risk to health involving a food product from a non-EU country. These can impose stricter import conditions and require additional controls at EU borders, including additional sampling and analysis. A list of products subject to safeguard measures follows:

1. Melamine Contamination of Certain Products from China.
2. Guar gum from India due to contamination risks for PCP and dioxins.
3. Products covered by the aflatoxins Regulation 1152/2009.
4. Fishery products from Albania for histamines.
5. Fishery products from Gabon for heavy metals and sulphites.
6. Farmed fishery products from Indonesia for pharmacologically active substances, in particular: chloramphenicol, metabolites of nitrofurans and tetracyclines (at least tetracycline, oxytetracycline and chlortetracycline).
7. Aquaculture fishery products from India for the presence of chloramphenicol, tetracycline, oxytetracycline, chlortetracycline and of metabolites of nitrofurans.
8. Crustaceans from Bangladesh for the presence of residues of pharmacologically active substances and in particular: chloramphenicol, tetracycline, oxytetracycline and chlortetracycline, metabolites of nitrofurans, as well as malachite green, crystal violet and their respective leuco-metabolites.
9. Sunflower oil from the Ukraine due to contaminated risks by mineral oil.
10. Certain products of animal origin from China for the presence of chloramphenicol and metabolites of nitrofurans, and in addition for aquaculture fishery products the presence of malachite green and crystal violet and their metabolites.

11. Prawns from Myanmar for the presence of chloramphenicol.
12. Certain bivalve mollusc from Peru due to hepatitis A.
13. Feed and food from Japan following the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power station.

Where a known or emerging risk to health is identified, feed and food products may be subject to additional import controls under Regulation 669/2009 (as amended).

How do we learn from experience?

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

A number of incidents, a maximum of six each year are selected, for a wider, formal internal and/or external review.

We also hold quarterly incident review meetings with external stakeholders. These meetings may concentrate on particular incident types, for example on-farm incidents. They may also be used to review trends, statistics or procedures.

Appendix 4

How can you get in touch with us?

Incidents Branch

The Incidents Branch acts as the central hub for our 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 other interested parties and RASFF notifications to the Commission.

Contact details for the Incidents Branch:

Incidents Branch

Food Standards Agency
Aviation House
125 Kingsway, London
WC2B 6NH

tel: 020 7276 8448
fax: 020 7276 8788
Email (all incidents):
foodincidents@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: 0845 051 8486
fax: 0845 051 8487

The Defra Duty Room will contact the appropriate officer 'on-call' in the Incidents Branch.

Food Fraud Team

The Food Fraud team is committed to providing local authorities with support when tackling food fraud, which includes any deliberate illegal activity relating to the supply of food or feed. The team provide the resources to all UK local authorities when tackling known or suspected food fraud:

Contact details for the Food Fraud Team:
Food Fraud
Food Standards Agency
Aviation House
125 Kingsway, London
WC2B 6NH

tel: 020 7276 8242
fax: 020 7276 8788
email:
foodfraud@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Local authorities are asked to submit intelligence on a '5x5x5' Information/Intelligence Report form. This is a standard format used by enforcement agencies for managing the evaluation, the source and the origin of information, and the way in which it should be handled and disseminated. The form can be found at:

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

Out of office hours contact should be calling the Food Fraud Hotline (answerphone) on 020 7276 8527.

FSA has offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which take responsibility for co-ordinating incidents and food fraud investigations in their areas. Any issues relating to food in these areas will be led by the devolved office concerned.

FSA in Scotland

6th Floor, St Magnus House,
25 Guild Street, Aberdeen
AB11 6NJ
tel: (01224) 285 194/196
email:
scottishincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone: 07881 1516867

FSA in Wales

11th Floor, Southgate House
Wood Street, Cardiff
CF10 1EW
tel: 029 20 678 902/961
email:
wales.foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone: 07789 926573

FSA in Northern Ireland

10a–10c Clarendon Road
Belfast
BT1 3BG
tel: (028) 9041 7700
email:
incidents.ni@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours telephone: 07884 473022

Appendix 5

Glossary of terms

ACNFP	Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes
BIP	Border Inspection Post
CIEH	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
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
FAFA	Food Alert – For Action
FAFI	Food Alert – For Information
FBO	Food Business Operator
FEPA	Food and Environment Protection Act (1985)
HPA	Health Protection Agency
HPS	Health Protection Scotland
Incident Response Protocol	A guide for our staff to procedures to be followed during incidents

JLARS	Joint Local Authority Regulatory Services
LOCOG	London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
NHS	National Health Service
OCT	Outbreak Control Team
PAAs	Primary aromatic amines
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
RIN	Recall Information Notice
SAC	Science Advisory Committee
SLB	Single Liaison Body
VLA	Veterinary Laboratories Agency
WIN	Withdrawal Information Notice

Stay up to date

For more information and advice about food, visit the Food Standards Agency website:
food.gov.uk

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