

# 2020 Annual Report

Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone



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## To The Minister for Health

The Board is pleased to submit to the Minister of Health its Annual Report and accounts for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2020, in accordance with Section 25 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998.

**Martin Higgins**

**Dr Pamela A Byrne**

Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer

**We protect consumers and raise compliance through partnership, science and food law enforcement**

# 2020 in review

21 years of protecting consumer health and interests



Staff move to  
working from home



7 Protected  
disclosures



42 Enforcement  
Orders



Publication of world-  
class research



50,044 food  
businesses



Commitment  
to staff culture  
and well-being



448 Media  
outputs



167 Food alerts and  
food allergen alerts

# Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer's statement



The past year was an unprecedented one for people across the globe. Within the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), severe challenges were presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by Brexit and constrained financial and human resources within the Authority. Despite this, 2020 saw a significant programme work delivered by the Authority and its partners. Food safety legislation was enforced; 42 Enforcement Orders were served on food businesses; food recalls and food allergen alerts continued; Brexit was realised; guidance was provided to the official agencies and food business operators; and the world's first *Scientific Recommendations for Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for 1 to 5 Year-Olds in Ireland* was published – all while our staff moved to remote working. Prioritising food safety and public health remained our priority against the challenging backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to recognise our talented team for their enthusiasm, dynamism and professionalism in achieving the FSAI's mission, particularly given the major changes that 2020 brought. Our staff, Board, committees and external partners are the essential players in delivering our legislative mandate. We commend them for their commitment to protecting both consumers in Ireland and consumers of Irish food in 180 markets across the world.

We are pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report and accounts for the FSAI. It demonstrates the critical role the FSAI plays in the protection of public health. The FSAI fulfils this role by increasing food law compliance and taking enforcement action, where appropriate – all based on science, evidence and expertise. Our vision of 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone' means that our

focus remains on the areas of highest risk, in order to protect consumers from any impact on their health and their interests due to unsafe and untrustworthy food being placed on the market. The FSAI employs a responsive, multifaceted combination of cutting-edge science, talented people, timely data and information, regulatory powers, and compliance building activities in order to

keep national food safety and authenticity at the forefront of the public health agenda.

In our Annual Report, we would like to recognise the dedication, effort and passion demonstrated by each individual FSAI team member. Our team members play an integral role in achieving the vision and mission of the FSAI and we are proud of their achievements. We would also like to express our gratitude to our external partners, at home and abroad. It is thanks to these committed individuals that we live in a country which is recognised as having one of the best food systems in the world.

As one of the world's very first food safety agencies, it is imperative that the FSAI continues to evolve using a data- and science-led approach. This protects Ireland's health into the future. During 2020, data from food business inspections, audits, research, food incidents, and digital analytics continued to drive business decisions and inform our approach to minimising risks to public health.

This approach aims to build on the FSAI's scientific and technical expertise to support and strengthen consumer protection. We would like to recognise the highly skilled people we have in the FSAI who provide scientific and technical expertise. In addition, we would like to recognise the FSAI's Scientific Committee, as well as national and international scientists, for their work, which informs national

risk management decisions. The robust data, evidence and expertise they provide is vital to safeguarding public health.

In 2020, we made good progress in achieving the FSAI's 2019–2023 Strategy. We focused on the new official control's regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/625), Brexit preparedness; building our evidence base, and strengthening our relationships with our stakeholders. The Strategy has so far, proven to be a very effective and efficient road map in what has been a very rewarding, but also challenging and dynamic, year.

In 2020, the FSAI published its second *Science Strategy*. It outlines how the Authority will achieve the scientific elements of the FSAI Strategy between now and 2024.

Our vision of 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone' is the purpose that guides how we oversee and harmonise Ireland's official food control system. This involves ensuring food industry compliance with EU food safety legislation. Our regulatory oversight of the food chain – from the farm gate to the consumer – is formalised through service contracts with 33 individual State agencies in Ireland. In this way, the FSAI regulates and oversees a dynamic food industry, with the clear purpose of protecting public health and the interests of consumers. This environment is driven by regulatory changes to official controls, innovation and digital media, coupled with the impact of globalisation. The management

of food safety risks in an increasingly complex global food system is becoming more and more challenging. Our role in the protection of public health in Ireland also extends to the consumers of Irish food in 180 markets worldwide. Having a data-led, independent, respected and robust system of official controls in place has proven to be a tremendous asset, and it is key to the underpinning of Ireland's societal health and well-being, and to entering new markets and maintaining existing markets.

Through data provided to us from the official inspection agencies, the FSAI identified a small increase (1.1%) in the number of food business operators in Ireland in 2020. Overall, in 2020 there were 543 more food business operators in Ireland compared with 2019.

The FSAI's mission is to "protect consumers and raise compliance through partnership, science and food law enforcement" within the Irish food industry. To succeed in achieving this mission, the Authority continued to provide tools and resources to the inspectorate to support them in assessing industry compliance with food law in 2020. The Authority also provided resources to support the industry to comply with the law.

The Authority and the official agencies are responsible for providing the evidence to demonstrate that the industry is fulfilling its legal obligations. This can involve: monitoring for chemical and microbiological contaminants; carrying out risk assessments on

food hazards; auditing the food service sector, and managing food incidents related to issues that have occurred in Ireland or that have emerged from other European Union (EU) countries. The Authority audits Ireland's food control system to ensure that it is robust and compliant with EU food control legislation. These findings inform national and international decisions and policies that affect public health and well-being.

Our work in the management of food incidents is continuous. During 2020, the Authority issued 112 food alerts and 55 food allergen alerts, a 56% increase over 2019. It also dealt with 661 food incidents. The number of complaints from consumers about food or food premises, labelling, and allergens was slightly lower than in previous years (2,272). The reduction in numbers largely reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby many food service businesses were temporarily closed for long periods throughout the year. In 2020, the Authority's Advice Line dealt with 7,767 requests from industry. Some of the most common queries were in relation to starting a food business, food supplements, food labelling requirements, and requests for FSAI publications.

Collaboration and teamwork are key FSAI values, and in order to fulfil our mission we regularly work in partnership with the official agencies and other bodies, both nationally and internationally. Our relationships with our regulatory partners are key to Ireland's

success in protecting consumers and delivering an enhanced national food control system. Through our service contracts and relationships with the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, and the Local Authority Veterinary Service, we ensure that we prioritise our limited resources in line with the areas of highest risk to the consumer. However, any further reduction in resources will seriously challenge our ability to protect public health – this was particularly evident in 2020, and it resulted in intensive funding discussions with the Local Authority Veterinary Service before agreement on a 2021 budget was reached.

Our close working relationships with those further afield also ensure that we can share, exchange and leverage critical information in a timely manner where there is a risk to consumers from food, either produced in Ireland or imported into Ireland. These relationships also facilitate a learning environment where insights and best practice can be shared among countries. Partnerships and engagements with agencies such as the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and our counterparts in the EU and across the world enable us to access timely, accurate and robust information which helps us to maintain an evidence-based, world-class system of controls that stands up to scrutiny. In 2020, the FSAI co-founded the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum with colleagues in the

Saudi Food and Drug Authority, and Food Standards Agency Australia New Zealand. In addition, the FSAI assumed the role of Secretariat of the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies for the period 2020-2022.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the inspectorate and the State laboratories in delivering an essential programme of work during the year, despite constrained resources and the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensuring that we can deliver on our legislative mandate requires a team, and we are privileged to have a very professional and committed team within the Authority. In 2020, we continued a programme of work which aims to enhance the Authority's inclusive, collaborative and high-performing environment in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This programme of work involved the implementation of the actions identified in our staff survey, and we also continue to provide personal and professional development opportunities for Authority staff and Board members. Additionally, we would like to recognise our Corporate Affairs functional area and the workplace transition groups that facilitated a seamless changeover to remote working for the organisation in 2020. The care, support, and dedication provided by these groups to the rest of our staff was second to none. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the work of our committees and staff groups who worked hard to keep the organisation connected over the past year, with FSAI staff engaged

in everything from book clubs and quizzes to yoga and mindfulness sessions.

There is no market for unsafe food, and everyone involved in Ireland's food system must make consumer safety their top priority. The Authority will continue to deliver a robust system of controls and corporate governance designed to ensure accountability, transparency, and public value within our food system. This will become even more important as food businesses begin to reopen again following the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that they provide safe and trustworthy food to the consumer at all of their touchpoints.

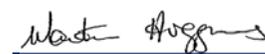
To successfully achieve the FSAI's mission, appropriate resources must be allocated to the Authority to ensure the delivery of a world-class food system based on cutting-edge scientific evidence and timely data.

Ireland is renowned internationally as a 'food island'. This reputation is due to the strong compliance delivered by the Irish food industry. The Authority has a strong reputation in its own right, due to its expert staff's commitment to protecting the consumer. The food inspectors of the official agencies and the staff in the laboratories who work under a service contract with the Authority are essential

to achieving safe and trustworthy food for everyone, and we recognise them for their dedication to their role as the national food safety inspectorate.

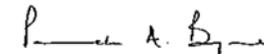
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, TD; former Minister for Health, Simon Harris, TD; Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, TD; and the staff of their respective Departments. I would also like to thank our Board members, the Scientific Committee, the Food Safety Consultative Council, and the industry fora as we work towards delivering our new strategy over the next 3 years.

**Martin Higgins**



Chairperson

**Dr Pamela A Byrne**



Chief Executive Officer

## An introduction to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland was established in 1998 under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 as an independent Government agency responsible for the enforcement of food legislation in Ireland. This Act was enacted in July 1998 and came into effect on 1 January 1999.

The Authority is a statutory, independent and science-based regulatory enforcement body dedicated to protecting public health and consumer interests in the areas of food safety, hygiene, integrity, and authenticity. It reports to the Minister for Health, who appoints a 10-member Board. It also has a 14-member Scientific Committee (also appointed by the Minister for Health) that assists and advises the Board. Therefore, decisions relating to food safety, hygiene and integrity are made using the latest and best scientific advice and information available.

This ensures that people in Ireland, as well as consumers of Irish food in 180 countries across the world, have access to a safe food supply and trustworthy information. Therefore, the FSAI takes all

reasonable steps to ensure that food consumed, produced, distributed or marketed in Ireland meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene reasonably available, and that food complies with legal requirements or, where appropriate, with recognised codes of good practice.

These activities are key to underpinning Ireland's societal health and economic growth.



### Underpinning a healthy society and functioning economy

The basis of a healthy society and a functioning economy is healthy people making informed choices about the food they eat. The Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023 recognises the importance of appropriate legal frameworks, forward-thinking policy and cohesive structures in order to achieve the highest standards of food safety possible and to achieve the Department of Health's overall objective of improving the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland.

Unsafe food can have acute and chronic health effects, and these impact considerably on quality of life. In addition,

the consequences of food poisoning can impact on the economy at a societal level through inability to work, as well as through healthcare and social welfare costs. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that unsafe food causes 600 million cases of foodborne diseases and 420,000 deaths each year. One in 10 people are thought to fall ill after eating contaminated food worldwide. The WHO estimates that, globally, 33 million years of healthy lives are lost each year due to eating unsafe food. In this way, a safer food supply means improvements in the lives of people in Ireland through reduced illness rates, lower health and welfare costs, and increased economic productivity.

Food and drink manufacturing is the largest indigenous sector in Ireland, with an average annual turnover of €27.5 billion. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM),

employment in the agri-food sector accounts for approximately 164,400 jobs/7.1% of total employment in Ireland. It represents 6.7% of modified Gross National Income and 9.5% of total merchandising exports. Data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that the food and beverages sector accounts for 19% of all industrial turnover and 21% of all manufacturing industry turnover.

Irish food and drink exports were worth €13 billion in 2020, which represents a 2% decline when compared with 2019.

Despite this, Ireland maintains substantial market positions in the United Kingdom (UK), European Union (EU) markets, and international markets. According to Bord Bia, exports of food and drink from Ireland have increased 16% in value since 2016.

Ireland's food and drink exports success is underpinned by meat and dairy exports. Ireland is the fifth-largest beef exporter in the world and the largest exporter of beef

in Europe. Additionally, 250,000 jobs are linked directly to the agri-food sector.

The FSAI's commitment to compliance building and the provision of safe food underpins the performance of these economically crucial national industries. It also plays a significant role in Ireland's image nationally and globally as a world-class producer of safe and trustworthy food. There is no market for unsafe food.



# The Irish food safety system

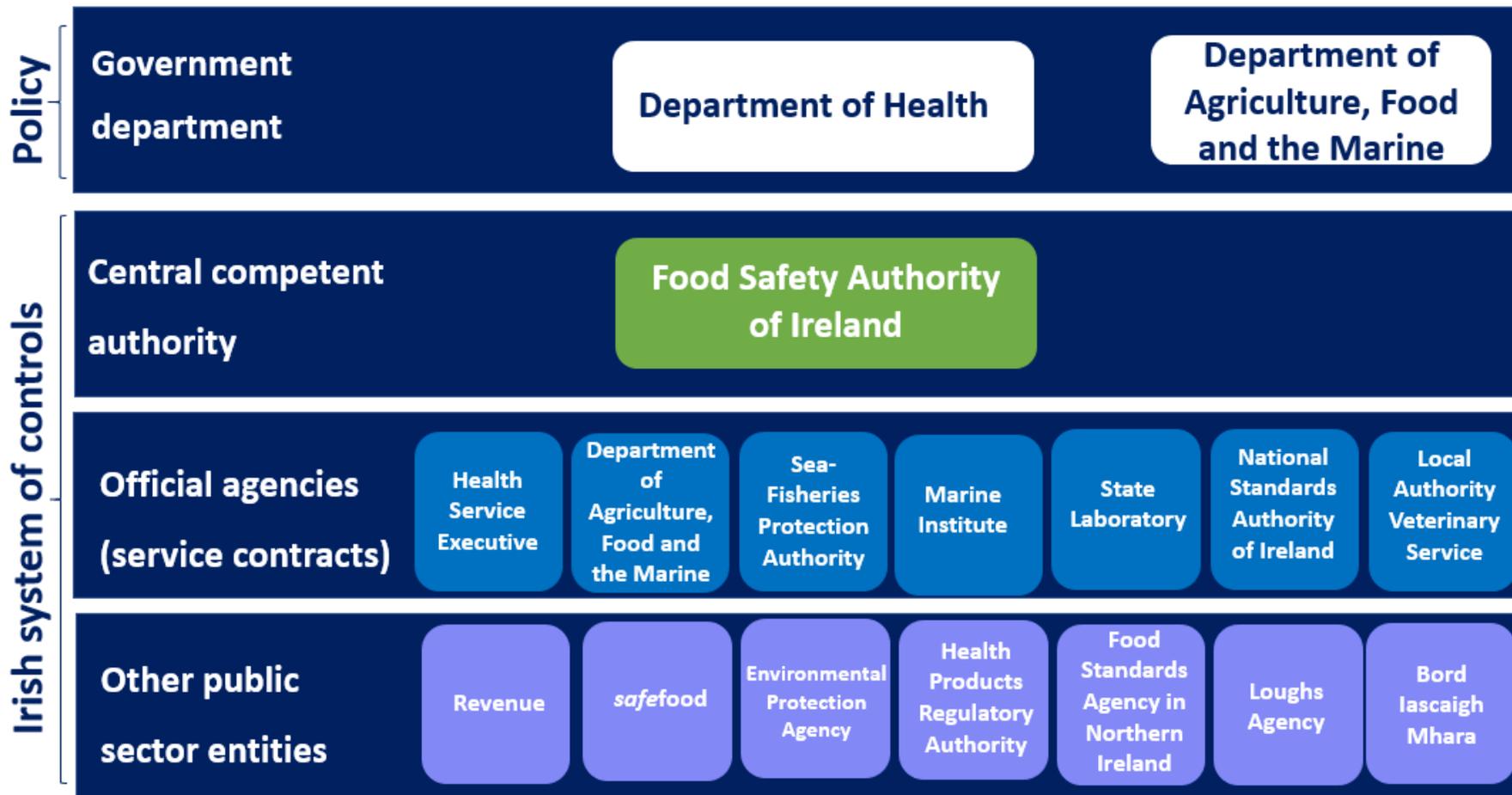
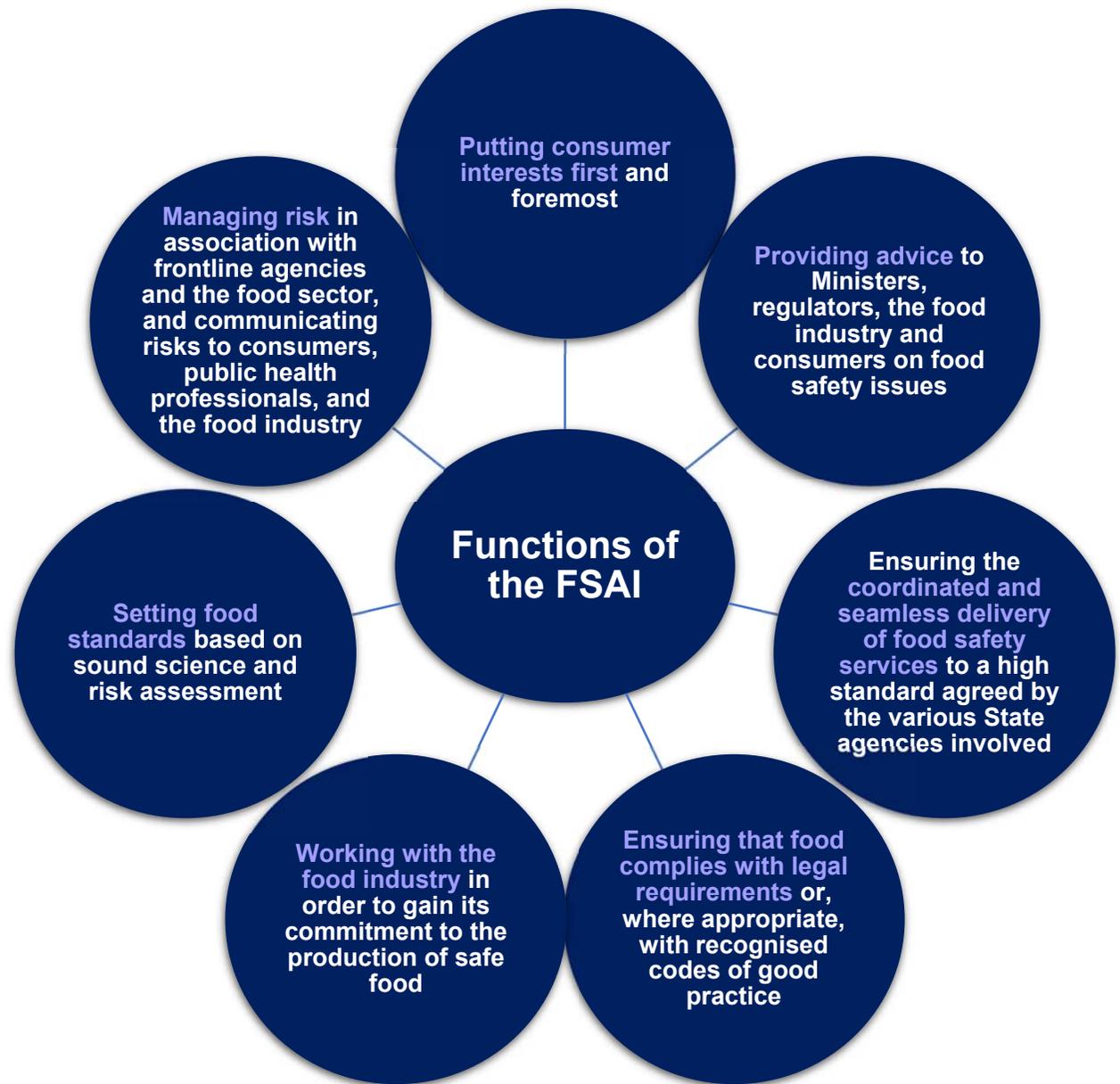


Figure 1 The Irish food safety system

## What the Authority does

The Authority's key remit is the enforcement of food legislation which is coordinated through working in partnership with other food regulatory authorities.

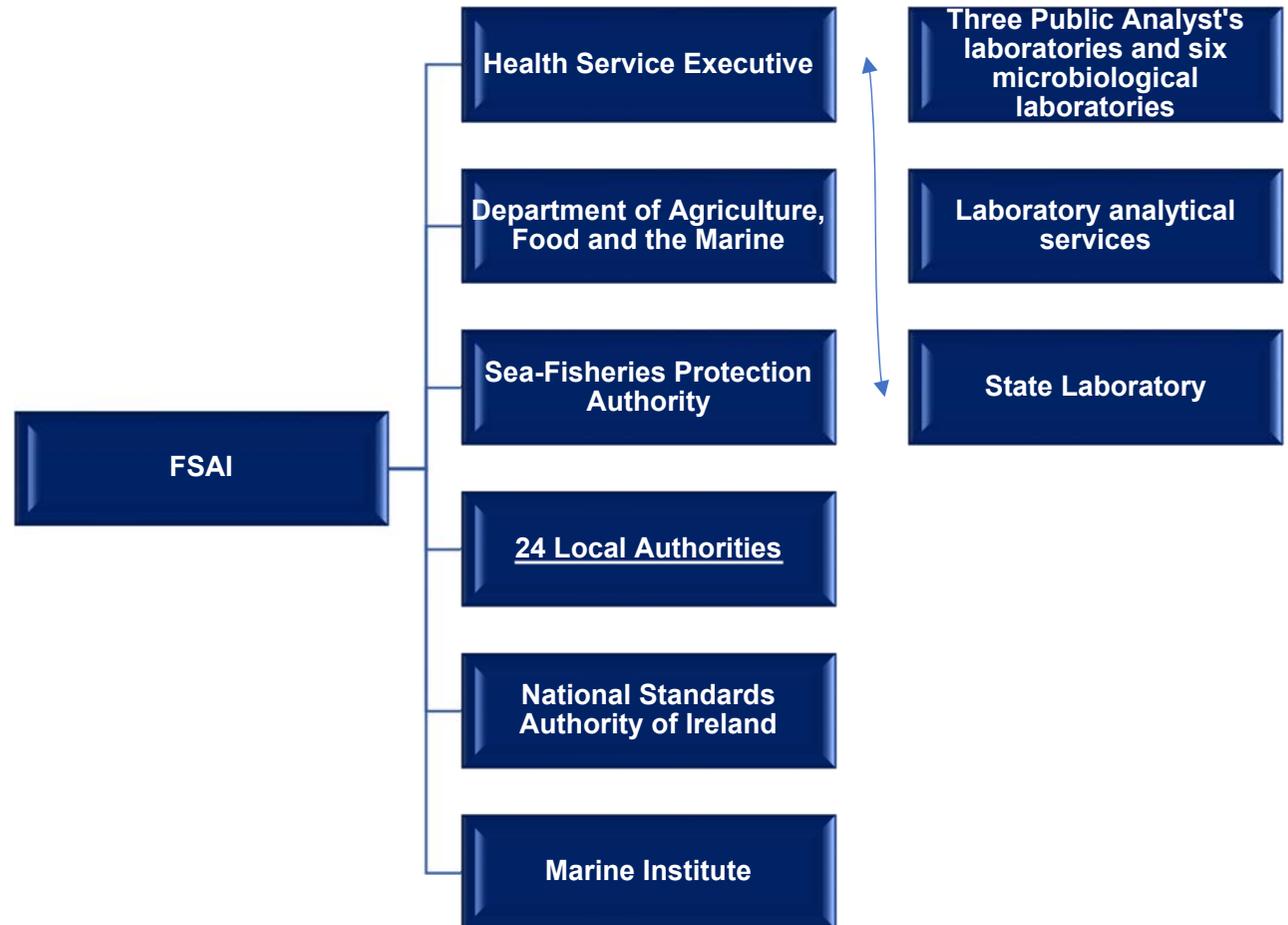
Food legislation is enforced on behalf of the Authority by a network of official agencies through a service contracts programme, which the Authority monitors. The Authority also reports on the agencies' activities and seeks continuous improvement and accountability through a programme of regular audits. Read more about the [range and scope of our work here](#).



## How the Authority operates

In 2020, the Authority enforced food legislation through service contracts with 31 official agencies, and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 provides the requisite legislative basis for this.

The Authority's role is to coordinate and monitor the activities of these official agencies through service contracts, which outline an agreed level and standard of food safety activity that the official agencies will perform. Service contracts are in place for a minimum of 3 years and may be reviewed during that time at the request of either the Authority or the official agency. Regular meetings are held with senior management in each official agency and with the line managers responsible for the delivery of the inspection and analysis service.



## Industry Engagement



The food industry is responsible for the safety of food on the Irish market, whereas the Authority's role is one of oversight and enforcement.

The Authority engages regularly with the food industry in order to make food businesses aware of their responsibilities and increase their compliance with food safety legislation.

One of the ways in which the Authority does this is through virtual meetings with its four industry fora. These meetings provide the food industry with a platform to raise pertinent issues and obtain important information from the Authority. They also allow the Authority to raise any ongoing issues with industry and raise awareness of regulatory and legislative changes. During 2020, all of these meetings were held virtually.

### Artisan Forum



Members of the Artisan Forum come from a very diverse and dynamic group of artisan, small-scale or domestic food producers. The Forum provides a useful setting through which the sector and the regulators can engage, interact and exchange information. This in turn helps to enhance compliance throughout the sector. Due to severe disruption to the sector caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum met just once in 2020, but communications continued in between meetings. Forum members continue to have grave concerns about the presence of chemicals, in particular glyphosate, in the environment, in food, and in humans, and the possible impact on human health. Members feel that their sectors are sometimes inconsistently regulated and overregulated. The possibility of a 'train the trainer' initiative with third-level institutions will continue to be pursued.

### Retail Forum



The Retail Forum includes representatives from both the main supermarket chains and the major symbol groups operating in Ireland. The Forum serves to increase understanding of food legislation, to disseminate food safety advice, and share best practice. The Retail Forum held two meetings in 2020: one regular meeting, and one virtual meeting due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The main issues discussed were labelling of infant formula with HMO (human milk oligosaccharides); primary ingredient origin labelling; vegan/vegetarian labelling; antimicrobial resistance; Brexit; campylobacter; second expert opinion; definition of sourdough; EU Commission guidance on acrylamide; the delisting of additive E160b, and permanent baiting.

### Food Service Forum



The Food Service Forum draws its membership from catering businesses, food service businesses and representative organisations. The Forum disseminates food safety advice, shares best practice, and improves understanding of relevant food legislation. The Food Service Forum met once in March 2020; it opted not to meet virtually in late 2020, but continued to correspond with the FSAI on a number of issues via email. The main issues discussed were: meal ordering and delivery services; Brexit; European Commission guidance on acrylamide; the FSAI Safe Catering Pack update; permanent baiting; the second expert opinion consultation, food safety training, beef labelling, and country of origin labelling.

### Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee



The Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee is the national stakeholder committee for the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme. The aim of the Programme is to ensure that only safe shellfish are placed on the market. The Committee is chaired by the Authority and includes representatives from the official agencies (the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, the Marine Institute, and the HSE), Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the shellfish industry, and other stakeholder groups (including Irish Water, and the Environmental Protection Agency). During 2020, the Committee met four times and discussed a wide range of issues, including sample coordination, biotoxin events and shellfish water quality. The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority and the Marine Institute kept the Committee up to date on norovirus, general toxicity trends, water quality, environmental contaminants and developments regarding shellfish safety within Europe. The Committee oversaw reviews of both the biotoxin and microbiological codes of practice under the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme. The Committee members also provided user feedback to the Marine Institute on the continued development of the harmful algal blooms biotoxin database.

## Collaboration

**Collaboration is one of the Authority's core values. Only by working with industry, our stakeholders, and our international partners can the FSAI protect consumers and ensure the achievement of its vision and mission. The Authority recognises the commitment of its national partners and collaborators in delivering a comprehensive system of controls for food safety and authenticity during 2020.**



In 2020, the Authority continued to be a collaborative player in the field of food safety. However, the way the Authority maintained its national and international relationships changed significantly. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the Authority's work moved online and was conducted through video conferencing software. This had advantages and disadvantages. It made it harder to maintain human bonds and connections, but made it easier to attend national and international meetings.

Despite this, the Authority continued its close cooperation with the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland. This became even more important in the face of Brexit. The partnership is enabled through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that allows common issues related to consistency of enforcement in both jurisdictions to be addressed, in addition to ensuring efficient cooperation in the event of a cross-border food incident. The MoU between the Loughs Agency and the Authority outlines the assistance the Loughs Agency provides to the operation of the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme in Lough Foyle and Carlingford

Lough. Over the past year, the Authority continued its engagement with *safe food*. This allows the opportunity for collaborative work to be completed on issues of common importance. It included a joint celebration to mark World Food Safety Day 2020 with the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). The Authority collaborates with Food Drink Ireland (FDI) on horizon scanning through the Emerging Risks and Threats Forum, whose membership includes representatives from the FSAI, FDI, and the larger multinational food manufacturers. The Authority also worked with other regulators in Ireland, including the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), Bord Bia, Sport Ireland and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Additionally, the Authority's food safety regulatory partners and members of their councils, committees, and stakeholder groups were key in disseminating key messages and safeguarding Ireland's food systems in 2020.

The Authority contributes to the Health Service Executive Health Protection Surveillance Centre Scientific Advisory Committee, and also to the Environmental Protection Agency Advisory Committee. The Authority is an ongoing, active contributor on a number of other committees hosted by other organisations, the purposes of which are to raise and maintain standards in the food sector. These organisations include: Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland; Bord Bia; Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI); National Hygiene Partnership; and the National Standards Authority of Ireland.



The Authority collaborated across Government Departments as part of the Ireland #BrexitReady campaign, which allowed the Authority to develop cohesive Brexit messages for interested stakeholders. It also collaborated with Fáilte Ireland to develop guidance on reopening and operating safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the Authority participated in the HSE's committees dealing with the outbreaks of COVID-19 in meat plants and also in the food processing sector.

In 2020, the FSAI assumed the role of Secretariat of the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies for a period of 2 years, during

which period it will host four meetings with EU Member States holding the presidency of the European Council. The FSAI also chairs Food Law Enforcement Practitioners, an EU group of inspectors and laboratory personnel engaged in food law implementation. In addition, the FSAI participates in a global government-to-government meeting on the use of private certification schemes in the context of official controls, and it is an active member of the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF). The FSAI assists agencies in other countries, which regard it as a model for single national food control agencies. In addition, it continues to be a member of Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI), an Enterprise Ireland and DAFM initiative to make Ireland's food safety, scientific, technical, policy, and agri-food expertise available in order to support development overseas.



**In August 2020, the FSAI became the European Heads of Food Safety Agency's Secretariat.**

EU engagement in 2020 included the FSAI's continued participation in a network of other Member States, and also in the European Commission, working on a standard format for producing National Control Plans for official controls across the EU, and for reporting on them. In addition, the FSAI participated in an EU working group in relation to compliance with EU rules on olive oil monitoring and reporting.

In 2020, the FSAI along with a consortium of Irish Government agencies and their international partners supported Albania as a candidate for accession to the EU by strengthening its food safety, veterinary, and plant health standards. This project became more complex in 2020, due to the restraints imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is intended to continue for the next 2 years and is supported by a €5 million EU grant.

From a global perspective, the FSAI utilised video conferencing software and engaged with its international and EU counterparts, allowing the sharing of ideas and information. The FSAI also has a confidentiality agreement with the United States (US) Food and Drug Administration. In addition, the Authority continues to host foreign delegations who wish to learn more about its strategy and operations.

The FSAI's Director of Food Science and Standards, Dr Wayne Anderson, is a member of the ICMSF. The FSAI is also the national

contact point for the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), a joint initiative between the WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The initiative involves 177 Member States in the routine exchange of information on food safety issues and the sharing of experiences and expertise, and it enables rapid access to information in the event of food safety emergencies. In 2020, these international connections proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating real-time exchange of key information.

Such collaborations and partnerships are essential in order to ensure a safe and trustworthy food system, both nationally and internationally. The FSAI recognises its partners' contributions as well as the food industry's efforts in achieving the delivery of this system for Ireland over the course of 2020.

The Chief Executive Officer of the FSAI co-founded the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum in 2020 with her counterparts in the Saudi Food and Drug Authority, and Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

## FSAI Strategy 2019–2023

The FSAI launched a [new strategy](#) in 2019. The strategy sets out its vision, mission, values, and strategic goals and objectives for the next 5 years, and it is the result of extensive internal and external consultation.

The FSAI's vision of 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone' clearly articulates the FSAI's ambition, and the delivery of the strategy builds on the work undertaken in the past, fostering a partnership approach by delivering a strategically planned food safety regulatory system that continues to be relevant, progressive, and robust for the future.

The FSAI's success is firmly based on food law, science, and collaboration with those in the food safety community. Its commitment to protecting consumers is the foundation of its mission, which states:

**'We protect consumers and raise compliance through partnership, science and food law enforcement.'**

**Core to the delivery of our strategy are our values: integrity, respect, passion, transparency, teamwork and collaboration. These values guide the FSAI's decisions and interactions.**



Figure 4 FSAI values

## Corporate social responsibility

The FSAI is committed to operating in a socially responsible manner. As a public agency, the FSAI is aware of the impact that its activities have on its staff, its stakeholders, society, and the environment. To this end, the FSAI identified environmental savings, education, well-being, equality, accessibility, and fundraising as key areas of focus for corporate social responsibility (CSR) development in 2020.

The FSAI is dedicated to carrying out its statutory duties in an environmentally friendly manner. It supports EU and national environment action plans. 2020 was a year when the FSAI was able to substantially minimise its impact on the environment as, like many others public sector bodies, the organisation pivoted to working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This allowed the FSAI to engage with stakeholders in a way that minimised environmental impact and the organisation's carbon footprint, contributing to Ireland's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2020, the FSAI continued to offer the Taxsaver Commuter Ticket Scheme and the Bike to Work Scheme to staff.

The FSAI has committed to working with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) on the implementation of aspects of The Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (2020) that are relevant to our mandate. The FSAI has



The FSAI is based in the Exchange Building in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Dublin 1.

established an internal working group, the FSAI Food Waste Group, to cooperate with the DECC in achieving the objectives of Ireland's new road map for waste planning and management.

Accessibility is an area that the FSAI continues to focus on and improve on. During 2020, due to the change to remote working, it was important that all stakeholders could access key areas of our services. This meant that our IT team had to pivot in order to ensure no disruption in our services. In addition, the FSAI launched an accessibility and plain English guide for communications. This enables staff to communicate effectively in a manner that everyone can understand.

As the majority of staff moved to working from home during 2020, great emphasis was placed on transparent communication and staff



well-being. We were aware that in a world which held so much uncertainty it was important to provide accurate information to our staff as early as possible.

Staff well-being was prioritised. We were aware that the COVID-19 pandemic meant that staff members

faced different types of situations, and so our Staff Committee and its subcommittees ran a number of initiatives which encouraged togetherness and self-care. These included mindfulness sessions, quizzes, yoga, Christmas carols, the book club, steps challenges, and other social activities. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the FSAI ran a staff engagement survey in late 2020. The findings from this survey will be evaluated and used to ensure that the FSAI's culture is supportive, empowering, and inclusive.

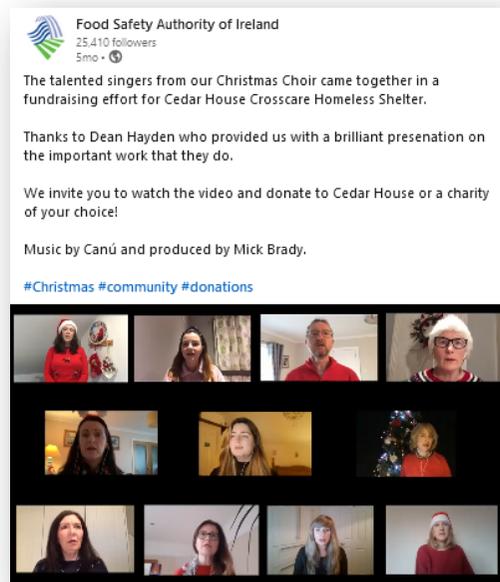
Recognising the importance of diversity and inclusion, the FSAI has committed to placing an emphasis on the area of equality, diversity and inclusion in 2020. The FSAI also provides excellent upskilling opportunities, with staff members having availed of online learning, training courses and further professional development opportunities in 2020.

Prior to the move to remote working, staff were based in The Exchange building in the IFSC. The building holds LEED Gold standard certification due to its emphasis on sustainability and energy efficiency, and it is rated BER A3. The FSAI has also undertaken specific measures to decrease printing and increase light savings, by reducing the number of printers as well as making publications available online and utilising LED lighting throughout the building. In line with Government direction, the FSAI adapted its day-to-day operations in order to eliminate purchase of single-use plastics, beverage cups, cutlery or drinking straws, either directly or indirectly, except where specific public health/hygiene or safety issues arise. In addition, the FSAI's procurement plan includes, where possible, product energy efficiency ratings and life cycle costs as tender award criteria. The FSAI will continue to be a proactive member of The Exchange Building Environmental Team in 2021, in order to improve consumption of utilities and reduce waste, thus reducing the organisation's carbon footprint.

Each year, the FSAI allocates time to the education of the future generation of food scientists, food safety inspectors and those studying for a career in regulatory agencies, through lectures and seminars across Ireland. During 2020, student training was provided through student placement in the FSAI and lectures by staff. For the second year, the FSAI funded industry-led 'Science and Technology in Action' and developed a lesson for second-level

students on food allergens. Further outreach at third level included 18 hours of lectures. In addition, the FSAI features guidance and numerous e-learning resources on its website; these also help to contribute to and reinforce its educational efforts.

During 2020, the FSAI team engaged in fundraising initiatives for several charities. It organised a Formal Friday initiative for the ALONE and LauraLynn charities. The FSAI also organised a Christmas Carols ceremony to raise funds for Cedar House Crosscare Homeless Shelter; the programme for this event included a talk from shelter representative Dean Hayden. In addition,



**FSAI staff members came together to raise money for Cedar House Crosscare Homeless Shelter**

FSAI Chief Executive Officer Dr Pamela Byrne took part in Focus Ireland's Shine A Light Night to sleep outdoors in solidarity with homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. Dr Byrne live-tweeted this experience from her garden in a bid to further raise awareness of homelessness and to generate funds for Focus Ireland.



**FSAI Chief Executive, Dr Pamela Byrne took part in Focus Ireland's Shine A Light Night**

Operating in a socially responsible manner is part of the FSAI's DNA, and the organisation will continue to build on these initiatives in 2021 and beyond.

## Governance and management

The Authority has a non-executive Board. It is appointed by the Minister for Health and it is responsible for the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer and the oversight of corporate governance in accordance with Government guidelines.

Two independent bodies advise the Board: the Food Safety Consultative Council (FSCC), composed of stakeholders in the food chain (e.g. food industry, consumers), and the Scientific Committee, composed of scientists.

The Scientific Committee comprises 14 independent scientists appointed by the Minister for Health in consultation with the Board. The Chairperson of the Scientific Committee must be a member of the Board.

The Scientific Committee advises the Board on scientific matters underpinning food safety and nutrition, and the Authority may not act on an issue referred to the Scientific Committee until such time as its opinion is provided to the Board. The Scientific Committee establishes subcommittees of independent scientists to progress its advice; consequently, the Authority is advised by the work of approximately 83 scientists. The FSCC acts as a forum for debate on food safety issues. It is a constructive vehicle for consumers and industry to provide inputs to the FSAI's strategy and programme of activities."

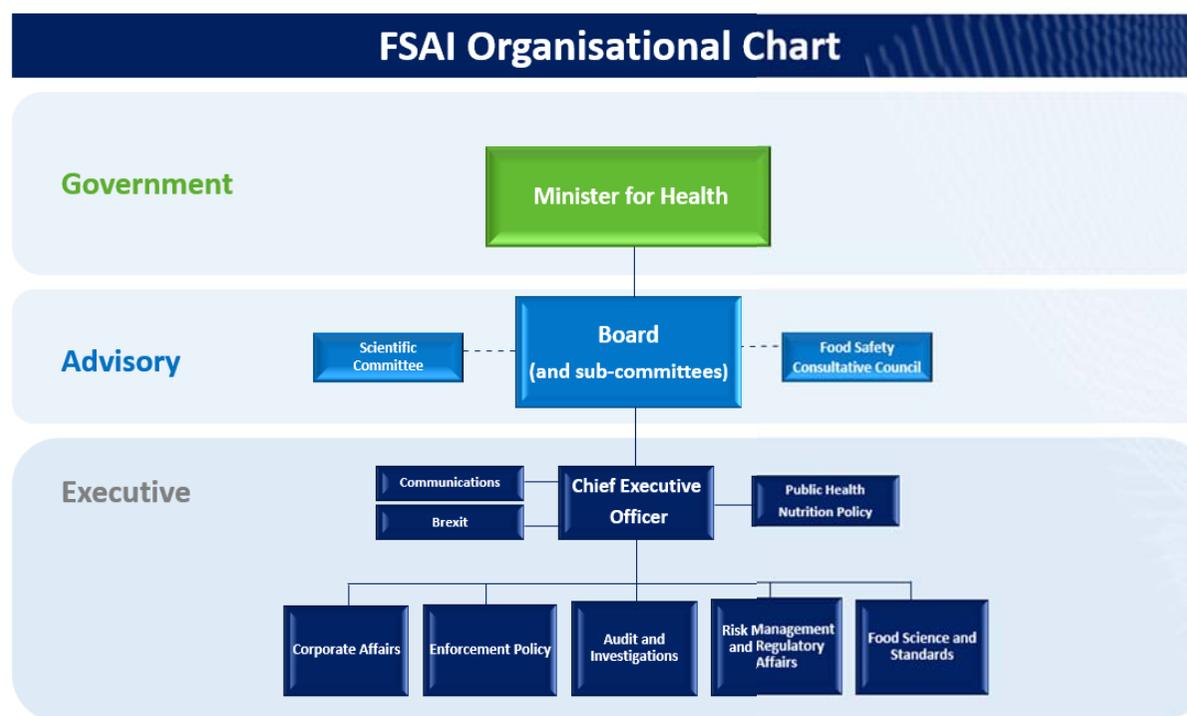


Figure 5 The FSAI Organisational Chart

**Food Safety Authority of Ireland Board,  
2020**

Martin Higgins (Chairperson)

Mr Ciaran Byrne (until July 2020)

Ms Mary Cullen

Mr Derek Cunningham

Prof. Albert Flynn

Ms Margaret Moran (until June 2020)

Ms Ros O'Shea

Mr Gerry McCurdy

Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan

Prof. Francis Butler

**Food Safety Consultative Council, 2020**

**Mr Ray Bowe (Chair)**

Musgraves Retail Partners

**Ms Maree Gallagher**

Food Law Solicitor

**Mr Cormac Healy**

Meat Industry Ireland

**Mr Dermot Jewell**

Consumers' Association of Ireland

**Mr Jamie Knox**

Britvic Ireland

**Ms Siobhan Murphy**

Health Service Executive

**Mr James McCrudden**

Country Markets

**Food Safety Authority of Ireland  
Scientific Committee, 2020**

**Prof. Albert Flynn (Chairperson)**

University College Cork

**Dr Paula Barry Walsh**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the  
Marine

**Prof. Kevin Cashman**

University College Cork

**Dr PJ Cullen**

TU Dublin

**Dr Geraldine Duffy**

Teagasc

**Dr Mark Fenelon**

Teagasc

**Mr John Keegan**

Dublin Public Analyst's Laboratory (retired)

**Mr Tim O'Brien**

Restaurateur

**Prof. Brian McKenna**

University College Dublin (retired)

**Mr Eamonn Quinn**

Kelsius

**Dr Eleanor McNamara**

Health Service Executive

**Mr Martin Roper**

Food Safety Consultant

**Dr Michael O'Keeffe**

Residue Specialist

**Ms Annette Sweeney**

TU Dublin

**Dr Margaret O'Sullivan**

Health Service Executive

**Dermot Gates**

Boxmore Plastics Ltd

**Mr Ray Parle**

Health Service Executive

**Dr Dónal Sammin**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the  
Marine

**Ms Ita Saul**

Children's Health Ireland at Crumlin (retired)

## Key highlights of the Authority's activities

### The official food control system: the numbers at a glance

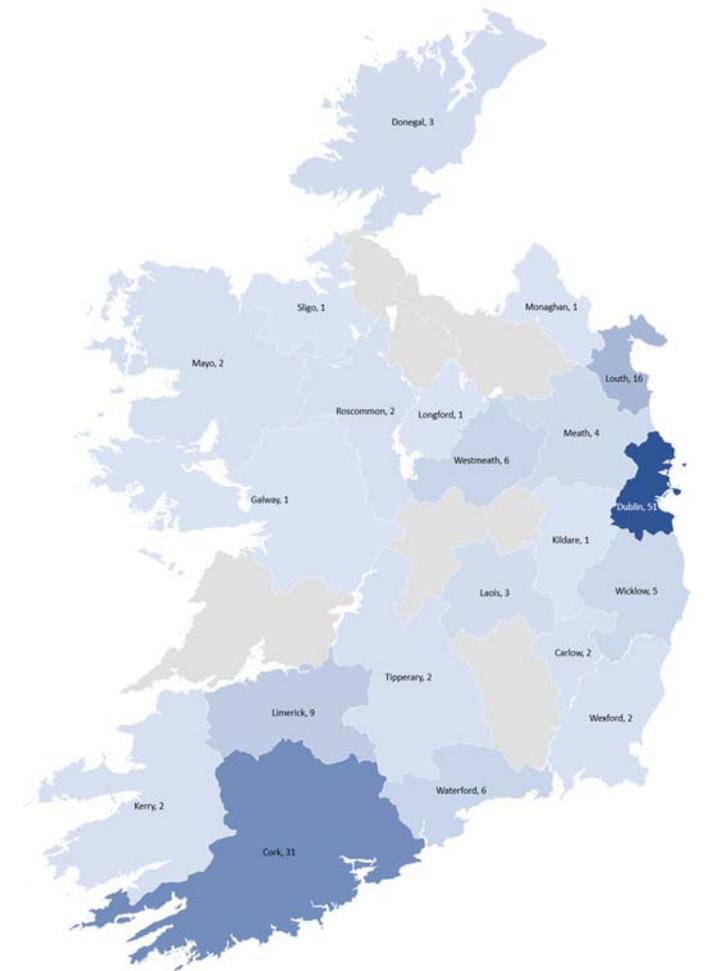
#### Enforcements

During 2020, food inspectors served food businesses with 31 Closure Orders, 2 Improvement Orders and 9 Prohibition Orders, and took 5 prosecutions against food businesses throughout Ireland (Figure 6).

The types of recurring food safety issues which lead to Enforcement Orders and Improvement Notices (Table 1) are poor cleaning and sanitation of premises; poor personal hygiene; lack of running water; inadequate hand-washing facilities; incorrect food storage; lack of, or an ineffective, pest control programme; structural problems arising from a lack of ongoing maintenance; and lack of, or an inadequate, food safety management system.

**Table 1 Enforcement Orders and prosecutions served, 2016–2020**

Enforcement action	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Closure Order	94	64	95	108	31
Improvement Notice	263	262	230	236	104
Improvement Order	3	1	5	4	2
Prohibition Order	9	4	10	13	9
Prosecution	13	11	9	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>151</b>



**Figure 6** Enforcement Orders and prosecutions, by county, 2020

## Food business inspections

In 2020, 50,044 food businesses were under the supervision of official agencies that have service contracts with the Authority (Table 2). This represents a small (1.1%) increase from 2019. Of the registered food businesses, almost 92% are inspected by the HSE; 6% by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority; 2% by DAFM; and 1% by local authorities.

A wide range of activities is carried out by these food businesses, from importing and manufacturing to distributing, retailing and catering operations.

**Table 2 Number and type of food businesses under the supervision of official agencies, 2016–2020**

Official agency	Premises type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Primary producers	114	123	337	340	355
	Manufacturers and packers	297	352	441	428	494
	Distributors and transporters	411	419	236	132	108
	<b>Total</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>894</b>	<b>1014</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>957</b>
HSE	Service sector	28 933	29 177	28 676	28 832	28 769
	Not assigned	23	46	46	36	160
	Transporters	123	132	144	130	128
	Wholesalers/distributors	1138	1158	1183	1194	1193
	Packers	117	121	120	112	107
	Retailers	12 950	13 529	13 336	13 373	13673
	Manufacturers	2109	1437	1436	1400	1526
	Third-country importers/exporters	37	41	41	42	36
	Administrative food businesses	102	162	208	263	306
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 532</b>	<b>45 803</b>	<b>45 190</b>	<b>45 382</b>	<b>45 898</b>

Official agency	Premises type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Local authorities	Slaughterhouses	201	195	182	175	166
	Small meat manufacturing plants	204	209	211	217	199
	Poultry plants	40	38	40	32	35
	Cold stores	36	43	45	38	42
	Butcher shops	9	8	9	9	7
	Mobile businesses	21	33	34	23	32
	Trader/Broker	0	0	0	0	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>487</b>
Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority	Fishing vessels	2195	2079	1912	2077	2080
	Molluscan production areas	2	182	185	187	189
	Registered food businesses on land (including ice plants)	8	10	11	15	15
	Food broker	0	0	1	1	1
	Freezer and factory vessels	40	60	65	67	57
	Processing plants	111	121	124	116	105
	Fresh fishery products plants	60	60	72	72	68
	Importers	53	58	64	62	56
	Cold stores	15	16	15	4	5
	Shellfish farmers	17	33	35	30	30
	Purification plants	16	17	20	28	23
	Dispatch centres	12	14	15	14	15
	Mobile businesses	9	0	7	0	0
	Transporters	0	0	8	9	8
	Wholesalers/distributors	0	0	8	42	48

Official agency	Premises type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Auction halls	0	0	1	1	1
	Not stated	0	0	0	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2539</b>	<b>2651</b>	<b>2543</b>	<b>2725</b>	<b>2702</b>
<b>Total number of food premises</b>		<b>49 404</b>	<b>49 873</b>	<b>49 268</b>	<b>49 501</b>	<b>50 044</b>

## Food inspections

All official agencies operate risk-based programmes of official controls, and each agency categorises risk in agreement with the Authority.

Those food businesses which carry out activities that present the greatest potential risk to human health are prioritised for inspection.

Unannounced inspections of food businesses are a key element of the official controls, as well as other activities, such as food sampling and investigation of incidents and outbreaks. There was a decline from 2015 to 2020 in the number of inspections carried out (Table 3). In addition to planned inspections, a significant number of unplanned inspections take place; these arise as a result of food incidents, investigations, follow-ups on complaints from the public, and advisory visits to food businesses. In 2020, the HSE Environmental Health Service carried out 6,551 other inspections of food businesses.

**Table 3 Number of planned food inspections by the official agencies, 2015–2020**

Official agency	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>HSE (Environmental Health Service)</b>	36 353	35 786	33 193	32 254	31 189	20 269
<b>Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Inspectorate)</b>	15 011	11 985	11 569	10 826	12 214	7 408
<b>Local authorities</b>	5 033	4 870	4 891	4 582	4 320	3 790
<b>Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority</b>	2 015	2 228	2 245	2 122	2 121	1 911

<b>National Standards Authority of Ireland</b>	61	72	84	62	88	37
<b>Total number of food business inspections</b>	<b>58 473</b>	<b>54 941</b>	<b>51 982</b>	<b>49 846</b>	<b>49 932</b>	<b>33 415</b>

## Staff working in official controls

The official agencies report annually to the Authority on the staff resources they have dedicated to official controls under the service contracts. In 2020, 1,403 whole time equivalents (WTEs) were involved in carrying out official controls in Irish food businesses (Table 4). There was an increase of 132 WTEs in 2020 over the number in 2019. The food safety inspectorate continues to develop its expertise through training courses. In 2020, 697 courses were taken by the inspectorate, a slight drop on the previous year, but there was a noticeable increase in e-learning and online training due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 4 WTEs by official agency, 2016–2019**

<b>Official agency</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine</b>					
Inspection Service	319	338	345	407	495
Laboratory Service	79	82	82	90	88
<b>HSE</b>					
Environmental Health Service	336	339	339	377	425
Laboratory Service	104	130	124	125	132
<b>FSAI</b>	70	73	79	79	87
<b>Local authorities</b>	116	104	101	106	88
<b>Marine Institute</b>	41	41	41	41	39
<b>National Standards Authority of Ireland</b>	1	1	1	1	1

Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority	42	36	40	45	47
<b>Total number of WTEs</b>	<b>1108</b>	<b>1144</b>	<b>1150</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>1403</b>

## Food sampling

The service contracts include programmes by the official agencies for the sampling and testing of food for compliance with all aspects of food legislation. Samples taken by the food safety inspectorates are analysed by a network of Official and National Reference Laboratories operated by the official agencies. In 2020, 50,261 samples were taken and tested, a decrease of 11.4% compared with 2019 (Table 5).

**Table 5 Number of samples taken by the official agencies, 2016–2020**

Sampling agency	2016	% of total	2017	% of total	2018	% of total	2019	% of total	2020	% of total
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	31 456	56%	32 947	57%	35 983	56%	32 035	56%	28,100	56%
HSE (Environmental Health Service)	13 220	23%	11 699	20%	11 678	18%	11 217	20%	5844	12%
Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority	9004	16%	8353	14%	8386	13%	8463	15%	9726	19%
Local authorities	2388	4%	3306	6%	3195	5%	2524	4%	2354	5%
Other agencies	520	1%	1335	2%	4597	7%	2516	4%	4237	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56 588</b>		<b>57 640</b>		<b>63 839</b>		<b>56 755</b>		<b>50,261</b>	



## Office of the Chief Executive Officer

Dr Pamela A Byrne

Chief Executive Officer



The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Authority as well as for providing leadership among her peers in food safety agencies across Europe and beyond. She is supported by the Senior Leadership Team, which oversees operations within the Authority's five functional areas. The CEO's Office is also responsible for liaising with the Authority's Board and coordinating the communications function, as well as stakeholder management and engagement; organising events; designing and publishing the Authority's publications; promoting the Authority's work in the media; and representing Ireland at the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA's) Communications Experts Network.

The Public Health Nutrition Policy team is responsible for providing the secretariat for the Authority's Scientific Public Health Nutrition Subcommittee and to various national working groups in the area of nutrition. The Public Health Nutrition Policy team also chairs the Codex Alimentarius Electronic Working Group to develop an international nutrition standard for older infants and young children. The FSAI's Brexit team also reports to the CEO's Office; this team has implemented a number of Brexit initiatives to support national Brexit preparations.

The CEO is the Irish representative on EFSA's Advisory Forum and the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies group. She is a member of the Irish delegation to the Codex Alimentarius Commission; a member of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Research Advisory Committee; and Chairperson of University College Dublin's Institute of Food and Health Advisory Board. The CEO is also the Chairperson of the Board of the Association of Chief Executives of State Agencies and Chairperson of the Postgraduate Applications Centre in University College Cork.

## Communications

**The Authority engages in a multifaceted approach to its communications. It actively engages with stakeholders through a variety of online and offline channels. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online channels became more important than ever before.**

Over the past year, Authority staff have worked almost completely remotely, and therefore they have had to innovate effectively in order to maintain and grow stakeholder engagement. Video conferencing, email and web technologies have become the new norm in terms of the way Authority staff operate day to day.

The Authority's Advice Line, website, stakeholder initiatives, extranet, meeting software, social media pages, and webinars were the backbone for delivering our food safety messages in 2020. This new way of working has had both benefits and drawbacks. For example, it has meant that we have been able to reach more people than ever with our online events, but it makes it more challenging to maintain close and meaningful stakeholder relations. As a result, the Authority has created many engaging and interactive initiatives in order to maintain attention on all things food safety related.

In 2020, the Authority responded to 174 media queries. The number of media queries was lower than in 2019 (228); this reduction was

due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which dominated the news cycle from early 2020 onwards. The Authority issued 21 press releases in 2020, which directly resulted in 448 outputs in print, online and broadcast media. Authority staff were regularly invited to speak on national and local radio throughout the year. The Communications team continued their work on a stakeholder engagement project, which is a means to improve collaboration, create a wider understanding of the Authority's role, and encourage and create change in line with scientific developments and changes in regulation, while also supporting those directly involved in seeking to provide a robust official food control system.

During 2020, the Authority's Advice Line continued to provide food safety and hygiene advice and information to stakeholders. Over the course of the year, the Advice Line received 7,767 queries, including from: the food service sector; manufacturers; retailers; researchers; distributors; and consultants. Some of the most popular queries related to legislation on food labelling requirements; food supplements, requests for FSAI publications, as well as requests for information on Brexit and food business start-up information. Consumers were also actively encouraged to contact the Authority about any food safety



complaints or issues they may have. More than 2,772 consumer complaints were handled by the Authority's Advice Line in 2020, with 34% of complaints relating to unfit food and 30% relating to poor hygiene standards. Overall, the 2020 complaints saw a decrease on the 3,460 complaints reported in 2019. The reduction in numbers largely reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby many food service businesses were temporarily closed for long periods throughout the year.

The Authority's social media channels provided a key means of communicating in real time with key stakeholders over the course of 2020. It allowed the Authority to provide food businesses with early guidance on COVID-19, and on Brexit, as well as providing takeaway and business reopening information; raising awareness of webinars; raising key food safety issues; encouraging consumers to make complaints, and much more. These social media channels also provided a key facility by which stakeholders could contact the Authority with queries through platforms that suit them. In 2020, the Authority recognised the changing social media landscape and added a fifth channel, Instagram, to its social media suite. At the end of 2020, the Authority had an online community of 53,721 engaged stakeholders



between its Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube channels. During 2020, the Authority ran social media campaigns on various topics, such as food safety training resources; starting a food business; COVID-19; Brexit resources; and labelling. In addition, it launched a series featuring a number of Authority staff, which illustrated the work of the Authority and demonstrated its values.

The Authority continues to be a leading expert in food safety for its stakeholders, providing timely food safety guidance, and conducting studies and publishing scientific reports on a regular basis. During 2020, a total of 21 new publications were published, and a further 8 publications were updated. All of these were published on the Authority's website and they include guidance notes for the industry, audit reports, Scientific Committee reports, surveys, and other materials to support the achievement of the Authority's vision of 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone'.

The reality of 2020 meant that all FSAI events became virtual webinars. This was a worthwhile learning curve for the Authority. It also multiplied the attendance numbers by providing stakeholders with a more accessible way to access the relevant advice and information. The move to online events was timely for food businesses involved in trading with the UK and all the changes that occurred as a result of Brexit. Over the course of the year, the

Authority held 8 webinars, which attracted an audience of 1,922 live participants and generated 3,337 views following the events.



The Authority's website is a valuable source of food safety information for its stakeholders. It was regularly reviewed, maintained and updated throughout 2020. It continues to take measures to improve and enable its accessibility for users of

all devices. The website experienced a 28% increase in views in 2020, resulting in 3,325,057 pages views over the course of the year. In 2020, the website team brought the creation of a new website to fruition. Over the course of the year, they engaged in the research and build of the new website, which is due to be launched in 2021.

## Brexit

Following the departure of the UK from the EU on 31 January 2020, the Authority, as part of the Government's Brexit plans, worked to support the national Brexit preparations during the 11-month transition period up to 31 December 2020. This work focused on preparing food businesses to meet the regulatory and compliance changes associated with Brexit, and working with the official

agencies and the Government to ensure that systems, infrastructure, staffing, and IT system capacity were ready for Brexit. The Authority worked collaboratively with the official agencies through its cross-agency group to strengthen and enhance coordination and partnership between the official agencies in the context of Brexit's potential impact on food safety and public health.

The Authority also contributed to the Government's Brexit preparations and contingencies through the Department of Health's Secretary General, Heads of Agencies Group, and Brexit Operations Team. The Authority worked with Government and agencies to ensure that a risk-based interagency approach was in place to manage any traffic flow issues at Dublin Port.

The Authority identified issues and provided advice on food safety and authenticity as well as advice on food regulatory issues arising from the EU and UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Ireland/Northern Ireland



Protocol and the EU Commission Brexit stakeholder notices, the UK Border Operating Model and, at the end of 2020, the new EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The Authority developed a detailed Brexit Q&A for industry to address questions in relation to food regulation from 1 January

2021 in addition to informational notices to support food industry compliance.

During 2020, the Authority took all Brexit stakeholder engagement activities online and held four webinars to highlight the regulatory issues that food businesses needed to be aware of in order to prepare for the end of the transition period on 30 December 2020. These webinars covered topics such as importing foods of animal and non-animal origin, import documentation requirements, food labelling, and the regulatory changes for foods brought in from the UK (excluding Northern Ireland). The webinars were attended by more than 1,000 representatives from a broad mix of industry stakeholders, with the webinar recordings available to view on the FSAI website.



During 2020, the FSAI, in conjunction with the HSE Environmental Health Service and the DAFM, ran a number of Brexit-related webinars for food businesses.

The Authority continued its engagement with food businesses and their representative groups to discuss and address Brexit-related questions throughout the year; this included giving presentations at industry events, and organising Government Brexit food industry stakeholder fora and FSAI industry fora meetings. The Brexit section on the FSAI website received more than 9,200 page views in 2020. The Authority's dedicated Brexit email address enabled industries to access the most up-to-date information available. During 2020, the Authority answered more than 560 Brexit-related queries; these were predominately from the manufacturing and retailer/wholesaler sectors.

Also during 2020, the FSAI, in partnership with the official agencies, developed two e-learning modules on the requirements for importing food and food contact materials from the UK (excluding Northern Ireland). The first of these free modules provided food businesses with step-by-step guidance on the import requirements for all foods and food contact materials coming from the UK, as well as when using the UK as a landbridge. The second module focused on importing composite products from the UK, including how to determine whether the product is subject to veterinary checks on import.

The Authority's social media campaign from June 2020 onwards was targeted at small and medium-sized food businesses, prioritising important Brexit topics, as well as signposting to relevant

messages from other agencies and Government Departments. Twelve editions of the Authority's *Brexit Ezine* were published in 2020 and disseminated to almost 400 subscribers representing a wide range of industry stakeholders. The FSAI *Brexit Ezine* provided advice and guidance to food businesses on the risks associated with Brexit, assisting them in their preparations for the end of the transition period.

In preparation for the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December 2020, the Authority worked with the DOH and the official agencies stakeholders to implement arrangements to ensure that contingencies and supports were in place from 1 January 2021. In addition, the Authority operated its Advice Line and Brexit email address over the Christmas 2020 holiday period to support food business queries.



COVID-19 restrictions impacted on the timelines during which investigations were conducted, the allegations of wrongdoing contained in the protected disclosures were in all instances investigated either by the FSAI or by authorised officers from an official agency. In one joint investigation carried out by authorised officers from the FSAI and an official agency, significant enforcement actions were taken in relation to the food business operator concerned.

## Protected disclosures

The CEO of the FSAI is a designated person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. During 2020, seven protected disclosures were made to the CEO, all of which were forwarded to the Audit and Investigations team for assessment and investigation. While



## Corporate Affairs

Kevin Roantree

Director, Corporate Affairs



The Corporate Affairs functional area, led by Mr Kevin Roantree, ensures the quality and alignment of the Authority's corporate operations in order to ensure that supporting structures, processes and systems are optimally in place to maximise the impact and benefits of the FSAI Strategy.

Corporate Affairs has responsibility for the FSAI's human resources (HR), finance, IT, information and data management, organisational development, Freedom of Information, corporate governance, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and general facilities management functions. This functional area is key to ensuring that the Authority achieves its business objectives internally and externally, and utilises innovative approaches to constantly improve its services and ensure the optimal utilisation of resources.

The Corporate Affairs team also leads the Authority's ISO 9001:2015 compliance for its quality management system and works with colleagues across the organisation in developing and delivering on the FSAI's business planning and reporting mechanisms.

During 2020, the Corporate Affairs functional area ensured, and reported on, its compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016) and agreed its Oversight Agreement/Performance Delivery



Agreement (OA/PDA) with the Department of Health (DOH). It continued to progress an extensive programme to develop the Authority's culture; maintained certification to the ISO 9001:2015 standard; provided a broad range of training programmes; and achieved the highest level of assurance regarding the effectiveness of the Authority's systems of internal financial controls, following completion of a review.

The Corporate Affairs functional area plays a key role in ensuring that the Authority has the capacity and capability, systems, and processes to facilitate effective delivery of its services to all stakeholders and that it maximises the impact and benefits which the FSAI Strategy delivers.

The Corporate Affairs functional area is responsible for managing finance, HR, organisational development, data collection and analysis, information, IT, and facilities, as well as for managing and ensuring adherence to the Authority's obligations with regard to governance, procurement, Freedom of Information and data

protection. In addition, it oversees the Authority's business planning and reporting mechanisms.

In March 2020, when Government directives required all staff to commence working from home (as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic), the Corporate Affairs functional area responded by ensuring that staff were supported in maintaining the continuity of their work. This was done by ensuring technological support to work remotely, and by maintaining the highest level of communication and support for staff. Subsequently, the Corporate Affairs functional area continued to address, and deliver on, changing FSAI staff technology needs throughout 2020.

## Organisational compliance

During 2020, the Authority ensured, and reported on, its compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016), and it agreed its OA/PDA with the DOH. In addition, it provided the DOH with quarterly updates on progress against the OA/PDA as part of the agreed governance arrangement, and it did so within an improved business planning and reporting framework, which clearly highlighted progress as well as any deviation from planned work and the measures being taken to manage it.

## Organisational culture

In 2020, the Corporate Affairs functional area continued to work with colleagues across the organisation in implementing a

significant programme which sought to develop the Authority's culture, in order to ensure that it is collaborative, high-performing, and based on positive teamwork. This programme of work included ongoing engagement in refining the prioritised areas for development, embedding the organisation's values into everything it does, and implementing the actions to further improve the FSAI work environment.

### Quality management

The Authority is committed to having a strong quality management system in place, which is essentially based on the concept of identifying customers and their requirements, planning how to meet these requirements, documenting procedures where appropriate, setting measurable objectives for all functional areas and all staff, and regularly reviewing achievements.

In 2020, the Authority maintained certification to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

### Organisational development

The HR team within the Corporate Affairs functional area focused on ensuring that staff had the requisite competencies, skills and knowledge to meet both organisational and personal development needs. The Authority places a strong emphasis on continuous



learning and development, and it encourages staff to engage in continuing professional and personal development activities. During 2020, a broad range of training programmes were delivered to support this; in addition, a management development programme was introduced, and the Authority supported a number of staff through developmental and further education programmes.

### Finance

An efficient and effective finance function continues to be in place within the Authority, in order to ensure appropriate management and control over resources, as well as to ensure that relevant accounting standards are met and adhered to, and that effective financial management systems and controls are operating. During 2020, the internal auditors conducted a review of the systems of internal financial controls, and the level of assurance achieved was 'substantial', the highest level available. The Authority also ensures that Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform budgetary measures are implemented in terms of salary, travel rates, procurement, and other expenditure savings.





## Enforcement Policy

Dr Bernard Hegarty

Director, Enforcement Policy



The Enforcement Policy functional area, led by Dr Bernard Hegarty, is responsible for the enforcement of food legislation in Ireland. A key activity is the management of the service contracts with the Authority's official agencies, which carry out the enforcement activities.

The service contract mechanism for the enforcement of food safety legislation was mandated under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, as amended. Service contracts are in place with 31 official agencies. Most of the Enforcement Policy team's activities are focused on supporting the strategic goal of enforcing food legislation with the FSAI's regulatory partners.

The Enforcement Policy team also provides advice to Government Departments on proposed legislation and it operates one of the Authority's consultative fora (the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee). There are four main official agencies, and the structure of the Enforcement Policy functional area reflects this operating model. The team also organises the preparation and follow-up for the cross-agency audits carried out by the European Commission and other bodies.

In 2020, the Authority published 42 Enforcement Orders (including 31 Closure Orders, 9 Prohibition Orders and 2 Improvement Orders) served to food businesses for breaches of food safety legislation. This was a 67% decrease on the 125 orders served in 2019, reflecting the huge impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the food service sector.

Five prosecutions taken for breaches of food safety legislation were publicised: four by the HSE and one by a local authority. The full texts of the Enforcement Orders served on food businesses were published, to provide transparency to the official controls process and also to inform food businesses of practices to avoid.

The official controls on food continued to operate during 2020 despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions imposed during the pandemic had major impacts on the food industry, particularly the food service sector. The FSAI established an internal group to assess the food safety implications of changes such as the switching of operations from restaurants to takeaway modes of operation. COVID-19 outbreaks also affected some food businesses directly, particularly meat processors.

The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions also affected the official control system. Inspections were hindered by the need to comply



with social distancing and it was not possible to carry out inspections in some food service businesses with vulnerable consumers/residents, such as nursing homes. Many HSE environmental health officers were diverted to contact-tracing work in support of the pandemic controls. A number of food microbiology laboratories took on the urgent work of testing samples for the COVID-19 virus, reducing their capacity for carrying out official food controls. Such measures had to be limited in duration in order to allow normal food controls to resume as soon as possible.

The European Commission introduced emergency measures in relation to COVID-19 and official controls, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/466, which allowed EU Member States some flexibility on how official controls are carried out, including the option of carrying out controls remotely. There was some limited use of this option during 2020 for certain documentation inspections, but most official controls were still conducted in person.

A survey of the official agencies was launched as part of the FSAI's efforts to gather as much information as possible on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the delivery of official controls, and some of the measures taken to minimise those impacts. The operation of the survey also prompted a number of discussions with the official agencies on how best to communicate information on this issue and how to provide ongoing support to these agencies.

The official controls are carried out under service contracts with 31 official agencies. The service contracts with the HSE, local authorities, DAFM, and the National Standards Authority of Ireland were extended to permit negotiation of new contracts in early 2021. The new contracts will reflect the requirements of the revised EU regulation on official controls. Management and monitoring of the service contracts switched to accommodate the move to remote working by the FSAI, and all necessary meetings took place virtually during the year.

## Official controls legislation



During 2020, the Authority continued its activity on the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625, which came into effect on 14 December 2019. This Regulation sets the rules for the performance by EU Member States of

controls on the agri-food sector, replacing previous official controls legislation, Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 and Regulation EC No 854/2004.

A programme of work to implement Regulation (EU) 2017/625 continued during 2020, including:

- Collaboration with the official agencies on a cross-agency strategic committee to oversee development of the official controls system
- Input into the development of tertiary legislation (implementing and delegated EU Acts) in relation to Regulation EU 2017/625 at EU level
- Preparation of a comprehensive inventory of the official controls legislation, including the tertiary legislation as a resource for the official agencies and the FSAI
- Provision of guidance and training to the official agencies on the requirements of the Regulation and the implementing national legislation
- Provision of advice to the DOH and the DAFM on the national legislation to give effect to the Regulation's requirements.

## Service contract management

During 2020, the Enforcement Policy team had extensive interactions with all official agencies, but particularly so with local authorities. The FSAI provides local authorities with funding for carrying out official controls. During 2020, the funding available for funding local authorities to deliver official controls was less than the amount requested by local authorities. The FSAI was obliged to advise local authorities with staff vacancies that it would not be able to fund such recruitment. Funding and related issues around the

structure and delivery of the Local Authority Veterinary Service was the subject of intensive discussions between the FSAI and the County and City Management Association (representing local authorities) and the DOH. A number of short-term extensions of local authority service contracts were approved before agreement was reached on funding for 2021, which will permit a further engagement between the FSAI and the County and City Management Association on the delivery and funding of the service in the longer term. The agreement included the inclusion of key priorities of the official controls regulation.

Despite the funding difficulties, local authorities continued to provide official controls services in all counties throughout the year, with 27 enforcement notices served during 2020 on local authority-supervised premises; in some cases, these enforcement notices were served by the FSAI, working with local authority veterinary inspectors. The FSAI also provided guidance on enforcement issues arising from the new EU (Food and Feed Hygiene) Regulations 2020 (S.I. No. 22 of 2020), introduced by DAFM to give effect to the EU legislation on official controls. In addition, the FSAI organised a series of financial audits of the claims submitted by local authorities for funding; these audits were carried out by an external auditing company in 2020, with the full series due to be completed in 2021.

In 2020, the FSAI worked with the official agencies to prepare for the end of the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement. The official controls system will reflect the status of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) as a third country for imports of food.

Discussions were held during the year between the DAFM and the HSE on the transfer of authorisation of labelling of spirit drink geographical indicators from the HSE to the DAFM Food Industry and Development Division for Irish Whiskey and Irish Poitín. (The DAFM already authorises labels for Irish cream liqueur.) Once the agreement has been signed off, the FSAI will finalise a protocol on enforcement of this legislation between the FSAI, DAFM, HSE, and Revenue.

The DOH introduced major new legislation (S.I. No. 79 of 2020) to give effect to the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625. This statutory instrument (S.I.) introduces new legal powers not available under the previous legislation, namely fixed payment and compliance notices. The FSAI provided detailed comments to the DOH in relation to these new powers. A significant programme of work was carried out by the FSAI and the HSE to develop guidance in relation to the use of these new powers. This included the issue of guidance on the provision of a second expert opinion for official sampling and food testing. The S.I. gives some new responsibilities to the FSAI, including oversight of official laboratories designated by the DOH,

and a requirement for the FSAI and the HSE to publish guidelines to support implementation of various aspects of the Regulation.

In March 2020, a cross-agency meeting was held to discuss measurement uncertainty in relation to food microbiology laboratories. The Irish National Accreditation Board participated in the discussions and provided great insight on its approach to this technical issue.

Some planned microbiological and chemical surveys, e.g. radioactivity in bottled water, had to be postponed until 2021 due to resource and laboratory designation issues that arose during the year.

The FSAI continues to provide guidance on supervisory arrangements for food businesses with complex food activities that could potentially involve more than one official agency carrying out official controls. A meeting of a cross-agency group agreed changes to the existing guidance. This group also agreed to review the consistency of processes for obtaining approval from an official agency when processing foods of animal origin – a legislative requirement for certain food businesses.

The FSAI participated in a 2020 Review of Classifications of Bivalve Mollusc Production Areas by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority. This consisted of a full examination of all relevant data to ensure that each production area has been assigned a classification status

consistent with the data published for it and the legislation applicable to this sector. The review led to changes in the classification of eight production areas. It also examined the locations and boundaries of all live bivalve mollusc production sites and species in Ireland. The groundwork for this effort started in early 2016 and was completed in June 2017. All sample locations for each classified species were reviewed, and were considered representative of the various production areas.

Shellfish sampling undertaken under the supervision of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, with examination and analysis carried out by the Marine Institute, detected saxitoxin (the toxin associated with paralytic shellfish



poisoning) in a production area in the southwest of Ireland. In this instance, saxitoxin was detected in an area that had not previously experienced such issues, in time to advise shellfish producers and members of the public of the risks involved. The area was subsequently closed to commercial harvesting when recorded saxitoxin results breached the levels set out in legislation. Analysis of samples sourced from the area showed that the toxin peaked at over three times the regulatory limit.

In addition to closing the area in question and ensuring that the public and food businesses were informed of the issue, the FSAI

arranged an online information event with the Marine Institute. This virtual event was 'attended' by over 60 participants, many of whom reported positively on the opportunity to receive up-to-date information and present questions to the State agencies involved in managing the situation.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Laboratory operated a normal analytical service in relation to official controls samples received. The State Laboratory intends to maintain this service as close to full capacity as possible. Business continuity plans were enacted to enable remote working and social distancing within the workplace.



The FSAI chairs meetings of the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee, a stakeholder forum for the shellfish industry. These meetings moved online during the year and it was noticeable that attendance was higher than was recorded at previous

physical meetings of the forum, with more representatives from different stakeholder groups participating. Meeting participants received updates from the FSAI, Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority, and the Marine Institute on these organisations' activities. Topics covered during the 2020 meetings included: the impact the COVID-19 pandemic was having on participant organisations' respective operations, and how those impacts were being managed and

mitigated; the review of shellfish water classifications; the rationalisation of phytoplankton sites; and EU legislative proposals relating to norovirus. The meetings also included regular updates on toxicity and the performance of the management programmes.

### Advisory work

The FSAI prepared advice for the DOH on developments up to 31 December 2019 in national and EU legislation. The update was agreed with the DAFM in relation to legislation in its area of competence. This advice enabled the preparation by the DOH of a new order (S.I. No. 173 of 2020) under Section 5 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 1998 Act to update the list of food laws within the remit of the FSAI and the service contracts. In the latter part of the year, the FSAI worked on an update to the advice, in advance of the preparation of new legislation to support the DOH in creating a new Section 5 order in early 2021.

As well as the advice on the official controls legislation, the FSAI organised a public consultation for the DOH on the Authority's website, in order to seek stakeholder views on the extent of retail-to-retail supply of animal-origin foods that should be permitted under a 'marginal, localised and restricted' (MLR) exemption from certain EU food hygiene laws. The results of the consultation will be inputted into a revision by the DOH on current national legislation to

give effect to this exemption for butchers, retail caterers, and fishmongers.

## EU engagement

EU engagement included continued participation in a network of other EU Member States and the European Commission working on a standard format for producing National Control Plans for official controls across the EU, and for reporting on them.



Additionally, EP team members participated in an EU working group in relation to compliance with EU rules on olive oil monitoring and reporting.



## Risk Management and Regulatory Affairs

Raymond Ellard

Director, Risk Management and Regulatory Affairs



Mr Raymond Ellard leads the Risk Management and Regulatory Affairs (RMRA) group, comprising four teams – Environmental Health, Food Incidents, Training and Compliance, and Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture.

The teams work closely with staff in the official agencies to provide guidance on the application of food laws, supporting implementation through training, and liaising directly with the food sector through regular meetings of the Authority's sector-specific fora as well as various industry trade representative groups.

Much effort was focused on changes in import and export controls resulting from Brexit.

## Food incidents – alerting the public

A key aspect of liaison with both the food industry and the official agencies is dealing with food incidents, that is where food is, or is suspected of, being contaminated, and poses a threat to consumers at home or abroad. In such situations, a fast risk management response is required in order to determine whether food should be recalled or withdrawn and whether the public needs to be informed. In 2020, on average, three public warnings per week were issued in relation to foods that posed a danger to the public. These were issued in the form of food alerts and food allergen alerts.



As part of this work, the Risk Management and Regulatory Affairs (RMRA) functional area is the national contact point for the EU's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), a network to exchange information between its members – EU Member States, the European Commission and EFSA – on hazards identified in food, feed, and food contact materials. The group is also the contact point for the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), a global network of national food safety authorities whose secretariat is hosted by the WHO. In 2020, the RASFF dealt with 3,862 notifications. Of these, 58 were notified by Ireland (FSAI). There were 27 notifications in respect of food which had

originated in Ireland; a total of 216 notifications were related to foods distributed in Ireland.

In 2020, there was a regular and increasing flow of food incidents to which a response capability was required on a 24/7 basis. In 2020, the RMRA team dealt with 661 food incidents, compared with 679 in 2019. Of these 661 food incidents, 364 were full incidents (compared with 298 in 2019). Nevertheless, the number of food incidents in 2019 and 2020 was higher than in all other years since 2006, when there were 206 food incidents.

A total of 167 public warnings about food being recalled or withdrawn from the market were issued in the form of food alerts (112) and food allergen alerts (55). This represents a 56% increase over 2019.



In 2020, 112 food alerts were issued, advising the public and the food sector of the need for a withdrawal (from the food chain) or recall (from consumers). The principal reasons for these alerts were a direct or indirect threat to consumers due to the presence of

foreign matter, of pathogenic microbes such as Salmonella or Listeria, or of chemical contaminants such as arsenic.

Three in every 100 people in Ireland have food allergies. It is therefore important that they are made aware of any product which contains an undeclared allergen. There are 14 categories of allergens which by law must be declared on a label. In 2020, the Authority issued 55 food allergen alerts. Subscribers to the Authority's alert system are informed of these alerts by text message.

Apart from public warnings, a key RMRA coordination activity is the management of food-related incidents together with staff in the inspection and laboratory services, in the official agencies, and in the food businesses involved.

## Food supplements

The RMRA functional area manages the Authority's food supplement notification system, through which it is notified of more than 3,000 food supplements each year. Those placing a food supplement on the market are legally obliged to provide the FSAI with a copy of the supplement label. In 2020, a project to significantly enhance the facility was undertaken, opening it to additional official services and improving the user experience for the food businesses, the environmental health services of the HSE and FSAI staff. The notification system allows the Authority to monitor

the food supplements market and carry out checks on the supplement composition, labelling, as well as on any nutrition and health claims. In 2020, 3,243 notifications were submitted. Checks and survey work carried out in conjunction with the HSE resulted in product withdrawals and labelling and marketing changes. There was a particular emphasis on cannabidiol (CBD) oil products, which have grown in popularity.



## Training and Compliance

The RMRA Training and Compliance team ensure that the right tools are developed and are in place to enable food safety inspectors' understanding of, and industry compliance with, the law. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that face-to-face training had to be replaced with online events, including webinars. The team have made numerous online learning modules available on various aspects of food law and food science, in addition to disseminating presentations from European Commission training events. During 2020, there was a steady uptake by inspectors of the available material.

The FSAI developed a 'Principles of Intelligence-Led Food Fraud Control' training programme for inspectors from the official agencies. This training session provided attendees with the tools and knowledge to adopt an intelligence-led approach to combatting

fraudulent and deceptive practices in the agri-food chain. The aim of the training session was to provide inspectors with a structure for recording, evaluating, sharing and using intelligence in a cross-agency environment. 55 officers received 9 hours of online training delivered by the Authority's Training and Compliance, and Audit and Investigations functional areas. Further Intelligence Management System end user training by the successful software vendors will follow as part of contract delivery.

The FSAI Training team continue to engage with the food industry and, during 2020, 700 of their *Food Safety and You* workbooks were sold. This workbook/course is designed to be delivered by supervisors/managers/trainers to staff within their own food business settings.

Since 2019, the FSAI has been working on a nutrition and health claims compliance building project. It aims to create a solution to assist Irish food and drink producers in achieving successful compliance with health and nutrition claims legislation.

A training workshop for DAFM inspectors supervising dairy products establishments was developed with the DAFM Dairy Control and Certification Division, and is planned for delivery in early 2021. The labelling training is intended to cover Food Information for Consumers (FIC), Nutrition and Health Claims and selecting

problematic areas to assist with consistency of enforcement as part of official controls.

During 2020, the RMRA training team continued the shared management of Ireland's participation in the European Commission's Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme.

The training team also continued to communicate with the Trainers' Network, through the use of Campaign Monitor, the aim of which is to provide trainers with information relevant to their role as educators of businesses. They are notified of new resources and events, such as the Breakfast Bite series of webinars, and they are encouraged not only to use these resources themselves but to pass the information on to their clients.

## Consultation and engagement

The RMRA functional area interacts with the 'regulated', that is directly with individual businesses or through their trade organisations. RMRA is also responsible for the management and coordination of the FSAI's Food Safety Consultative Council, Artisan Forum, Retail Forum, and Food Service Forum. In this way, RMRA oversees outreach and engagement with key stakeholders within the food safety system. This engagement transitioned to online meetings throughout 2020. The Food Safety Consultative Council



continued to meet during 2020, also moving to an online platform. Chaired by Mr Ray Bowe, it dealt with numerous topics and it is planning an Consultative Council open meeting in 2021.

These groups meet regularly and enable the FSAI to listen to the views of important sectors of Ireland's food industry, in addition to providing the FSAI with a practical opportunity for engagement on food safety and food regulatory matters. The RMRA team worked bilaterally with these groups and with Fáilte Ireland to develop guidance on reopening and operating safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The RMRA team also participated in the HSE's committees dealing with outbreaks of COVID-19 in meat plants and the food processing sector, again developing practical guidance for these sectors.

## Regulatory issues

The RMRA functional area acts as a repository of knowledge and support on certain aspects of food law. In 2020, they were engaged in the investigation and follow-up of 31 regulatory compliances.

Complaints were received about the labelling of whiskey. Improved arrangements were made with the official agencies for the control of labelling of spirit drinks, a market sector that has grown exponentially in Ireland. Support was provided to industry sectors on various aspects of food information law. Meetings were conducted with industry sector representatives, particularly from the

beverages and dairy sectors. Regular meetings were held with Food Drink Ireland (FDI), and with Enterprise Ireland, on regulatory issues related to Brexit. A number of presentations were delivered to the food and service industry on labelling; these included presentations run by Teagasc on New Product Development, and by IBEC on Food Safety for Reopening Businesses. A member of the RMRA team gave a presentation at the FSAI's virtual 'Breakfast Bite' series. In addition, the RMRA team delivered a special seminar for Bord Bia on labelling issues and health and nutrition claims.

RMRA chairs both an enforcement consistency group and a legislation committee with the HSE to harmonise approaches to the implementation of food law. In 2020, in anticipation of Brexit, considerable work was undertaken with a cross-agency group on import controls, including the development of guidance.

Whereas previously the online marketplace mainly featured food supplements, all kinds of food are now available for sale there, including fresh meat and fish. The revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625 extended the requirement for official controls to deal with online sales. The RMRA functional area has drafted guidance documents on enforcement of e-commerce for the official agencies and it hopes to publish this in 2021. A significant aspect of preparations for Brexit is controls on imports. The RMRA team placed a lot of emphasis on this work during 2020.

The RMRA functional area acts as a contact point for the DOH on food legislation, providing feedback on draft statutory instruments and guidance to the official agencies.

During 2020, members of the RMRA team participated in EU working groups on general food law, e-commerce, food information and labelling, official controls, and import controls.

### **Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture**

The RMRA Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture team provide expert support for official agencies colleagues by way of answering technical and legal queries; providing training; participating in management and liaison meetings; and carrying out on-site visits. The team provided technical support on numerous issues, such as animal by-products, residue controls, and pesticides, in addition to providing technical secretariat support to the Scientific Committee Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis (MAP) and Crohn's disease. The RMRA functional area also ensures that the FSAI contributes to industry stakeholder initiatives, such as Bord Bia's quality assurance schemes, the Association of Craft Butchers of Ireland's National Craft Butcher Apprenticeship Scheme, and the Irish Grain and Feed Association's hazard analysis and critical control points system.



## Audit and Investigations

Peter Whelan

Director, Audit and Investigations



Mr Peter Whelan leads the Audit and Investigations functional area, which is responsible for conducting audits and investigating protected disclosures and food fraud. The Audit and Investigations team carry out audits of the official food control system, as well as targeted audits of food businesses in order to ensure compliance with the Authority's legal mandate.

The team also provide support during third country and SANTE F audits in Ireland. The annual risk-based audit programme is designed to ensure adequate coverage of all relevant areas of activity and all official agencies over a period of 5 years. Audit reports and their corrective action plans are published on the Authority's website. The team conducts special investigations in conjunction with official agencies and other State agencies where serious breaches of food law have been alleged or food fraud has been detected. These investigations are designed to determine the nature and extent of non-compliance with food law and/or related food fraud offences.

Outcomes of such investigations may result in enforcement actions and criminal proceedings being taken against offenders. Notifications to the CEO, who is a designated person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014, are investigated by the Audit and Investigations team.

## Audits

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted significantly on the Authority's official controls and targeted audit programmes. Some work on audits that were already in process was conducted. To ensure compliance with Government public health guidelines, none of the programmed audits for 2020 commenced.

### International audits



Ireland's official controls system is subject to regular audit by the European Commission's DG SANTE audit function. The main activity in 2020 was an extensive programme of preparation with the official agencies for a fact-finding mission on controls on 'fraudulent and deceptive practices' within the agri-food chain; this programme of preparation was carried out in October 2020. Ireland was the first EU Member State to be studied by the mission team in a series of fact-finding missions on this topic, which is the subject of increased focus in the EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625. In particular, the study focused on the implementation of the provisions of Article 9(2) of the Regulation regarding the performance of official controls, on a regular basis and with appropriate frequency as determined on a risk basis, to identify possible intentional violations of the rules referred to in Article 1(2)

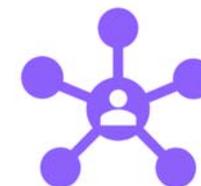
perpetrated through fraudulent or deceptive practices. The FSAI submitted a comprehensive package of information to the mission team in advance of the mission. The SANTE F team noted in their letter following conclusion of the mission that "Ireland is already well advanced with the implementation of arrangements to fight fraud in the agri-food chain, including strong intelligence-led investigation capacities, cross-agency cooperation and targeted audits."

Other work related to SANTE F during the year included the cross-agency preparation of responses to reports on audits of the controls on geographical indicators and on horsemeat.

Again, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no audits were conducted in Ireland by the U.S Food and Drug Administration or other third country. The Authority continues to represent Ireland on the European Commission-chaired National Audit Systems Network.

### Central Intelligence Hub

The Establishment of a Central Intelligence Hub (CIH) within the Authority forms the first of a four-phase proposed programme of work to ensure that the necessary support and coordination is provided to the official agencies to adequately address the threat to consumer health and interests presented by fraudulent and deceptive practice in the food chain. During 2020, funding was secured



through an information and communications technology capital (ICT) funding scheme which will enable the delivery of the CIH and the development of a legally compliant intelligence management network.

The absence of the capability to collate and analyse intelligence at a central location has been recognised as a contributory factor in the establishment and growth of food fraud. The FSAI's role as the competent authority with overall responsibility for the enforcement and coordination of food legislation in Ireland is best placed to take a central role in setting up and coordinating the CIH function, in accordance with its legal mandate. This will ensure the ability to capture and analyse intelligence to inform the risk-based decision-making required by the introduction of Regulation EU 2017/625. The risk assessment which informs this approach should consider information from a wide variety of sources, including that shared through the mechanisms of Administrative Assistance and Cooperation (AAC) provided for in Articles 102 to 108, for which the Authority has responsibility.

The CIH has the following additional benefits:

- Provides an efficient and cost-effective solution to meeting the additional legislative requirements of Regulation EU 2017/625 by utilising the current official

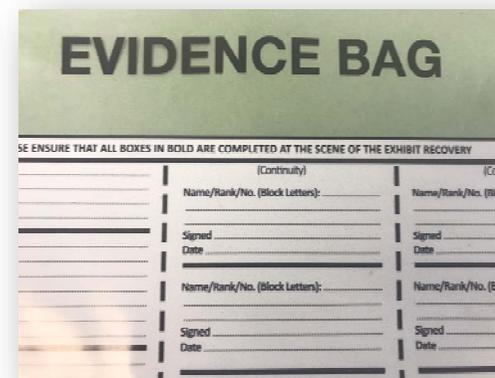
agencies resources, as identified in service contract arrangements

- Delivers opportunities for improved mitigation of risk to the consumer and creates greater resource efficiency as a result of earlier identification of fraudulent practice and targeted risk-based interventions, including prevention and protection strategies
- Utilises the existing structure for the enforcement of food legislation managed through service contract arrangements between the FSAI and the official agencies, thus avoiding the need for legislative or structural change to meet the requirements of Regulation EU 2017/625
- Makes use of existing legal gateways for information sharing, thereby avoiding the need to develop alternative legal arrangements in each agency, in order to ensure compliance with data protection law, e.g. the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); the 2016/680 Law Enforcement Directive; the Protected Disclosure Act 2016; and EU Directive 2019/1937.
- Provides the foundation for further opportunities to develop the strategic risk-based planning identified in Phase 4 of the proposed model

- Optimises available resources, thus avoiding duplication and also avoiding each agency developing separate intelligence management systems.

## Investigations

During 2020, authorised FSAI officers, together with other State regulatory authorities and the official agencies, conducted 95 investigations. These investigations were designed to determine the nature and extent of non-compliance with food law and related food fraud offences. They required a variety of approaches, ranging from the execution of search warrants secured in the District Court to the monitoring of social media pages in cases where the operation of online unauthorised food businesses was suspected. In some instances, outcomes of investigations resulted in the issuing of Enforcement Orders. In excess of 24 tonnes of foods of animal and non-animal origin were taken off the market as a result of these investigations.



Photograph of an evidence bag from an investigation.

During the year, FSAI staff also participated with official agencies personnel in multi-agency roadside checks, at checkpoints organised by An Garda Síochána.



The Food Fraud Task Force is chaired by the FSAI, and during 2020, one virtual meeting of the task force was convened. This multi-agency, multidisciplinary forum continues to consider and report on issues that are likely to significantly impact on food integrity/authenticity. In 2020, the Audit and Investigations functional area staff attended one virtual meeting of the Cross-Border Task Force on Food and Rural Crime.

## Food fraud – national and international cooperation

On behalf of the Authority, the Audit and Investigations functional area acts as the national food fraud contact point for the European Commission. During 2020, Audit and Investigations functional area representatives participated in two EU Food Fraud Network meetings, which were held virtually. In addition, the Authority monitored the European Commission's Administrative Assistance and Cooperation/Food Fraud Network database. In 2020, Ireland published 11 cases relating to meat, alcohol and food supplements claiming to treat, cure and/or prevent COVID-19 infection. Ireland responded to other Member State cases as required.



The FSAI continues to participate in the Food Industry Intelligence Network (FIIN) and it meets quarterly with members of the FIIN management board. FIIN currently represents a number of large food industry companies in Ireland and the UK. FIIN meetings involve discussion of intelligence reports and sharing of relevant information on food fraud. Representatives from the FSAI also sit on the Emerging Risks and Threats Forum, jointly chaired by Ibec and the FSAI.

In collaboration with An Garda Síochána and Revenue's Customs Service, the Audit and Investigations team participated in the joint Europol/INTERPOL operation targeting food crime. Known as Operation OPSON IX, in 2020, returns submitted by Ireland to Europol included seizures of food of animal origin (meat/dairy), as well as bottled water, and counterfeit alcohol.

The FSAI continues to participate in the European Heads of Agency Food Fraud Working Group. During 2020, the guidance on meeting the requirements of Article 140 of Regulation EU 2017/625 on official controls on reporting of infringements was adopted.

In collaboration with the University of Manchester, the Authority continues to participate in a project on the development of an operational toolkit for food safety practitioners committed to reducing non-compliance in the food industry. It is envisaged that practitioners, regulators, and enforcement personnel will utilise the toolkit to analyse deviance in the food system, and to design intervention mechanisms to correct such deviances.

The Authority also participated in the EU FoodSmartphone project, which endeavours to identify science and innovation gaps and how they relate to high-speed and novel biorecognition of food contaminants. Kits will be developed that can be attached to smartphones to instantly analyse foods.



## Food Science and Standards

Dr Wayne Anderson

Director, Food Science and Standards



The Food Science and Standards (FSS) functional area focuses its work on expanding and analysing the evidence base and using this in combination with the expertise of its scientists to conduct risk assessments, draft technical guidance for the food industry, support the work of the official agencies, carry out direct official controls, and deliver expert support to officials in the European Commission in Brussels as well as to officials in the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) for the development of food legislation at European level.

The FSS functional area also manages the FSAI Scientific Committee and provides technical input into the risk assessment work of EFSA and the Code Alimentarius Commission who set international food standards.

The work of scientists in the FSS functional area and in the Scientific Committee is supported by a dedicated team of administrators whose work maximises the efficiency and effectiveness of the FSS functional area and ensures the quality of outputs, as well as providing vital in-house services for other functional areas.

The Food Science and Standards functional area (FSS) concentrates its work on expanding and analysing the evidence base. This work, combined with the expertise of FSAI scientists, allows the FSS team to conduct risk assessments, draft technical guidance for the food industry, support the work of the official agencies, and carry out direct official controls, with the aim protecting public health.

The FSS functional area also provides expert support to the DOH and the DAFM on the development of food legislation. In addition, FSS experts provide technical inputs to the risk assessment work of EFSA and, at international level, inputs to food standards development work through the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

## Research and collaboration

The FSS functional area continued to expand its involvement in research in 2020, serving in an advisory capacity on five national research projects in the biological safety and chemical safety areas, including work to mitigate against cadmium uptake in root vegetables and work to reduce *Campylobacter* in poultry, and address the risk of *Listeria monocytogenes* in food. For the first time, the FSAI published a list of research priorities that will advance the organisation's risk assessment agenda. It also



provided research priorities to the DAFM for its 2020 call under the Food Institutional Research Measure, which will lead to proposals aimed at addressing the FSAI's data needs. In collaboration



with *safefood*, research was undertaken on *L. monocytogenes* in frozen vegetables, following a pan-European outbreak of Listeriosis. FSS staff also planned and coordinated focused studies under official controls with the official agencies on persistent organic pollutants in food, in addition to continuing studies on levels of sulphites and nitrites in meat products. A study on the microbiological safety of nuts and seeds was also published. Finally, a study of foods that make protein claims was conducted by third-level students working with the FSAI and this was published on the FSAI website as an infographic in early 2021.

An important function of the FSS functional area is the management and facilitation of the work of the FSAI Scientific Committee and of its subcommittees and working groups comprising 83 scientists. Several important opinions and requests for advice were completed. Five reports were published on the FSAI website: *Safety Considerations of Seaweed and Seaweed-derived Foods available on the Irish Market*; *Vitamin D Scientific Recommendations for Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Older Adults in Ireland*; *Appraisal of new and emerging food processing technologies and their potential risks to food safety*; *Risk management options related*

*to the use of botanicals in food supplements; and Scientific Recommendations for Food-based Dietary Guidelines for 1 to 5 Year-Olds in Ireland.* A further two opinions were adopted by the Scientific Committee in 2020 for publication in 2021. These publications were: *Scientific recommendations on healthy eating guidelines for the elderly; An update of the Scientific Committee opinion on Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis and Crohn's disease.*

The Scientific Committee completed its 5-year term of office on 31 December 2020 and a list of candidate members and Chairpersons for a replacement Scientific Committee was presented to the Minister for Health for consideration.



In 2020, the FSAI participated in a Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) initiative to place researchers in public bodies. The FSAI was successful in securing two 'researchers in residence' – one in the area of emerging risks and the other in the area of biological safety, specifically probiotic foods. These researchers have brought considerable expertise to the FSAI, enabling us to advance our science activities and enhance the skills of our resident scientists. An emerging risk signal system is being developed based on an intelligent search engine targeting the published scientific literature, and FSAI databases are being interrogated for further emerging risk

patterns. Systems that look at social media for early warning of food poisoning are being explored; in addition, a system that may enable the FSAI to identify unregistered or unapproved food businesses is being explored.

FSS representatives attended 46 expert meetings on legislation development organised by the European Commission and the European Council; they also briefed the DOH for votes on the completed work. Five submissions to the European Commission were made pertaining to the development of legislation.

Expert network meetings are also a feature of collaboration with EFSA, and in this context, members of the FSS team have actively participated in five virtual network meetings in the area of emerging risks, microbiological risk assessment, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), novel foods, and nanomaterials. On the international stage, members of the FSS team have made detailed technical submissions to three electronic working groups of the committees under the Codex Alimentarius Commission, where global food standards are agreed. Plenary meetings were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FSAI also provides assistance to the WHO and in 2020 one of our chief specialists was invited to participate in a WHO expert consultation on allergen thresholds and management in foods; in

addition, this specialist was asked to review the WHO report on foodborne outbreaks involving berries.

## Supporting food safety enforcement and compliance

A key aspect of the FSS team's work involves supporting other FSAI functional areas, government bodies, and EU agencies in safeguarding Ireland's food system. Following the introduction of an EU-wide contaminants coordinated testing programme, FSS staff provided significant technical inputs to the European Commission. Work continued on developing a risk basis for chemical sampling involving application of risk ranking developed by the FSAI Scientific Committee. The FSS functional area provides expert scientific support to the official agencies' food safety enforcement work. Detailed scientific recommendations were provided to the HSE, for its 2021 chemical monitoring programme, and to the DAFM for its proposed 2021 pesticides and veterinary medicine monitoring programmes. Several other major issues concerning enforcement were also addressed with staff in the official agencies. This included resolving accreditation problems for official laboratories surrounding the measurement of uncertainty for microbiological testing, as well as addressing suspension of accreditation in one HSE laboratory due to reduction in food sampling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further technical

inputs were provided to the official agencies during meetings about contract liaison matters. Specific technical issues faced by the official agencies were also addressed, such as assessing validation of thermal processes and cooling practices in certain food businesses, and risk assessment of freezing and thawing processes.

The growth of the hemp industry and the marketing of CBD oils were particularly notable in 2020. An FSS study identified a number of issues in relation to CBD oils, and subsequent official controls investigations confirmed non-compliance within the hemp industry. Significant technical contributions were made by members of the FSS team to bring this industry into better compliance and ensure that novel foods were not placed on the market without EU authorisation. Further technical advice was also provided during the roll-out of the new official controls legislation.



The FSS functional area also plays a role in notifications and approvals of certain foods. In 2020, 112 foods for special medical purposes and 40 infant formulas/follow-on formulas were notified to the FSAI. Initial composition compliance checks were carried out on these foods. In addition, 1,162 other products (mostly food supplements) were assessed for compliance with nutrition and health claims legislation. Under novel foods regulations, FSS staff

assessed 12 notifications of traditional foods from third countries, provided a reasoned opinion on the novel food status of 10 consultation requests, and sent information on 14 novel foods applications to the DOH for voting at EU level. In addition, FSS carried out 12 reviews of genetically modified organisms for food and feed following EFSA assessment.

The FSS functional area supports the food incident team in the FSAI Risk Management and Regulatory Affairs functional area by providing scientific advice and conducting risk assessments. The FSS functional area provided technical input into FSAI advice on COVID-19, and it maintained a watching brief on scientific developments during the so-called 'infodemic', which saw thousands of research studies published both prior to and post peer review. A large qualitative risk assessment was published on SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 virus) and also on bivalve molluscs, which addressed concerns over the safety of shellfish. FSS staff provided a further 158 risk assessments, including 108 in the chemical safety area alone. 2020 was also a busy year for supporting the FSAI Audit and Investigations team in their work on protected disclosures, with involvement in the related field work and follow-up for two large investigations, as well as providing technical support on testing results and the development of the central intelligence hub.



## Communication and outreach

The FSAI provides an excellent Advice Line service for its stakeholders. The FSS functional area supports this service by responding to many queries directly. In total, FSS staff responded to 970 external queries, of which 401 related to novel foods and other food technology issues; the team responded to 272 external queries on chemical safety matters, 162 external queries on biological safety hazards, and 135 on nutrition. Following extensive work with the infant formula industry, the FSAI published guidelines and an assessment tool to ensure that communications to health professionals on infant formula were compliant with health claims regulations and that they were based on science generally accepted by the scientific community. In this latter regard, the FSS functional area published a guide to the assessment of scientific evidence to help define the meaning of 'generally accepted science' when referred to in legislation. Another major piece of work involving the supplements industry was published in 2020. This report provided the food industry with a way of ensuring that the maximum levels of vitamins and minerals in their supplements were safe. The FSS functional area published frequently asked questions documents on health claims and also on COVID-19, in order to help the food industry understand legal requirements and risks. In



In addition, FSS staff provided extensive direct technical support for food business operators on the safety of their processes – issues which are often unique and complex, requiring considerable time and expertise to resolve.

Despite the constraints created by the COVID-19 pandemic, FSS staff made scientific presentations at two national meetings and three international meetings. FSS representatives also presented two posters at scientific meetings. As part of the Science Strategy, FSS scientists continued to support third-level institutions, including delivering 16 lectures to both undergraduate and postgraduate students at seven universities and institutes of technology.

## Strategy

In 2020, the FSS team continued to develop the science base at the FSAI; this included publishing the second FSAI *Science Strategy* 2020–2024, which will see the FSS team develop further key skills, maximise strengths in science synthesis for risk assessment, and leverage influence to ensure that key research on food safety is undertaken in Ireland. The importance of communicating food science to others is recognised across the FSAI. During 2020, FSS activities included: developing a guide to science communication; producing short videos on science topics; and disseminating a number of science outputs via LinkedIn and other social media platforms. In addition, for the second year, the FSAI funded and

engaged with the industry-led *Science and Technology in Action* programme. This is in line with our aspiration to influence young students to study STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects because they will be the scientists of tomorrow.

FSS staff are committed to working across the FSAI to ensure that we maintain a cohesive organisation. Throughout the 2020 remote working period, the FSAI staff committee and its sub-groups helped to keep people smiling and connected to each other, and the FSS team were delighted to play a part in this collective endeavour.

**The FSAI published its 2020–2024 *Science Strategy* in June 2020.**



## Corporate governance

In compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016), the Authority has a Corporate Governance Framework in place. This Framework was developed in order to assist in improving efficiency and enhancing openness and transparency. The Framework provides guidance for the organisation, detailing aspects such as conducting Board business, strategic planning, operational processes, risk management, financial controls, and standards of behaviour. During 2020, the Authority ensured and maintained compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016).

## The Board

The key functions of the Board include reviewing and guiding strategic direction and major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets, and business plans; setting performance objectives; monitoring implementation of the Authority's strategy and business plans; and overseeing major revenue and capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Board has a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved for its consideration. The Board commences each meeting with a private session of the Board, where no FSAI staff members are present.

## Board Audit and Risk Committee

The Authority has a fully functioning Board Audit and Risk Committee which undertook the following audits during 2020: internal financial controls, payroll, and a review of previous internal audit findings. During 2020, the Board continued to review its effectiveness and an effectiveness review was considered by the

Board in early 2020, and agreed actions were implemented. The Financial Statements, as approved by the Board Audit and Risk Committee and the Board, were subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Four Board Audit and Risk Committee meetings were held in 2020. The Board Audit and Risk

Committee has an independent role in providing the Board with assurance on internal control, risk management, audit, and assurance matters as part of the systematic review of the Authority's control environment and governance procedures. The

Board Audit and Risk Committee operates under an agreed charter and prepares a formal annual report for the Board.

- Number of meetings: Four
- Chairperson: Ms Margaret Moran until June 2020, replaced by Ms Mary Cullen

## Nominations and Remunerations Committee

The Nominations and Remunerations Committee is appointed to devise and implement an appropriate mechanism to assess the performance of the Chief Executive Officer and, through the Chief Executive Officer, to review the performance of the FSAI Executive Team. As required, the Committee agrees remuneration with Government Departments, develops job descriptions, identifies the relevant competencies and ideal candidate profile for posts, agrees

the recruitment and search process, and sets a specific timetable. The Nominations and Remunerations Committee convenes as required by the Board.

- Number of meetings: Two
- Chairperson: Martin Higgins
- Membership: Prof. Albert Flynn and Ms Ros O'Shea

## Statutory and other notices

In accordance with Section 41 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001, members of the Authority's Board, Scientific Committee and Scientific Subcommittees, as well as designated FSAI staff, are required to submit a declaration of interests annually. These are in turn submitted by the FSAI to the Minister for Health and/or to the Standards in Public Office Commission, as appropriate.

## **Protected Disclosures Act 2014**

There were seven protected disclosures made to the FSAI in 2020 from employees or former employees of the food industry.

## **Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997**

The FSAI's policy is to ensure that all payments are made promptly. Every effort, consistent with proper financial procedures, is being made to ensure that all suppliers are paid within the required time frame, in accordance with best practice. The FSAI publishes quarterly reports of compliance on its website.

## **Freedom of Information Act 2014**

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 asserts the right of members of the public to access official information to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of individuals. The FSAI complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and publishes under Section 8 of the Act. This publication contains information about the services provided, or to be provided, to the public by the FSAI, and it also features a disclosures log and financial information. During 2020, there were 23 Freedom of Information requests.

## **European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007**

The European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 133/2007) gives legal rights to those seeking access to information on the environment from public authorities. During 2020, there were no requests under Access to Information on the Environment legislation.

## **Customer Charter**

The FSAI has a Customer Charter detailing its full commitment to providing customers with an efficient, timely, professional, and courteous service. The Charter sets out the standards of service customers can expect to receive from the FSAI.

# Strategic goals and achievements

## Goal 1 Enforcement and compliance

To enforce food law and increase compliance, in collaboration with our regulatory partners, through a world-class food control system

### Objective 1.1 Lead and support Ireland's food safety regulators to implement a fair, consistent and effective system of enforcement

- Developed a guidance document on microbiological sampling and published a report on a coordinated official controls survey on microbiological safety of pre-packaged dried herbs and spices
- Provided detailed proposals for the DAFM Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines and HSE Chemical Official Controls Programmes 2021
- Detailed technical input was provided to the official agencies on a number of topics: for example, measurement of uncertainty in official microbiological laboratories; helping inspectors to assess validation of cooking and cooling practices in certain food businesses; and risk assessment of freezing and thawing processes
- Maintained a comprehensive suite of service contracts with the official agencies to cover their official controls on food safety
- Developed new training methodologies and tools to enable training to take place virtually, and enhance e-learning modules
- Supported trainers in the delivery of the Food Safety and You training programme
- Delivered 'Principles of Intelligence-led Food Fraud Control' training session to provide inspectors from the official agencies with the tools and knowledge to adopt an intelligence-led approach to combatting fraudulent and deceptive practices in the agri-food chain
- Funded the food safety controls conducted by local authorities and the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)
- Participated in a review with the County and City Management Association of local authorities' funding requirements
- As part of the preparations for the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625, the FSAI provided advice to the official agencies on new national legislation introduced in 2020 to give effect to the Regulation.
- The FSAI continued the development of e-learning modules for official agencies staff and food businesses.
- It also managed aspects of Ireland's participation the European Commission's Better Training for Safer Food initiative.
- The FSAI's extensive activities of engagement and support with the official agencies included the following: a cross-agency meeting held in March 2020 to discuss measurement uncertainty in relation to food microbiology laboratories; participation in a meeting of a

cross-agency group on supervisory arrangements for food businesses with complex food activities that could potentially involve more than one official agency for official controls – where agreed changes to the existing guidance were made. The FSAI also agreed to review the consistency of processes for food business to obtain approval to operate.

- The management of technical and legal queries from official agency and FSAI staff.

### **Objective 1.2** Manage risks in the food chain and respond effectively to any national or international food incident or crisis

- Twenty-five EU Administrative Assistance and Cooperation Food Fraud Notifications were processed by the FSAI.
- A consistent theme for the official agencies during 2020 was the impact of Brexit preparations on official controls programmes carried out by the official agencies and the FSAI. The preparations, particularly for enhanced import controls at Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort, presented practical challenges in delivering normal levels of official controls.
- In 2020, the Authority dealt with 661 food incidents.
- The FSAI (supported by its official agencies) identified and reported 27 products to the EU's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). This operates on a 24/7/365 basis.
- An FSAI study found issues with CBD oils, and subsequent official controls investigations confirmed non-compliance within the hemp industry. A press release on these findings was issued; the FSAI subsequently liaised with industry and food recalls were undertaken.

### **Objective 1.3** Ensure the safety, integrity and authenticity of the food chain by detecting, deterring and preventing breaches of food law, and taking action to protect consumers

- A total of 167 public warnings about food being recalled or withdrawn from the market were issued in the form of food alerts (112) or food allergen alerts (55), a slight increase on the 107 such alerts issued in 2019.
- To support the work of the food incidents team, 159 risk assessments were carried out, including 108 in the chemical safety area alone.
- Ninety investigations were carried out in conjunction with other State regulatory authorities and the official agencies.
- Seven protected disclosures were investigated.

- In 2020, the FSAI published 42 Enforcement Orders (including 31 Closure Orders, 9 Prohibition Orders and 2 Improvement Orders) served to food businesses for breaches of food safety legislation. This represented a 67% decrease on the 125 Enforcement Orders served in 2019, reflecting the huge impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the food service sector.

#### **Objective 1.4** Strive for a world-class official food control system for Ireland which delivers the best outcomes for consumers

- Notifications were received for 112 foods for special medical purposes and 40 infant formulas/follow-on formulas. These were assessed for safety and compliance with food safety legislation.
- In 2020, 3,243 food supplement notifications were submitted.
- Health and nutrition claims checks were conducted on 1,162 other products (mostly food supplements). A total of 1,200 additives checks were carried out on food supplements.
- Under novel foods regulations, the FSAI assessed 12 notifications in relation to traditional foods from third countries; it provided a reasoned opinion on the novel food status of 10 consultation requests, and it sent information on 14 novel foods applications to the DOH for voting at EU level.
- The FSAI carried out 12 reviews of GMOs for food and feed following EFSA assessment.
- A number of existing audit reports and action plans were updated.
- Two audit projects to assess the effectiveness of official controls were developed.
- During 2020, the FSAI continued work on the implementation of the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625. This Regulation set the rules for the performance by EU Member States of controls in the agri-food sector and it replaced the previous official controls legislation (Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 and Regulation (EC) No 854/2004). Work included participation in a steering group comprising the FSAI, the DAFM, and the DOH.
- Participated in the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies work on Regulation (EU) 2017/625, including chairing a working group producing guidelines on laboratory-related aspects of the Regulation.
- With the official agencies, the FSAI coordinated preparations for a fact-finding mission, carried out in October 2020, to investigate controls on fraudulent and deceptive practices in the agri-food chain. Ireland was the first EU Member State to be studied by the European Commission team in a series of fact-finding missions on this topic, which is the subject of increased focus in Regulation (EU) 2017/625. The European Commission noted in its feedback that “Ireland is already well advanced with the implementation of arrangements to fight fraud in the agri-food chain, including strong intelligence-led investigation capacities, cross-agency cooperation and targeted audits.”



## Goal 2 Science, expertise and evidence

To advance food safety and integrity through independent science, expertise and a strong evidence base

### Objective 2.1 Support risk-based decision-making and policy with high-quality, independent expertise

- The Scientific Committee met six times in 2020 and there were a further nine meetings of the subcommittees and working groups to advance advice.
- Five reports were published on the FSAI website: *Safety Considerations of Seaweed and Seaweed-derived Foods available on the Irish Market*; *Vitamin D Scientific Recommendations for Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Older Adults in Ireland*; *Appraisal of new and emerging food processing technologies and their potential risks to food safety*; *Risk management options related to the use of botanicals in food supplements*; and *Scientific Recommendations for Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for 1 to 5 Year-Olds in Ireland*.
- A further two opinions were adopted by the Scientific Committee in 2020 for publication in 2021: Scientific recommendations on healthy eating guidelines for the elderly; An update of the Scientific Committee opinion on Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis and Crohn's disease. Support was provided to the Minister for Health in his appointment of a new FSAI Scientific Committee in 2021.
- The FSAI provided advice to the official agencies on new national legislation introduced in 2020 to give effect to the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625.
- The FSAI maintained a watching brief on scientific developments during the COVID-19 pandemic that saw thousands of research studies published both prior to and post peer review.
- The FSAI produced a large qualitative risk assessment on the risk of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 virus) and bivalve molluscs which addressed concerns over the safety of shellfish
- The FSAI completed 158 risk assessments to support risk management actions, including 108 in the chemical safety area alone.

**Objective 2.2** Expand the evidence base through research, coordinated studies and scientific collaboration

- Expanded involvement in research, serving in an advisory capacity on five national research projects in the biological safety and chemical safety areas, including work to mitigate against cadmium in root vegetables and work to reduce *Campylobacter* in poultry
- Published a list of research priorities that will advance the FSAI's risk assessment agenda
- Provided a comprehensive list of research priorities to the DAFM; the FSAI was successful in getting many of these adopted under the EU Food Institutional Research Measure funding round.
- Planned and coordinated focused studies under official controls with the official agencies on persistent organic pollutants in food; in addition, the FSAI continued studies on levels of sulphites and nitrites in meat products.
- Participated in a Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) initiative to place researchers in public bodies. The FSAI was successful in securing two 'researchers in residence' – one in the area of emerging risks and the other in the area of biological safety, specifically probiotic foods. These researchers have brought considerable expertise to the FSAI, enabling it to advance its science activities as well as enhance the skills of its resident scientists.
- Research undertaken in collaboration with *safefood* on *Listeria monocytogenes* in frozen vegetables, following a recent pan-European outbreak of Listeriosis.

**Objective 2.3** Advance risk assessment practice to promote trust and engagement

- Actively participated in five EFSA virtual network meetings in the area of emerging risks, microbiological risk assessment, genetically modified organisms, novel foods, and nanomaterials
- In 2020, two consultations were published by the FSAI.

**Objective 2.4** Grow our ability to identify emerging risks and threats to the food chain

- Participated in two European Commission Joint Research Centre meetings on food fraud and quality
- Established an in-house Emerging Risk Screening Group to progress briefing notes developed around potential emerging issues. The FSAI continued to build its database of emerging risk issues published in peer-reviewed literature, and it explored the possibility of using several social media tools for early warning systems.

- Shared details of emerging risk issues with EFSA at Emerging Risk Network Meetings; the FSAI also shared details of such issues and national emerging risk contacts with the food industry at meetings of the Emerging Risks and Threats Forum.
- Collaborated with the National Poisons Information Centre in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin on a pilot of a nutravigilance system for Ireland.

### **Objective 2.5** Influence the development of food standards and enforcement approaches at European and international level

- Attended 60 expert meetings on legislation development organised by the European Commission and the European Council, as well as briefing the DOH for votes on the completed work
- Made five submissions to the European Commission pertaining to the development of legislation
- Submitted detailed technical submissions to four electronic working groups of the committees under the Codex Alimentarius Commission, where global food standards are agreed
- Continued to participate in a network of other EU Member States, and in the European Commission, working on a standard format for producing National Control Plans for official controls across the EU and for reporting on them
- Under the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, the FSAI continued to chair an electronic working group on establishing nutrient reference values (NRVs) for older infants and young children. This work included an international Consultation on General Principles for NRVs held in May 2020 and an Agenda Paper submitted in December 2020.
- Participated in a WHO/FAO expert meeting on allergens, in order to provide advice to the Codex Committee on Food Labelling.
- Provided input into the development of tertiary legislation (implementing and delegated EU Acts) in relation to the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625.



### Goal 3: Engagement and communication

To be a leader in the safety and integrity of food through communication, partnership, collaboration and advocacy

**Objective 3.1** Provide clear and evidence-based advice and information to promote food safety and build compliance with food law

- The Authority's website, [www.fsai.ie](http://www.fsai.ie), was updated regularly and maintained in order to ensure accessibility for all users on all devices. Comprehensive customer feedback was collated during 2020; this feedback was used to improve users' experience of the website, and it will inform further website development to be carried out in 2021. The tender for the development of the website was awarded in 2020 and work on the new website began in 2020.
- During 2020, the FSAI website generated 3,325,057 page views, an increase of 28% on 2019. The pages on COVID-19; the frequently asked questions; food alerts; and 'Starting a Food Business' were the most visited sections of the FSAI website in 2020.
- Regular ezines were distributed to subscriber groups during the year. The FSAI continues to use webinars and e-learning tools to support increased compliance with food safety legislation.
- Active two-way engagement with the FSAI's stakeholders was achieved. We recorded an increase in the number of followers on social media platforms, with 19,400 followers on Facebook (2019: 14,512); 9,900 followers on Twitter (2019: 8,579); and 23,300 followers on LinkedIn (2019: 16,984). Instagram was also added to the FSAI's social media channels in 2020.
- Engagement with the official agencies was facilitated through SafetyNet, an extranet for the FSAI and the official agencies staff. Documentation and meetings information was shared through this portal; the FSAI also provided access to online training for both internal and external users.
- The Authority responded to 970 technical queries from outside the FSAI, either directly or via the FSAI Advice Line; of these 970 queries, 272 related to chemical safety matters, 135 related to nutrition, 162 related to biological safety, and 401 related to novel foods and other food technology issues. Following extensive work with the infant formula industry, the FSAI published guidelines and an assessment tool to ensure that communications to health professionals on infant formula are compliant with health claims regulations.
- Published guidance for the food supplements industry on maximum safe levels of vitamins and minerals in their products
- Published the updated Safe Catering Pack in 2020. It includes new sections on safe sushi production, allergen management, and the control of acrylamide

- Organised a public consultation for the DOH on the FSAI website to seek stakeholder views on the extent of retail-to-retail supply of animal-origin foods that should be permitted under a 'marginal, localised and restricted' (MLR) exemption from certain EU food hygiene laws
- Organised a public consultation on the FSAI website on the criteria for appropriately qualified experts, for the purpose of documentation review by food businesses which are subject to official food sampling by the HSE; this exercise formed part of the preparation of guidance for the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625.
- Continued work on a compliance building project in 2020, in order to create a novel compliance solution to assist Irish food and drink producers to make compliant health and nutrition claims on their products.

**Objective 3.2** Work in partnership with Government, other State agencies, academia, and civil society organisations to champion food safety within Ireland

- Convened one virtual meeting of the Food Fraud Task Force in 2020; this task force is chaired by the FSAI.
- Attended the Food Industry Intelligence Network (FIIN) and quarterly meetings
- Co-chaired one meeting of the Cross-Border Task Force on Food and Rural Crime
- Participated in multi-agency operations, including the execution of search warrants in domestic dwellings where fraudulent and deceptive practices were suspected
- Engagement with the scientific community was interrupted initially during the COVID-19 pandemic as conferences were cancelled, but engagement progressed virtually. Activities included presenting three papers and chairing a session (invited) at international meetings; giving three presentations at national meetings; presenting posters at scientific meetings and virtual events. As part of the FSAI's Science Strategy, FSAI scientists continued to support third-level institutions by delivering 16 lectures to undergraduate and postgraduate students at 10 universities and institutes of technology.
- 2020 saw continued engagement with the Food Safety Trainers' Network.

### Objective 3.3 Collaborate with key stakeholders to foster and promote a culture of food safety and compliance within Ireland's food industry

- Participated in a Garda-led operation targeting the illegal presentation of equines for slaughter
- Provided technical support to the DAFM Campylobacter Stakeholder Group, who are working to improve the safety of poultry in Ireland
- The Service Contract Committee overseeing enforcement consistency between the HSE Environmental Health Service and the FSAI met three times in 2020.
- Supported the work of Food Drink Ireland (FDI) by attending three virtual meetings, and providing FDI with three FSAI briefs in writing and two presentations on regulatory issues
- The FSAI's industry and food sector groups – the Retail Forum, Artisan Forum, and the Food Service Forum met regularly during 2020.
- During 2020, the FSAI also held liaison meetings with the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and industry representative groups.
- The Cross-agency Committee on Import of Food of Non-animal Origin met once in 2020 to coordinate and support the enforcement of import controls.
- The FSAI was involved in the HSE-led COVID-19 National Standing Oversight Committee (NSOC), which oversaw outbreaks of COVID-19 in meat plants and other workplaces.
- During 2020, the FSAI increased engagement with the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee, a collaborative forum with the Irish shell-fisheries industry; this engagement was achieved through the use of video-conferencing meetings.

### Objective 3.4 Improve our capacity and capability by working with others to advocate for safe and trustworthy food for everyone

- The FSAI assumed the role of Secretariat of the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies group. The FSAI organised a meeting of this group in collaboration with the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (*BfR*), Germany, the Presidency of the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies. Additionally, many staff members sit on the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies expert working groups.
- The FSAI contributed to industry stakeholder initiatives, such as the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme, the ACBI Butchery Apprenticeship Scheme and the Irish Grain & Feed Association HACCP.

- The FSAI funded the Science and Technology in Action programme and developed a lesson for second-level students on allergens. This is in line with our aspiration to influence young students to study STEM subjects, because they will be the scientists of tomorrow.



## Goal 4 Organisational excellence

To empower our people, strengthen our systems, and develop our culture to achieve organisational excellence and maximise our impact

**Objective 4.1** Ensure a high-performing and empowering culture for our people, built on innovation, shared values and teamwork

- At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland, the Government's guidelines and instructions were for people to work from home if possible, the FSAI and its staff quickly adapted and not only delivered the majority of the Authority's planned work for the year through adapting its methods and using innovative solutions but they also delivered a substantial amount of additional reactive work. The Authority was also able to activate its crisis management plan, which had been tested prior to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.
- A number of project briefings were held throughout the year. Project briefings are recognised as a key communication tool to inform staff about organisational activities that they may not be directly involved in.
- Work continued on embedding the Authority's values of integrity, respect, passion, transparency, teamwork and collaboration in the organisation's staff.
- The Authority progressed a detailed programme seeking to further develop a positive, collaborative and high-performing working environment. This included actioning responses from the 2018 staff survey, organising themed workshops for all staff, and implementing a programme for staff, management, and leadership development. In late 2020, we conducted a new staff survey and the findings from this will be used to develop the organisation further in future years. Additionally, we set up an equality, diversity and inclusion committee in 2020.
- The Authority's recruitment needs were reviewed, and recruitment progressed throughout the year, in line with sanctions received from the DOH. A skills gap analysis, as well as staff learning and development plans, were undertaken in order to plan for future organisational needs.

- Human resources (HR) policies were reviewed and updated in order to ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation and best practice.
- The Civil Service Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) was further embedded into the Authority's HR system through engaging extensively with staff to provide guidance and training to enhance the organisation's team and individual performance.
- The Authority hosted a number of students throughout the year across all functional areas.
- A number of initiatives under the Life@FSAI Health and Wellbeing Framework, developed by the Staff Committee and endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team, took place during 2020. These initiatives included mindfulness sessions for staff, yoga, coffee roulette, an Employee Assistance Programme, ergonomics checks, and a steps challenge, book club, and team-building exercises.
- Regular staff meetings and quarterly staff seminars were held throughout the year. In addition, the Senior Leadership Team met on average once a week to discuss issues and make decisions on key areas for the organisation. Functional area meetings, team meetings, and project meetings were also held with all teams on a monthly basis. Regular meetings of the Health and Safety Committee were held and the annual work programme was implemented. Staff Committee meetings were held regularly during 2020, thereby facilitating open discussions on numerous issues of relevance to staff.
- The internal communications strategy was further progressed throughout the year, and it remains key to the organisation's development.
- The FSAI developed an internal guide to science communication, which saw it produce short videos on science topics and disseminate its science outputs via LinkedIn and other social media platforms.
- The FSAI set up an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, endorsed by the senior leadership team.

**Objective 4.2** Provide a robust and targeted information framework to deliver internal efficiencies and meet stakeholder and customer needs

- During 2020, the FSAI updated software development applications to support business activities to meet increased and changing business needs.
- Updates were made to the various mechanisms that the FSAI uses to prepare and process certain datasets to enable earlier reporting to EFSA, in line with new recommended deadlines that apply to the 2020 data.
- Various modifications and improvements were made to key FSAI data collection systems and processes, in order to support the FSAI's external partners with the adjustments that had to be made to work practices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The FSAI continued to progress work relating to its Data Strategy, with some system work completed, in addition to planning various review processes to build and improve on existing data collection processes and frameworks.

- Many of the key databases that the FSAI requires in order to carry out its corporate functions were updated. They included the Internal Audit and Continual Improvement Database, the database for managing FSAI Advice Line queries, and the RASFF Database, which is used to manage and collate food alerts and notifications.
- The FSAI managed the redeveloped food notification system, in line with the principles defined within the FSAI Data Strategy. The new food notification system has improved end-user functionality and it includes a broader remit for the capture of notification information on food supplements and foods for special groups.
- During 2020, the FSAI's electronic document management system and intranet, 'Our Space', continued to be used by staff as a central repository for document management and as an internal communications tool. Sections were set up specifically for COVID-19 pandemic staff remote working, containing relevant advice, resources and tips, well-being content, IT information, and learning resources. A section was also set up for informal discussions among staff. Document collaboration and engagement proved to be a major benefit to the organisation, especially when staff were working remotely.
- The FSAI's library service focused on the enhanced delivery of electronic resources to staff working remotely.
- The number of consumer complaints decreased during 2020, with over 2,772 consumer complaints handled by the Advice Line. Of these complaints, 34% related to unfit food and 30% related to poor hygiene standards.
- The Advice Line dealt with 7,767 requests from industry. Some of the most popular queries were regarding legislation on food labelling requirements; food supplements, requests for publications, as well as for information on Brexit and food business start-ups.
- All FSAI Advice Line queries were responded to, in line with the FSAI Customer Charter.

**Objective 4.3** Ensure that our governance structures support informed and accountable decision-making underpinned by responsive leadership, risk management processes and compliance

- The FSAI continued to implement its 2019–2023 strategy, ensuring that its resources, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and adapting to a remote working environment at short notice, were allocated in an efficient and appropriate manner, in order to maximise the benefits and impacts of the strategy. The 2020 business plan was also developed and submitted to the DOH for consultation and agreement.
- The 2020 business plan was substantially delivered by the end of the year and any deviations from the original plan were reported on and discussed between the FSAI Board and the DOH during their quarterly governance meetings.

- The FSAI operates under the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016). Under the guidance of the Board, the Authority continued to review, ensure compliance with, and report on its full compliance with the Code. The FSAI Oversight Agreement/Performance Delivery Agreement was agreed with the DOH.
- The FSAI adhered to its risk management framework and it continued to embed risk management into all aspects of its business planning, delivery and alignment to appropriate decision-making.
- The FSAI published its *Science Strategy 2020–2024* and developed an implementation plan to further develop key skills, maximise its strengths in science synthesis for risk assessment, and leverage its influence to see key research on food safety undertaken in Ireland.
- During 2020, the Authority dealt with 23 Freedom of Information requests and seven Parliamentary Questions. Seven protected disclosures were made under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. All Freedom of Information requests were dealt with in a timely manner and in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- The FSAI continued to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, and it processed no Subject Access Requests in 2020.

#### **Objective 4.4** Embed a culture of quality through ensuring that systems, processes and procedures meet the highest standards

- The FSAI operates a business management system in order to ensure organisational excellence, quality of service and compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016) and relevant legislation. The business management system ensures that risks and opportunities are identified and addressed, that a customer focus is maintained, and that a consistent, process-based approach underpins activities. Following an external audit in 2020, certification to the international quality standard ISO 9001:2015 was maintained.
- The FSAI enabled and supported a fully mobile workforce through the delivery of a large-scale IT capital project with the roll-out of state-of-the-art laptops, which enabled staff members to effectively and collaboratively work from home. In addition, licensing and enhancements to the teleconferencing facilities were implemented, including the roll-out of the GoToMeeting technology suite, which has enabled the Authority's staff members to host video conferencing remotely, as well as work on document collaboration and deliver remote training programmes to key stakeholders.
- The IT team further developed the IT infrastructure to support and enhance business operations. This was achieved using the core server infrastructure; the work included upgrading hardware and software in order to meet best practice industry standards. This included redesigning and streamlining the backup architecture, which has enhanced business continuity benchmarks.

- FSAI key databases were redeveloped to include the anonymisation of data and records in order to meet GDPR and data protection requirements.
- Increased measures were put in place to protect the Authority from cyber-attacks, which included technology enhancements and staff awareness programmes. This was because since the move to remote working there has been an increase in global cyber-attacks. The cyber awareness information highlighted how users are the last line of defence and that they need to remain vigilant when using corporate IT systems.
- The FSAI received a high rating score from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) as part of its annual legislative energy returns. The SEAI report highlighted how the FSAI is working towards becoming a more energy-efficient organisation and that the move to an LED building in The Exchange has significantly contributed to the rating. The FSAI continues to contribute positively to the overall Government Climate Action Plan through both staff engagement and environmentally impacting initiatives.

#### **Objective 4.5** Enhance recognition of the FSAI's identity, influence and reputation among staff, stakeholders and customers

- Ongoing press activities enhance organisation recognition and awareness about the work of the FSAI.
- FSAI staff regularly speak at local, national and international events. In addition, in 2020, the FSAI moved all of its events online. This enabled the organisation to reach larger groups in a more accessible way.
- Regular stakeholder engagement allows the FSAI to be well respected and valued for its knowledge and expertise in the field of food safety.
- The FSAI's active presence on social media allows it to facilitate two-way communication with its stakeholders. In 2020, the FSAI added Instagram to its social media channels. This enables it to remain relevant and to meet its stakeholders on the social media platforms where they are spending time.
- The FSAI continues to influence the global food safety community through the publication of world-class class scientific publications.

- The FSAI's prompt and responsive Advice Line acts as a useful touchpoint to industry, consumers and other interested stakeholders.



## Appendix 1 Industry fora members

### Artisan Forum, 2020

**Mr John Matthews**

(Chairperson)

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

**Ms Darina Allen**

Slow Food Ireland/Ballymaloe

Cookery School

**Ms Sally Barnes**

Woodcock Smokery

**Mr Eoin Bird**

The Wooded Pig

**Mr John Brennan**

Leitrim Organic Farmers Co-op

**Mr Kevin Brennan**

Teagasc

**Mr William Cleary**

Beekeeper

**Ms Jeffa Gill**

Durrus Cheese

**Ms Simone Kelly**

The Rocket Man Café

**Mr Sean Kent**

Poultry Expert

**Mr Donal Lehane**

Chair of Community Food Group

**Mr David Lang**

Associated Craft Butchers of  
Ireland

**Ms Jane Murphy**

Cáis

**Ms Mary Regan**

Regan's Organic Farm

**Ms Dearbhla Reynolds**

The Cultured Club

**Mr Declan Ryan**

Arbutus Breads

**Ms Elisabeth Ryan**

Independent Micro Breweries

### Food Service Forum, 2020

**Ms Dorothy Guina-Dornan**

(Chairperson)

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

**Ms Lana McGinn**

Gather and Gather

**Ms Louise Collins**

Eddie Rocket's (IRL) Limited

**Mr Pat Crotty**

Vintners' Federation of Ireland

**Mr Adrian Cummins**

Restaurants Association of Ireland

**Ms Martina Donohoe**

Aramark

**Mr Adam Heyes**

Subway Ireland

**Ms Louise Hickmott**

McDonald's Restaurants of Ireland

**Ms Mary Flynn**

Catering Management Association  
of Ireland

**Mr Conor O'Kane**

Irish Hotels Federation/Clayton  
Hotels

**Eoghan McLoughlin**

Irish Prison Service

**Ms Manuela Spinelli**

Euro-Toques Ireland

**Ms Helen Statham** (*joined*

*September 2020*)

KFC

## Retail Forum, 2020

**Ms Dorothy Guina-Dornan**  
(Chairperson)

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

**Ms Lucy O'Connor** (*replaced*  
*Ray Bowe January 2020*)

Musgrave Retail Partners  
Ireland

**Mr Stephen Browne**

Retail Ireland/Ibec

**Ms Katie Creamer**

Aldi

**Ms Tara Buckley**

Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied  
Trades Association (RGDATA)

**Ms Jenni O'Brien**

Avoca

**Mr Gareth Coburn**

Pallas Foods

**Ms Mary Daly**

Dunnes Stores

**Ms Elaine Clohosey**

BWG Foods

**Mr Jonathan Halls**

Boots

**Ms Aoife Noonan**

Lidl Ireland

**Ms Lynda Kenny**

Musgrave Wholesale/Daybreak

**Mr Rob McEvoy**

Circle K

**Ms Aisling McGough**

Tesco Ireland

**Ms Sharon Murphy**

Barry Group

**Mr Ben McGinn**

Gala Retail

**Mr Neil Spreadbury**

Iceland Foods

**Ms Anna Calvert**

Marks & Spencer

## Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee, 2020

**Mr David Lyons/Ms Christine King**  
(Chairpersons)

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

**Mr Dave Clarke/Mr Conor Duffy**  
**/Dr Sinead Keaveney/Mr Joe Silke/Mr Patrick Costello**

Marine Institute

**Ms Patricia Daly/Ms Vicky Lyons/Mr Geoff Robinson/Ms Joanne Gaffney/Mr John Hackett**

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

**Mr Paul Duane/Mr Brian Nolan/Mr Bernard O'Donovan/Dr Micheál O'Mahony/Ms Aileen O'Sullivan**

Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority

**Ms Teresa Morrissey/Mr John Harrington/Mr Pat Mulloy/Mr Finian O'Sullivan/Mr Kian Louet-Feisser/Mr Des Moore/Ms Nadia Ferguson**

Irish Shellfish Association and  
Processing Industry

**Ms Valerie Hannon/Ms Kate Harrington/Ms Maeve O'Reilly/Ms Claire Cremin/Ms Marie Feehan**

Irish Water

**Mr Paul Hickey**

Health Service Executive

**Dr Sarah McLean**

Loughs Agency

**Mr Liam Ó Súilleabháin**

Environmental Protection Agency

## Appendix 2 Scientific subcommittee members

### Biological Safety Subcommittee, 2020

**Dr Geraldine Duffy**  
(Chairperson)

Teagasc

**Dr Declan Bolton**

Teagasc

**Prof. Martin Cormican**

National University of Ireland,  
Galway; Health Service Executive

**Ms Catherine Foye**

Health Service Executive

**Dr Patricia Garvey**

Health Protection Surveillance  
Centre

**Mr John Griffin**

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

**Ms Bernadette Hickey**

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

**Dr Kieran Jordan**

Teagasc (retired)

**Dr Eleanor McNamara**

Health Service Executive

**Dr Joanne O’Gorman**

Health Service Executive

**Dr Micheál O’Mahony**

Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority

**Dr Helen O’Shea**

Cork Institute of Technology

**Dr Margaret O’Sullivan**

Health Service Executive

**Mr Ray Parle**

Health Service Executive

**Mr Kilian Unger**

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

**Assoc. Prof. Theo de Waal**

University College Dublin

**Dr Paul Whyte**

University College Dublin

**Mr Vincent Young**

Health Service Executive (retired)

## Chemical Safety Subcommittee, 2020

**Dr Michael O’Keeffe**  
(Chairperson)

Residues Expert

**Dr Gabriel Beechinor**

Health Products Regulatory  
Authority

**Mr Alan Breen**

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

**Dr Nigel Brunton**

University College Dublin

**Dr Claire Chambers**

Toxicology Expert

**Ms Catherine Cosgrove**

Health Service Executive

**Prof. Enda Cummins**

University College Dublin

**Dr Martin Danaher**

Teagasc

**Dr Edel Duggan**

Poisons Information Centre of  
Ireland, Beaumont Hospital

**Mr John Keegan**

Dublin Public Analyst’s Laboratory  
(retired)

**Prof. Joe Kerry**

University College Cork

**Ms Ita Kinahan**

State Laboratory

**Dr Evin McGovern**

Marine Institute

**Dr Declan McKernan**

National University of Ireland,  
Galway

**Assoc. Prof. Tara McMorrow**

University College Dublin

**Dr Breige McNulty**

University College Dublin

**Dr John Moriarty**

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

**Mr Joe Silke**

Marine Institute

**Dr Finbarr O’Regan**

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

## Public Health Nutrition Subcommittee, 2020

### Ms Ita Saul (Chairperson)

Children's Health Ireland at  
Crumlin (retired)

### Dr Teresa Bennett

Health Service Executive

### Assoc. Prof. Clare Corish

University College Dublin

### Prof. Albert Flynn

University College Cork

### Dr Eileen Gibney

University College Dublin

### Prof. Mairead Kiely

University College Cork

### Prof. Barbara Livingstone

Ulster University (retired)

### Prof. Fionnuala McAuliffe

University College Dublin

### Dr Sinéad McCarthy

Teagasc

### Prof. Malachi McKenna

St Vincent's University Hospital,  
University College Dublin

### Prof. Helene McNulty

Ulster University

### Dr Emeir McSorley

Ulster University

### Dr Anne Nugent

University College Dublin;  
Queen's University Belfast

### Dr Claire O'Brien

Irish Cancer Society

### Dr Dilip Rai

Teagasc

### Dr Janette Walton

Cork Institute of Technology

### Prof. Mary Ward

Ulster University

### Dr Katherine Younger

Technological University Dublin

## Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Seaweed, 2020

### Prof. Brian McKenna

(Chairperson)

University College Dublin (retired)

### Prof. Dagmar Stengel

National University of Ireland,  
Galway

### Dr Jenny Smith

Marine Institute

### Dr Evin McGovern

Marine Institute

### Dr Liam Morrison

National University of Ireland,  
Galway

### Ms Lucy Watson

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

### Dr Marco García-Vaquero

University College Dublin

### Dr Maria Hayes

Teagasc

### Ms Mary Curran

Public Analyst's Laboratory,  
Cork

### Mr Willie Ryan

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

### Dr Pat O'Mahony

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### Ms Faye Clarke

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### Dr Christina Tlustos

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### Dr Cormac McElhinney

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### Dr Cristina Arroyo-Casabona

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### Mr Mohammed Sohail,

Student, University College Dublin

## Ad Hoc Subcommittee on MAP and Crohn's Disease

### **Dr Dónal Sammin (Chairperson)**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

### **Dr Mark Fenelon**

Teagasc

### **Dr Margaret O'Sullivan**

Health Service Executive

### **Prof. Stephen Gordon**

University College Dublin

### **Dr Glen Doherty**

University College Dublin; St Vincent's University Hospital

### **Prof. Tom Rogers**

Trinity College Dublin; Irish Mycobacteria Reference Laboratory, St James's Hospital Dublin

### **Dr Kevin Kenny**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

### **Mr Joe O'Flaherty**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

### **Dr Carina Brehony**

Public Health Laboratory, Health Protection Surveillance Centre

### **Dr Louise Britton**

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

### **Mr Timothy O'Donnell**

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### **Mr John Matthews**

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

### **Dr Cristina Arroyo-Casabona**

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

## Appendix 3 Statement of Board members', Chief Executive Officer's, and Scientific Committee members' interests (1/01/2020 to 31/12/2020)

Board member	Commercial interest		Non-commercial interest	
	Name of organisation	Nature of interest	Name of organisation	Nature of interest
<b>Prof. Francis Butler</b>	Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, Food Standards Agency, UK	Four meetings per year approx.	None	–
<b>Mr Ciaran Byrne</b>	Summerford DAC	Directorship	None	–
<b>Ms Mary Cullen</b>	None	–	None	–
<b>Mr Derek Cunningham</b>	None	–	None	–
<b>Prof. Albert Flynn</b>	None	–	International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Europe Research grants (3) Research grants (1)	Member, Board of Directors  Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine  Enterprise Ireland
<b>Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan</b>	None	–	None	–
<b>Martin Higgins</b>	None	–	None	–
<b>Mr Gerard McCurdy</b>	None	–	None	–
<b>Ms Margaret Moran</b>	None	–	Arthur Cox Solicitors	One family member employed as a partner by Arthur Cox (Legal Advisors to FSAI)
<b>Ms Ros O'Shea</b>	None	–	None	–
<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>				
<b>Dr Pamela A Byrne</b>	None	–	None	–

Scientific Committee member	Commercial interest		Non-commercial interest	
	Name of organisation	Nature of interest	Name of organisation	Nature of interest
Ms Paula Barry Walsh	None	–	None	–
Prof. Kevin Cashman	None	–	None	–
Dr PJ Cullen	PlamaLeap Technologies	CEO and shareholder	PlamaLeap Technologies	One family member is employed by this company
Dr Geraldine Duffy	None	–	None	–
Prof. Albert Flynn	None	–	ILSI Europe Research grants (3)  Research grants (1)	Member, Board of Directors  Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine  Enterprise Ireland
Dr Mark Fenelon	None	–	None	–
Mr John Keegan	None	–	None	–
Prof. Brian McKenna	No return received	–	No return received	–
Dr Eleanor McNamara	None	–	None	–
Dr Michael O’Keeffe	None	–	None	–
Dr Margaret B O’Sullivan	None	–	None	–
Mr Redmond (Ray) Parle	None	–	None	–
Dr Dónal Sammin	None	–	None	–
Ms Ita Saul	None	–	None	–

## Appendix 4 Board members' biographies

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1. **Martin Higgins**

2. **Mr Ciaran Byrne**

3. **Ms Mary Cullen**

4. **Mr Derek Cunningham**

5. **Prof. Albert Flynn**

6. **Ms Margaret Moran**

7. **Ms Ros O'Shea**

8. **Mr Gerry McCurdy**

9. **Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan**

10. **Prof. Francis Butler**

### 1. Martin Higgins (Chairperson)

Martin Higgins was the founding Chief Executive of *safe food*, the all-island food safety promotion board, and led the organisation from its foundation in 1998 until his retirement in 2014. Prior to that he was the first Director of Corporate Services in the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), having previously been a Principal Officer in the Department of Health, specialising in finance and health agency regulation. He has professional qualifications in accountancy, international regulation and governance, and is a qualified mediator and executive and leadership coach. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute. He has in the past been a Board member of the Irish Medicines Board and of CORU, the health and social care professionals regulator. In 2015, he was appointed to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. He currently chairs the Audit Committee of An Bord Pleanála, the Health Research Board (HRB), and the Central Statistics Office.

### 2. Mr Ciaran Byrne

Mr Ciaran Byrne has served as a member of the Health Service Executive's Dublin North East Regional Health Forum (2009–2011), the Governing Authority of Dublin City University (2011–2014) and the University's Risk Management Committee. A public representative on Fingal County Council (2001–2014), he was Mayor in 2009/10, a member of the Council's Audit Committee (2011–2014), and a member of the Corporate Policy Group. He chaired the Fingal County Development Board (2004–2009). He was also Chairman of the Fingal Leader Partnership (2009–2011). He was a founding member of the Board of the Balbriggan Enterprise and Training Centre (2000–2014). He has worked in Voluntary Service Overseas in London, in Glockenspiel software engineers and as a partner in STS Management Consultants in Dublin. He is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin (TCD) (Economic and Social Studies) and holds master's degrees in science, arts, and media from the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT).

### 3. Ms Mary Cullen

Ms Mary Cullen is a chartered accountant. She attended Trinity College Dublin, where she studied Business, Economics and Social Studies (BESS), following which she joined Price Waterhouse, now PwC. She held a number of senior executive roles with PwC, including responsibility for partnership and company secretarial matters and partner affairs. She is a Trustee of the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) Pension Funds and is a former member of the Foundation Board of the RDS. She is a board member of Charter Medical Private Hospital and a member of the Audit Committee of The Office of the Attorney General. Previously she was a Board Member of Temple Street Children's University Hospital, Dublin, Chairperson of the Board of Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital, Dublin and a Board Member of Beaumont Hospital, Dublin.

### 4. Mr Derek Cunningham

Mr Derek Cunningham is a communications consultant. Previously, he was Special Adviser to the former Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, and Head of Communications

with the Irish Farmers' Association. He is a former journalist with RTÉ television and radio. He is a graduate of TCD and has postgraduate qualifications from Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Dublin City University. He served on an Advisory Group of the Information Society Commission and was Chairman of the RTÉ Audience Council.

#### **5. Prof. Albert Flynn**

Professor Albert Flynn, BSc, PhD (National University of Ireland, Galway) is Professor Emeritus in Nutrition at University College Cork. He has served on the faculty of the university since 1981, and from 1993 to 1996 he was Dean of the Faculty of Food Science and Technology. He has published widely on human nutrition, public health, and food safety on a range of topics, including nutritional intake and status of population groups, food safety risk assessment, food fortification, and risk benefit assessment of nutrients. He has extensive experience in providing scientific advice on human nutrition and food safety issues related to food policy and regulation. He is currently Chairperson of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's Scientific Committee. He has also served as a member of the European Food Safety Authority's Scientific Committee and as Chairperson of its Panel for Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies from 2003 to 2012, and was a member of the Scientific Committee on Food of the European Commission from 1997 to 2003. Professor Flynn was reappointed to the Board on 21 April 2015.

#### **6. Ms Margaret Moran**

Ms Margaret Moran was Head of the Home Economics Department and Lecturer in Food Studies in the former St Catherine's College of Education for Home Economics. For many years, she provided advisory services to Fáilte Ireland and worked as a Regional Food Advisor with Bord Bia. Her postgraduate qualifications include a MSc Agr (Food Science) from University College Dublin, a Certificate in Food Safety from University College Dublin, a Diploma in Food Policy from City, University of London, and Advanced Culinary Skills Certificates from Dublin Institute of Technology. She is a member of the International Federation for Home Economics and previously chaired the Food Security and Nutrition Programme Committee. She currently provides consultancy services to various institutions and organisations in the areas of teacher education, further education and consumer education.

#### **7. Ms Ros O'Shea**

Ms Ros O'Shea is an independent, non-executive director with a portfolio of board positions in the financial, public and charitable sectors, including with the Bank of Montreal Europe plc, BlackRock's Irish funds, and Pieta House. She also chairs the PwC Alumni Network in Ireland. She is a partner with Board Excellence Ltd, a consulting firm providing advice and leadership training in governance, culture, risk and compliance, and she lectures on these topics at the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School, and the Institute of Banking. Previously, she enjoyed a highly successful executive career, spanning almost 20 years, with two of Ireland's largest companies: CRH plc,

where she was Head of Group Compliance & Ethics, and Smurfit Kappa Group plc. She has first class honours bachelor and master's degrees in business from UCD, a diploma in Corporate Governance from the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School, and is an associate of the Institute of Tax, and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, having trained with PwC. She has also completed the Master Trainer Programme at the Irish Management Institute (IMI), holds a diploma in Aircraft Finance and Leasing from the Law Society of Ireland, is a graduate of the Value Creation through Effective Boards programme at Harvard Business School, and is a Certified Bank Director as designated by the Institute of Banking. In addition, she is the author of the book *Leading with Integrity: A Practical Guide to Business Ethics* and is a regular contributor to news and print media.

#### **8. Mr Gerry McCurdy**

Mr Gerry McCurdy has more than 40 years' experience working in a policy and regulatory environment dealing with food safety, public health and consumer protection. He qualified as an environmental health officer at the University of Ulster in 1978 and went on to attain a Master of Science Degree in 1991. He has held a number of senior positions in local and central government and was instrumental in setting up the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Northern Ireland. As Northern Ireland Director of the FSA he developed close working relations with the FSAI and the Food Safety Promotion Board. Following his retirement in 2013, Mr McCurdy has worked as a food safety consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and for the World Bank, on projects in Bosnia and Bangladesh. Mr McCurdy has considerable experience at Board level having previously been a Board, Audit and Risk Committee Member with the Regulation, Quality and Improvement Authority. He is currently the Deputy Chief Commissioner for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and a Board Member of the Northern Ireland Consumer Council. He is also a member of their respective audit and risk committees.

#### **9. Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan**

Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan MB, BCh, BAO, DCH, DObs, MPH, FFPHM is a Consultant in Public Health Medicine. She has worked as Director of Human Health and Nutrition at *safe*food (Food Safety Promotion Board) and as Specialist in Public Health Medicine in the Health Service Executive. Dr Foley-Nolan has a medical degree from University College Cork (UCC) and a Masters in Public Health from UCD, and is a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. Dr Foley-Nolan holds a Senior Lecturer post at UCC and is a trainer and examiner at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. She has served on a number of national advisory groups, including the National AIDS Advisory Group, as well as advisory groups on tuberculosis, immigrant health, food poverty, and antimicrobial resistance. She has served on the Boards of the Veterinary Council of Ireland; obesity policy groups in Northern Ireland and the

Republic of Ireland; the Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland; and the HRB Centre for Health and Diet Research.

#### **10. Prof. Francis Butler**

Professor Francis Butler is a Principal Investigator in the University College Dublin (UCD) Institute of Food and Health and the UCD Centre for Food Safety. He is Head of Subject in Biosystems Engineering at UCD. His main research is in food safety with a particular focus on traceability systems and quantitative risk assessment of microbiological and chemical hazards in foods. Professor Butler coordinates the UCD MSc in Food Safety and Risk Analysis. He has led several large-scale quantitative microbial food risk assessments, and has made some novel contributions to the characterisation of microbial distributions in food and to the development of novel sampling strategies for contaminants in foods. He is currently leading projects using molecular microbiological techniques to identify the sources and routes of transmission of pathogens through the food chain. Other research interests include food chain integrity and the traceability of foods. Professor Butler has published more than 150 publications in refereed journals, as well as over 100 refereed papers in international conference proceedings and more than 150 additional national conference and other workshop presentations. He has coordinated or partnered in upwards of 30 research projects, including four European Union Framework projects. He has trained a substantial team of researchers and scholars, including 20 PhD students to completion and 13 research master's students, as well as 14 postdoctoral researchers. He has served on several Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Health Organization expert meetings on microbiological risk assessment. Prior to joining UCD, Professor Butler worked in production management in the Irish dairy industry

# Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

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# Governance Statement and Board Members' Report

For the year ended 31 December 2020

## Governance

The Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) was established under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. The functions of the Board are set out in Section 31 of the Act. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Health and is responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland are the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the senior leadership team. The CEO and the senior leadership team must follow the broad strategic direction set by the Board and must ensure that all Board members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to the entity, and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Board and management of the Authority.

## Board responsibilities

The work and responsibilities of all those associated with the operation of the Board are set out in the Code of Practice for Board members, Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and Secretary. The Code also sets out the matters specifically reserved for Board

decision. Standing items considered by the Board include:

- declaration of interests,
- reports from committees,
- financial reports/management accounts,
- performance reports, and
- reserved matters.

The Food Safety Authority Act, 1998, Section 26 (5), requires the Board of the Authority to prepare financial statements in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Health with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, and to keep all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it.

In preparing these financial statements, the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Authority will continue in operation; and
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject

to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Board confirms that it has complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements. The Board is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Authority and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 26 of the Act. The maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the Food Safety Authority's website is the responsibility of the Board. During 2020, the Board highlighted significant challenges in ensuring the FSAI meets all its statutory and regulatory obligations, within its funding allocation, to the Department of Health, with whom it continues to engage on the matter. The Board is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. There is an on-going evaluation of the performance of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland by reference to its annual business plan and budget.

The Board is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Board considers that the financial statements of the Authority give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of the Food Safety Authority

of Ireland at 31 December 2020 except for non-compliance with the requirements of FRS 102 in relation to retirement benefit entitlements, as directed by the Minister for Health. The Board approved the signing of this statement and the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 on 22 June 2021.

The Board consists of a Chairperson and 9 ordinary members, all of whom are appointed/re-appointed by the Minister for Health. The members of the Board were appointed for a period of either 3 or 5 years and meet 6 times per annum.

The table below details the appointment period for members serving during the year:

Board Members	Role	Date Appointed	Latest	Additional detail
<b>Martin Higgins</b>	Chairperson	February 2013 (ordinary member)	Appointed Chairperson in February 2018	
<b>Prof. Albert Flynn</b>	Ordinary Member	February 2003	February 2015	Term ended Dec 2020
<b>Ms. Margaret Moran</b>	Ordinary Member	June 2014	June 2017	Term ended June 2020
<b>Mr. Ciaran Byrne</b>	Ordinary Member	July 2014	June 2017	Term ended July 2020
<b>Mr. Derek Cunningham</b>	Ordinary Member	February 2013	June 2016	–
<b>Ms. Ros O'Shea</b>	Ordinary Member	June 2016	–	–
<b>Ms. Mary Cullen</b>	Ordinary Member	June 2016	–	–
<b>Prof. Francis Butler</b>	Ordinary Member	May 2019	–	–
<b>Mr. Gerard McCurdy</b>	Ordinary Member	May 2019	–	–
<b>Dr. Clíodhna Foley-Nolan</b>	Ordinary Member	October 2019	–	–

During 2020 the Board completed an effectiveness survey which sought to assess the Board's performance, the strength of its enabling processes and structures as well as its obligations under the annex on gender balance, diversity and performance, the strength of its enabling processes and structures as well as its obligations under the annex on gender balance, diversity and inclusion. The Board reviewed the resulting report from the survey at its first meeting in 2021.

## Gender Balance in the Board membership

As at 31 December, the Board had 3 (43%) female and 4 (57%) male members, with 3

positions vacant. The Board therefore meets the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

The following measures are planned to maintain and support gender balance on this Board:

- The Minister has been requested to consider the requirements of the annex to the Code of Practice to ensure the FSAI maintain the balance of equality and improve diversity and inclusion through when nominating appointees to the vacant positions on the Board.

The Board has established three sub-committees, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), and the Performance & Development Committee (PDC).

The ARC comprises three Board members and one independent member. The role of the ARC is to support the Board in relation to its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the organisation. In particular the Committee ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC reports to the Board after each meeting.

The members of the Audit and Risk Committee are Ms. Mary Cullen (Chair), Ms. Ros O'Shea, Mr. Gerry McCurdy and Mr. Fergal Ó'Briain (appointed January 2020). There were 4 meetings of the ARC in 2020.

The PDC comprises three Board members. The role of the PDC is to devise and implement an appropriate mechanism to assess the performance of the CEO and, through the CEO, to review the performance of the FSAI Executive Team. As required, the PDC agrees remuneration with Government Departments, develops the job description, identifies the relevant competencies and ideal candidate profile for the post, agrees the recruitment and search process, and sets a specific timetable. The PDC convenes as required by the Board and reports to the Board after each meeting.

The members of the PDC are Mr. Martin Higgins (Chair), Prof. Albert Flynn and Ms. Ros O'Shea. There were 2 meetings of the PDC in 2020.

## Schedule of attendance, fees and expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Board and Committee meetings for 2020 is set out in Note 4(c) of the Financial Statements.

## Key personnel changes

The Board terms of Prof. Albert Flynn, Ms. Margaret Moran and Mr. Ciaran Byrne ended during 2020.

The term of Mr. Ray Dolan, the external member of the ARC, ended in January 2020. Mr. Fergal Ó'Briain was appointed as the external member of the ARC in January 2020. Disclosures Required by Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the Authority has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code:

- employee short-term benefits breakdown - set out in note 4 (b) to the financial statements,
- consultancy costs - set out in note 4 (h) to the financial statements,
- legal costs and settlements - set out in note 4 (h) to the financial statements,

- travel and subsistence expenditure - set out in note 4 (a) and 4(c) to the financial statements, and
- hospitality expenditure - set out in note 4 (f) to the financial statements.

## Statement of compliance

The Board has adopted the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016) and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland operated in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies for 2020.

On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Martin Higgins**

**Dr Pamela A Byrne**

Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer

24 June 2021

# Statement on Internal Control

For the year ended 31 December 2020

## Scope of responsibility

On behalf of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), we acknowledge the Board's responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated. This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

## Purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely way.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in the Authority for the year ended 31 December 2020 and has been maintained up to the date at the time of approval of the financial statements. In addition, the Board is provided with further assurance as to the quality of the Authority's internal control as the FSAI is certified to the Quality Management System Standard ISO 9001:2015. This Standard confirms that the Authority operates a set of policies, processes and procedures

appropriate for planning and execution of its core business.

## Capacity to handle risk

The FSAI has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising three Board members and one external member, with financial and audit expertise. The ARC met four times in 2020.

The FSAI has an internal audit function as defined in the Board's Charter for Internal Audit. The Authority has outsourced its Internal Audit Function to BDO Ireland. The work of the internal audit function is informed by analysis of the risk to which the body is exposed and annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. The analysis of risk and the internal audit plans have been endorsed by the ARC and approved by the Board. The Internal Auditor provides the Board with reports of internal audit activity.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy that sets out risk management processes and details the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to risk. The policy has been issued to all staff who are expected to work within the Authority's risk management policies, to alert management on emerging risks and control weaknesses and assume responsibility for risks and controls within their own area of work.

## Risk and control framework

The FSAI has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

A risk register is in place which identifies the key risks facing the Authority and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is updated by the Senior Leadership Team and presented to the ARC and Board as a standing item. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure that risks are managed to an acceptable level.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff. We confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- procedures for all key business processes have been documented,
- financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability,
- there is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management,
- there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems,
- there are systems in place to safeguard the assets, and
- control procedures over the use of grant monies and the allocation of funding to outside agencies to ensure adequate control over approval of such monies and also to ensure that grant funding has been applied for the purpose intended.

The FSAI makes payments to local authorities in relation to the provision of veterinary services. Annual service contracts are agreed with local authorities. Payments are based on quarterly claims from the local authorities based on activity levels.

## Ongoing monitoring and review

Formal procedures which have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Board, where relevant, in a timely way. We confirm that the following ongoing monitoring systems are in place:

- key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies,
- reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned, and
- there are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual

performance and financial reports which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts.

## Procurement

We confirm that the FSAI has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines. Matters arising regarding controls over procurement are highlighted under internal control issues below.

## Impact of Covid-19 pandemic to the Control Environment

The onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, in early 2020, and the resulting public health advice and safety measures rapidly changed the working practices of the FSAI.

The FSAI monitored the developments closely and sought to mitigate the risks that may have impacted affect the FSAI's business operations, staff and stakeholders. Actions taken by the FSAI, during 2020, included:

- Established an incidence response team (IRT) to enable the FSAI respond promptly to issues arising and determine the appropriate course of action.
- Transition the FSAI to a remote working environment for the purpose of ensuring continuity of service provision.
- Ongoing COVID-19 risk assessments for staff and stakeholders.
- Continual assessment of significant risks affecting the FSAI, the impact of COVID-19 on these risks and the agility of FSAI to respond effectively.
- Ensuring robust segregation of duties remains and adequate cover is in place should specific approving authorities be unavailable.
- Ensuring all existing data protection and records management policies and procedures continue to apply as normal.
- Assess potential for weaknesses in internal controls resulting from COVID-19 and took measures to monitor and update internal controls where necessary

## Review of effectiveness

We confirm that the Authority has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The FSAI's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors and the Audit and Risk Committee which oversees their work and the senior management within the Authority responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

We confirm that the Board conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2020 on 22 June 2021.

## Internal Control Issues

### Procurement

During 2020 expenditure of €143,000 was incurred in relation to seven contracts for services where the procedures employed did not comply with procurement guidelines:

- Approximately €38,000 relates to agency fees for temporary ICT staff. The total cost of these contracts was €250,800, which comprises salary costs of €212,800 (including VAT). These were previously disclosed in 2019. FSAI expects to regularise these contracts, as part of capital project developments.
- Approximately €3,400 relates to the provision of office supplies. A new OGP Framework is was established in 2021, which will be used to regularise this contract. This contract was previous disclosed in 2019.
- The remaining amounts, totalling €101,600, relate to expenditure incurred on expired contracts.
- The Authority is developing a procurement schedule with a view to addressing these contracts in 2021.

There were no internal control weaknesses identified during 2020 other than those disclosed above.

On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Martin Higgins**  
Chairperson

**Dr. Pamela A. Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer

24 June 2021

# Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

## Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

### Qualified opinion on financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2020 as required under the provisions of section 26 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland and comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure and retained revenue reserves
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, except for the non-compliance with the requirements of FRS 102 in relation to retirement benefit entitlements referred to below, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland at 31 December 2020 and of its income and expenditure for 2020 in accordance with FRS 102.

### Basis for qualified opinion on financial statements

In compliance with the directions of the Minister for Health, the Food Safety Authority

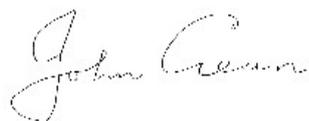
of Ireland accounts for the costs of retirement benefit entitlements only as they become payable. This does not comply with FRS 102 which requires that the financial statements recognise the full cost of retirement benefit entitlements earned in the period and the accrued liability at the reporting date. The effect of the non-compliance on the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's financial statements for 2020 has not been quantified.

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

### Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the annual report, the governance statement and Board members' report and the statement on internal control. My responsibilities to

report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report. I have nothing to report in that regard.



John Crean

**For and on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General**

29 June 2021

## Appendix to the report

### Responsibilities of Board members

As detailed in the governance statement and Board members' report, the Board members are responsible for

- the preparation of financial statements in the form prescribed under section 26 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS 102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free

from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 26 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998 to audit the financial statements of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not

detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Food Safety Authority of Ireland to cease to continue as a going concern.

- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

### **Information other than the financial statements**

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

### **Reporting on other matters**

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters

relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

I also report by exception if, in my opinion,

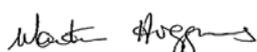
- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

# Statement of income and expenditure and retained revenue reserves

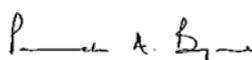
For the year ended 31 December 2020

	Notes	2020 €'000	2019 €'000
<b>Income</b>			
Oireachtas Grant	2	17,536	16,357
Other Income	3	981	1051
Operating Income		18,517	17,408
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>18,517</b>	<b>17,408</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Administration, Operations & Promotion	4	9,697	9,723
Communications activities	5	369	449
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	6 & 14	619	642
Albanian Project	14	499	565
Local Authority Veterinary Service	7	6,923	6,205
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>18,107</b>	<b>17,584</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Appropriations</b>		<b>410</b>	<b>(176)</b>
Transfer from/(to) the Capital Account	8	387	320
Loss on Disposal		(1)	
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for year after Appropriations</b>		<b>796</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Balance at 1 January</b>		<b>(938)</b>	<b>(1,082)</b>
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>(142)</b>	<b>(938)</b>

The Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. The Statement of Cash Flows and notes 1 to 16 form part of these financial statements. On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Martin Higgins**  
Chairperson



**Dr Pamela A. Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer

24 June 2021

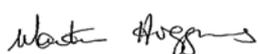
# Statement of financial position

as at 31 December 2020

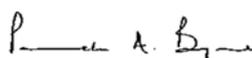
	Notes	2020 €'000	2019 €'000
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Property, Plant and Equipment	6	1,211	1,577
Intangible Assets	6 (a)	74	95
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Receivables	9	594	584
Cash and Cash Equivalents		2,606	1,143
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<b>3,200</b>	<b>1,727</b>
<b>Current Liabilities (amounts falling due within one year)</b>			
Payables	10	3,342	2,665
<b>Net Current Assets / Liabilities</b>		<b>(142)</b>	<b>(938)</b>
<b>Total Assets less Liabilities before Pensions</b>		<b>1,143</b>	<b>734</b>
<b>Representing</b>			
Capital Account	8	1,285	1,672
Retained Revenue Reserves		(142)	(938)
		<b>1,143</b>	<b>734</b>

The Statement of Cash Flows and notes 1 to 16 form part of these financial statements.

On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Martin Higgins**  
Chairperson



**Dr Pamela A. Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer

24 June 2020

## Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 December 2020

		2020	2019
	Notes	€'000	€'000
<b>Net cash inflow from operating activities</b>			
(Deficit)/Excess Income over Expenditure		410	(176)
Depreciation and Impairment of Fixed Assets	6 & 15	630	653
(Increase)/Decrease in Receivables	9	(10)	25
Increase/(Decrease) in Payables	10	677	430
<b>Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities</b>		<b>1,707</b>	<b>932</b>
<b>Cash Flows from Investing Activities</b>			
Payments to acquire Plant & Equipment	6	(199)	(184)
Payments to acquire Intangible Assets	6 (a)	(45)	(149)
<b>Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities</b>		<b>(244)</b>	<b>(333)</b>
<b>Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents</b>		<b>1,463</b>	<b>599</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		1,143	544
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December</b>		<b>2,606</b>	<b>1,143</b>

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 31 December 2020

### 1. Accounting policies

The basis of accounting and significant accounting policies adopted by Food Safety Authority of Ireland are set out below. They have been applied consistently throughout the year and for the preceding year.

#### a) General information

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland was set up under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, with a head office at The Exchange, George's Dock, IFSC, Dublin 1, D01 P2V6. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland's primary objectives as set out in Part II of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act are as follows:

To take all reasonable steps to ensure that:

- (a) food produced in the State (whether or not distributed or marketed in the State), and
- (b) food distributed or marketed in the State meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene reasonably attainable and it shall, in particular, take all reasonable steps to ensure that such food complies
  - (i) with food legislation in respect of food safety and hygiene standards, or
  - (ii) where appropriate, with the provisions of generally recognised standards or codes of good practice aimed at ensuring the

achievement of high standards of food hygiene and food safety

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland is a Public Benefit Entity (PBE).

#### b) Statement of compliance

The financial statements of Food Safety Authority of Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2020 have been prepared in accordance with FRS 102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Ireland issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as promulgated by Chartered Accountants Ireland. as modified by the direction of the Minister for Health in relation to superannuation. In compliance with the directions of the Minister for Health, the Authority accounts for the costs of superannuation entitlements only as they become payable (see 1 (i) below). This basis of accounting does not comply with FRS 102, which requires such costs to be recognised in the year in which entitlement is earned.

#### c) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the accruals method of accounting, except as stated below, and under the historical cost convention in the form approved by the Minister for Health with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform under Section 26(5) of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act,

1998. The accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's financial statements.

#### **d) Capital funding**

The fixed assets of the FSAI are funded from a combination of capital grants and allocations from current revenue. Funding sourced from grants is transferred to a capital account which is amortised in line with the depreciation of the related assets.

#### **e) Revenue**

##### **Oireachtas Grants**

Revenue is generally recognised on an accruals basis; one exception to this is in the case of Oireachtas Grants which are recognised on a cash receipts basis.

##### **Deferred Income**

Project income received in advance is treated as deferred income and reported as a payable falling due within one year. The income is released to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves in line with the expenditure incurred in the reporting period.

##### **Other Revenue**

Other Revenue is recognised on an accrual's basis.

#### **f) Plant and equipment**

Plant and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation, adjusted for any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided on all plant and equipment at rates estimated to write off the cost less the

estimated residual value of each asset on a straight line basis over their estimated useful lives, as follows:

(I) Leasehold improvements	15% per annum
(Ii) Computer equipment	33% per annum
(Iiii) Office furniture	15% per annum
(Iv) Office equipment	15% per annum
(V) Scientific equipment	15% per annum
(Vi) Motor vehicles	33% per annum

Residual value represents the estimated amount which would currently be obtained from disposal of an asset, after deducting estimated costs of disposal, if the asset were already of an age and in the condition expected at the end of its useful life.

If there is objective evidence of impairment of the value of an asset, an impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves in the year.

Intangible fixed assets are shown at their net book value having been depreciated at 33% on a straight-line basis.

#### **g) Receivables**

Receivables are recognised at fair value.

#### **h) Operating leases**

Rental expenditure under operating leases is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves over the life of the lease. Expenditure is recognised on a straight-line basis over the lease period, except where there are rental increases linked to the expected rate of

inflation, in which case these increases are recognised when incurred. Any lease incentives received are recognised over the life of the lease.

#### **i) Employee benefits**

##### **Short-term Benefits**

Short-term benefits such as holiday pay are recognised as an expense in the year, and benefits that are accrued at year-end are included in the payables figure in the Statement of Financial Position.

##### **Retirement Benefits**

A superannuation scheme has been approved by the Minister in accordance with Section 39 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. The scheme provides for a contributory defined benefit pension scheme for all employees. Deductions from salaries are retained and are treated as income by the Authority. The Department of Health's annual grant to the Authority is net of the deductions retained. The Public Service pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act, 2012 became law on 28 July, 2012 and introduced the new Single Public Scheme ("Single Scheme") which commenced with effect 1 January 2013. All new employees to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, who are new entrants to the Public Sector, on or after 1 January 2013 are members of the Single Scheme. Single Scheme members' contributions are paid over to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

By direction of the Minister for Health no provision has been made in the Financial

Statements for future pension liabilities.

Payments under the schemes are charged to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and retained reserves when paid.

#### **j) Local authority veterinary scheme**

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland provides funding to local authorities in relation to the provision of veterinary services. The Authority receives funding from the Department of Health (as part of its annual determination) in this regard.

Funding received from the Department of Health and amounts paid to Local Authorities are recognised on cash received and cash paid basis, in line with Section 34 of FRS 102.

#### **k) Key estimates and judgements**

The preparation of these financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities at the reporting date and the amounts reported for income and expenditure during the year. Judgements and estimates are continually evaluated and are based on historical experiences and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of estimation, by definition, means that the actual results may differ from the estimates made. The estimates and assumptions that can have a material effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are set out below:

- (i) **Establishing useful lives for depreciation purposes of equipment and leases** Equipment and leases comprise of a significant portion of the Authority's assets. The annual depreciation charge depends on the estimated useful lives of each type of asset. Given the relative short-term nature of the equipment assets, the estimation of the useful life of these assets is subject to regular review. Details of the useful economic lives is included in the accounting policies.
- (ii) **Establishing useful economic lives for amortisation purposes of capital grants** The annual amortisation charge depends primarily on the estimated useful lives of each type of asset. The useful economic lives are subject to regular review. Details of the useful economic lives are included in the accounting policies.

## 2. Oireachtas grants

The Oireachtas Grants voted to Food Safety Authority of Ireland from Vote 38 Department of Health as shown in the financial statements consist of:

Sub-head	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000

Grants for current expenditure	E.1.	17,172	15,972
Grant for capital expenditure	L.1.	364	385
		<b>17,536</b>	<b>16,357</b>

## 3. Other income

	Note	2020	2019
		€'000	€'000
Superannuation Deductions		237	232
Sale of Publications		156	82
Sundry Income		88	172
Albania CE Fund	14	499	565
<b>Total</b>		<b>981</b>	<b>1,051</b>

## 4. Administration, operations & promotion

	Note	2020	2019
		€'000	€'000
Remuneration and Other Pay Costs	4(a)	6,327	6,307
Rent, rates, service charges and insurance		1,491	1,483
Research costs		87	40
Legal and consulting fees	4(h)	44	103
IT, telephone and internet		1,220	985
Operating expenditure	4(g)	526	805
		<b>9,697</b>	<b>9,723</b>

## (a) Remuneration and other pay costs

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Staff Salaries, basic pay	5,405	4,932
Staff salaries, overtime		3
Retirement benefit costs	98	96
Retirement lump sum costs		-
Employer's contributions to social welfare	555	479
Staff training and development	125	129
Staff travel and subsistence cost - national travel	24	82
Staff travel and subsistence cost - international travel	10	101
Temporary staff	43	418
Board members' emoluments 4(c)	67	67
	<b>6,327</b>	<b>6,307</b>

Certain costs of international travel are reimbursed by the host organisation.

The FSAI paid €76,099 (2019: €54,518) to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in respect of employee contributions under the single pension scheme.

In 2020 €209,927 was paid to the Department of Health in respect of additional superannuation contributions (ASC) deducted from staff salaries (2019 €218,376).

## (b) Employee benefits breakdown

Range of total employee benefits		Number of Employees	
From	To	2020	2019
60,000	69,999	7	9
70,000	79,999	9	9
80,000	89,999	4	3
90,000	99,999	7	5
100,000	109,999	2	4
110,000	119,999	4	2
120,000	129,999	0	0
130,000	139,999	0	0
140,000	149,999	0	0
150,000	159,999	0	1
160,000	169,999	1	0

Note: for the purposes of this disclosure, short term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary, overtime allowances and other payments made on behalf of the employee, but exclude employers PRSI.

## (c) Board members' attendance, fees and expense

Board Member		Board Fee	Travel Expenses	Meetings Attended Board	Meetings Attended Audit and Risk	Meetings Attended P&D
		€	€			
Martin Higgins	Chairperson	11,970	500	10 of 10		2 of 2
Derek Cunningham		7,695		9 of 10		
Margaret Moran		3,376		4 of 4	2 of 2	
Ciaran Byrne		4,489		5 of 5		
Albert Flynn	Term ended 31 Dec 2020	7,695	95	10 of 10		2 of 2
Mary Cullen		7,695		10 of 10	4 of 4	
Ros O'Shea		7,695		9 of 10	4 of 4	2 of 2
Gerard McCurdy		7,695		10 of 10	2 of 2	
Clíodhna Foley-Nolan		7,695	344	7 of 10		
Francis Butler		0		10 of 10		
		<b>66,005</b>	<b>939</b>			

During 2020, 10 Board meetings were held, 8 regular meetings of the Board and 2 ad-hoc meetings to discuss, inter alia, the impact of COVID on the FSAI.

One Board member did not receive a Board fee under the One Person One Salary Principle (OPOS), as they are employed by other State organisations.

All travel and subsistence relate to domestic travel in Ireland.

The Audit and Risk Committee includes one external member. In 2020 this position was held by Ray Dolan (Jan 2020) an Ó'Briain thereafter. Ray Dolan attended 1 of 1 and Fergal Ó'Briain attended 3 of 3 ARC meetings. Neither external member received a fee under the OPOS principle.

**(d) Chief Executive Officer salary**

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Chief Executive Officer, Pamela Byrne	162	154
	<b>162</b>	<b>154</b>

The CEO remuneration package for 2020 was annual basic salary of €161,900 (2019: €153,700) with standard public sector arrangements.

The above salary values do not include the value of retirement benefits earned in the period. The key management personnel (excluding Board members) are members of the FSAI's contributory defined benefit pension scheme.

**(e) Key management personnel compensation**

Key management personnel in the Food Safety Authority of Ireland consist of the CEO, five Directors and members of the Board.

Total compensation paid to key management personnel, including Board members' fees and expenses and total CEO remuneration amounted to €784,981 (2019: €770,073)

**(f) Hospitality expenditure**

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Staff hospitality	2	3
Advisory Committee hospitality	0	0
Client hospitality	2	50
Board hospitality	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>55</b>

In 2020 a voucher for €100 was given to members of the FSAI Scientific Committee, and subcommittees, who work on a voluntary basis. The total value of these vouchers was €7,500. The term of the Scientific Committee ended in 2020. To recognise the members' contributions, over the term of the committee, a small gift was provided to 13 members.

**(g) Operating expenditure**

	Note	2020	2019
		€'000	€'000
Recruitment Expenditure		14	28
Stationery and Postage		15	27
Cleaning and Catering		2	50
Repairs and Maintenance		190	196
Audit Fee		15	15
Food Legislation Compliance		57	114
Training – official agency staff		41	16
Food supplement database		67	24
Committee Expenses		11	5
Library Supplies		53	76
General Expenditure (including hospitality)	4(f)	61	254
		<b>526</b>	<b>805</b>

**(h) Consultancy costs**

Consultancy Costs include fees paid to external parties providing advisory services of any nature.

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Legal (i)	19	24
Consultancy	25	79
<b>Total consultancy costs</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>103</b>
Legal costs capitalised		-
Consultancy costs capitalised		-
Consultancy costs charged to income and expenditure	44	103
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>103</b>

(i) This refers to general legal advice. No expenditure was incurred in the reporting

period in relation to legal costs, settlements and conciliation and arbitration proceedings relating to contracts with third parties.

## 5. Communication activities

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Public Relations	85	214
Industry Events	50	50
Industry Liaison	18	8
Publications	216	177
	<b>369</b>	<b>449</b>

## 6. Tangible fixed assets

	Motor Vehicles	Computer Equipment	Office Equipment	Office Furniture	Leasehold Improvements	Scientific Equipment	Total
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
<b>Cost:</b>							
At 1 January 2020	22	929	131	329	2,123	311	<b>3,845</b>
Additions		156			43		<b>199</b>
Disposals		(1)	(1)				<b>(2)</b>
<b>At 31 December 2020</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1,084</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>2,166</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>4,042</b>
<b>Accumulated Depreciation</b>							
At 1 January 2020	7	764	87	155	955	300	<b>2,268</b>
Charge for the year	7	163	12	47	325	10	<b>564</b>
Depreciation on Disposals		(1)					<b>(1)</b>
<b>At 31 December 2020</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>2,831</b>
<b>Net Book Value</b>							
At 31 December 2020	8	158	31	127	886	1	<b>1,211</b>
At 31 December 2019	15	165	44	174	1,168	11	<b>1,577</b>

The assets disclosed above include motor vehicles, computer equipment, office equipment and office furniture assets, relating to the Albanian project, for which FSAI is receiving the benefit. The original cost of these assets is €36,655 (2019: €36,655). These assets will transfer to the Albanian equivalent of FSAI at the end of the project. See note 14 for further information in relation to the project.

#### (a) Intangible Fixed Assets

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
1 January, Opening Net Book Value	95	19
Additions at Cost	45	149
Less Depreciation Charge for the year	(66)	(73)
<b>31 December, Closing Net Book Value</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>95</b>

Intangible fixed assets consist of software licences which are written off over their useful life.

## 7. Local Authority Veterinary Service (LAVS)

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
LAVS Payments	6,923	6,205

Payments are made to 25 Local Authorities for the provision of veterinary services, quarterly in arrears. Funding is channelled through the Department of Health and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and is included as part of the annual determination. The obligation to transfer funding to LAVS is only triggered when corresponding funding is received from the Department of Health.

## 8. Capital Account

	2020	2020	2019	2019
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
At 1 January		1,672		1,992
Transfer from/(to) Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves				
Additional funds allocated to acquire Fixed Assets	199		184	
Funded through operations				
Funds allocated to acquire Intangible Assets	45		149	

Amount Released on Disposal	(1)			
Amortisation in line with asset depreciation	(630)	(387)	(653)	(320)
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>1,285</b>		<b>1,672</b>

## 9. Receivables

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Prepayments	594	584
Debtors		
	<b>594</b>	<b>584</b>

## 10. Payables

Amounts falling due within one year.

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Trade Creditors	126	203
Accruals	187	230
Deferred Rent Accrual *	1,035	1,095
Payroll Accruals	189	134
Deferred Albanian income	1,542	822
Deferred project income	52	
Tax Creditor - VAT	9	4
Tax Creditor - PAYE/PRSI	169	154
Tax Creditor - PSWT	33	23
	<b>3,342</b>	<b>2,665</b>

\* Under the terms of the lease agreement there was a provision for a rent-free period of one year, which occurred in 2018. FRS 102 requires that this rent-free period be recognised over the lifetime of the lease. The Deferred Rent Accrual represents the balance of the rent-free period, which will be recognised in the Statement of Income and

Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves in future years.

## 11. Operating Leases

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland commenced a 20 year lease for the first floor of the Exchange Building, George's Dock, IFSC, Dublin 1 in October 2017. The lease is subject to rental reviews every 5 years and includes a rent-free year from 1 January 2018. In accordance with FRS 102 lease incentives are released over the life of the lease. The annual effective cost of the lease, excluding service charge, is €1,147,000.

At 31 December 2020 the FSAI had the following future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases

	2020
Lease obligations falling due:	€'000
Within 1 year	1,147
Between years 2 to 5	4,587
After 5 years	13,473

## 12. Provision

Included in accruals is a €150,000 provision in respect of an ongoing legal matter. Further disclosure is not prudent as it could impact on the outcome of the case.

The FSAI is in receipt of appropriate advice and is in consultation with other State Bodies to mitigate the risk.

## 13. Board Members' Interests

The Board adopted procedures in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Expenditure and Reform in relation to the disclosures of interests by Board Members and these procedures have been adhered to in the year. There were no transactions in the year in relation to the Board's activities in which a Board Member had a beneficial interest.

## 14. External Projects - The Food Safety Project, Albania

A consortium of Irish government agencies and their international partners has successfully tendered for a €5m EU grant to support Albania as a candidate for accession to the European Union, by strengthening its food safety, veterinary and plant health standards.

The project covers the period 14 Jan 2019 to 13 Jan 2022.

The consortium is led by FSAI and includes the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Sustainable Food Systems Ireland, the Finnish Food Authority, and an Albanian partner, Creative Business Solutions.

FSAI received €1.219 million in 2020 to deliver the first second of this project. The expenditure incurred in relation to this project is set out below.

	2020	2019
	€'000	€'000
Remuneration and Other Pay Costs	214	138
Project travel- national	7	5
Project travel - international	11	53
International Expert Support*	167	269
Rent, rates, service charges and insurance	30	16
Industry events		27
Publications	42	43
Depreciation of project assets	11	11
Other	17	3
<b>Albanian Project</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>565</b>

\* International Expert Support represents the input of personnel with experience in relevant disciplines that have been engaged to enable the successful delivery of the Albanian project. This includes areas such as phytosanitary, senior legislation, veterinary and organisational development experts that have been identified by the FSAI or the consortium partners.

## 15. Events after the reporting date

There are no events between the reporting date and the date of approval of these financial statements for issue that require adjustment to the financial statements.

The Board recognises that the Covid-19 pandemic is a significant event which occurred in 2020. The Board is taking the situation seriously and is monitoring the situation, in conjunction with management, on an ongoing basis. The business continues to operate with measures in place to protect staff. Staff are working remotely and services continue to be provided. To date, the operations and most of the entity's activities are being maintained while adjusting to the different way in which the business is being delivered.

As the FSAI is funded by moneys provided by the Exchequer, through the Department of Health, the Board considers it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

## 16. Approval of Financial Statements

The Financial Statements were approved by the Board on 22 June 2021.



**Food Safety Authority of Ireland**

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