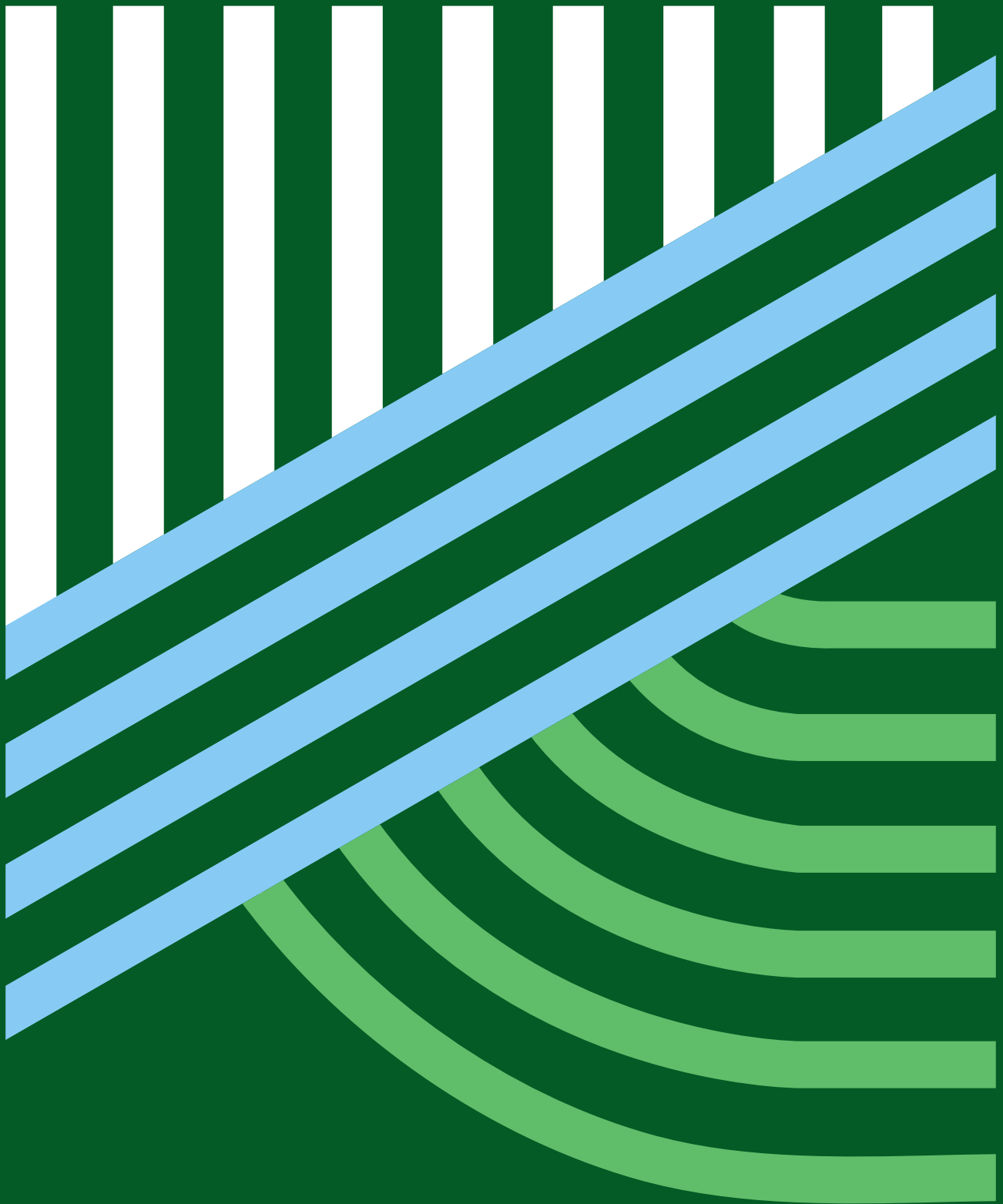




Údarás Sábháilteachta Bia na hÉireann
Food Safety Authority of Ireland



ANNUAL
REPORT **2024**

To the Minister for Health,

The Board is pleased to submit to the Minister for Health its Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024, in accordance with Section 25 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998.



Ms Ann Horan
Chairperson



Mr Greg Dempsey
Chief Executive Officer

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Chairperson's statement



It is with great pleasure that I present the 2024 annual report of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI).

This year the Board focused on planning for the future as we developed our Strategic Plan for 2025 to 2029 and completed the process to recruit our next Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to replace Dr Pamela Byrne who successfully led the organisation as CEO over the past 10 years.

2024 was another good year for the Authority. The organisation delivered on its programme of work, against the backdrop of a challenging external environment. For example, continuing political unrest gave rise to concerns around the environmental sustainability of food supply chains. The advancement of new technologies whilst presenting clear opportunities, had to be considered carefully from a food safety perspective. The need for a clear statement of strategy as the roadmap to ensure that the Authority remains on top of these and other challenges was at the forefront of the minds of the CEO, the Senior Leadership Team and all managers as they engaged in the extensive work needed to develop the strategic plan, including research, consultation, discussions and workshops.

Throughout the year, the Authority worked in collaboration with stakeholders including our partners in the Official Agencies, to monitor and enforce food safety legislation. One key source of intelligence around the level of compliance, comes in the form of contacts from members of the public through our advice line. In 2024 the Authority received almost five thousand complaints from consumers regarding unfit food, suspected food poisoning, and poor hygiene standards. All calls were logged and subsequently investigated by food inspectors.

The system of controls resulted in 133 Enforcement Orders being issued to food businesses for breaches of legislation. These are more than statistics – they reflect the passion of everyone at the Authority for safe and trustworthy food for everyone.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to extend our gratitude to the Minister for Health, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, their advisors and the staff of their departments and agencies for their continued support of the Authority and its range of activities.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the FSAI Board, the Food Safety Consultative Council and the Chair and members of the Scientific Committee and its subcommittees for their input throughout the year. In this context, I should acknowledge the contribution of Mary Cullen who retired from the Board this year having served the maximum permitted term of 8 years. Mary's financial and governance skills were very welcome and she used them to great effect throughout her time on the FSAI Board.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the outgoing Chief Executive, the senior leadership team and all managers and staff for their dedication, hard work and professionalism throughout the year. Their significant contribution and absolute commitment to protecting consumers and public health, is clear to see throughout the pages of this annual report. Indeed, during her time as Chief Executive, Dr Pamela Byrne guided the organisation through significant unprecedented events, including Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of the Board and myself, I want to offer heartfelt thanks for her contribution and to wish her the very best in her future endeavours.

Finally, it is my great pleasure to welcome Mr Greg Dempsey, who takes over the position of Chief Executive in March 2025. The Board and I look forward to working with Greg in the months and years ahead.



Ms Ann Horan
Chairperson

Introduction by the Chief Executive Officer



I am delighted to introduce the 2024 annual report for the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI).

Having served the Department of Health for 10 years prior to being appointed as Chief Executive of the Authority in March 2025, I have long held an appreciation of the Authority's vital role in strengthening Ireland's food control system. I have also observed the many significant accomplishments of the organisation throughout the past decade, for which I commend the entire FSAI team.

This report covers the Authority's activities in 2024, a year which included an important milestone: it was the final year of Dr Pamela Byrne's leadership of the organisation as Chief Executive. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Byrne for her support as I now take on this role and wish her well for her next chapter. With the publishing of this report, we celebrate the achievements of the year and look beyond it to the implementation of the Authority's new 5-year *Strategy 2025–2029*. I look forward to collaborating with the Board, Senior Leadership Team, and all staff members of the Authority as we deliver this strategy and continue to realise our vision of 'safe and trustworthy food for everyone' together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Greg Dempsey'.

Mr Greg Dempsey
Chief Executive Officer



01

About the Food Safety Authority Ireland

1.1 Introduction

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) was established 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. The FSAI also has a 15-member Scientific Committee (also appointed by the Minister for Health) which assists and advises the Board. As a result, decisions relating to food safety, hygiene and integrity are made using the latest and best scientific advice, evidence and information available.

This ensures that people in Ireland, as well as consumers of Irish food in over 180 countries across the world, have access to safe and trustworthy food. The FSAI is legally mandated to take all reasonable steps to make sure that food consumed, produced, distributed or marketed in Ireland meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene reasonably attainable, 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.

1.2 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.

In 2024, the Authority enforced food legislation through service contracts with 30 official agencies, for which the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 provides the requisite legislative basis. 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.

In addition to service contracts, the Authority works in partnership with other State agencies through memoranda of understanding. Figure 1 provides an overview of Ireland's food safety control system that outlines the relationships between Government Departments, official agencies that have responsibility for official controls, and other public sector entities that we work with in order to deliver on our mission.

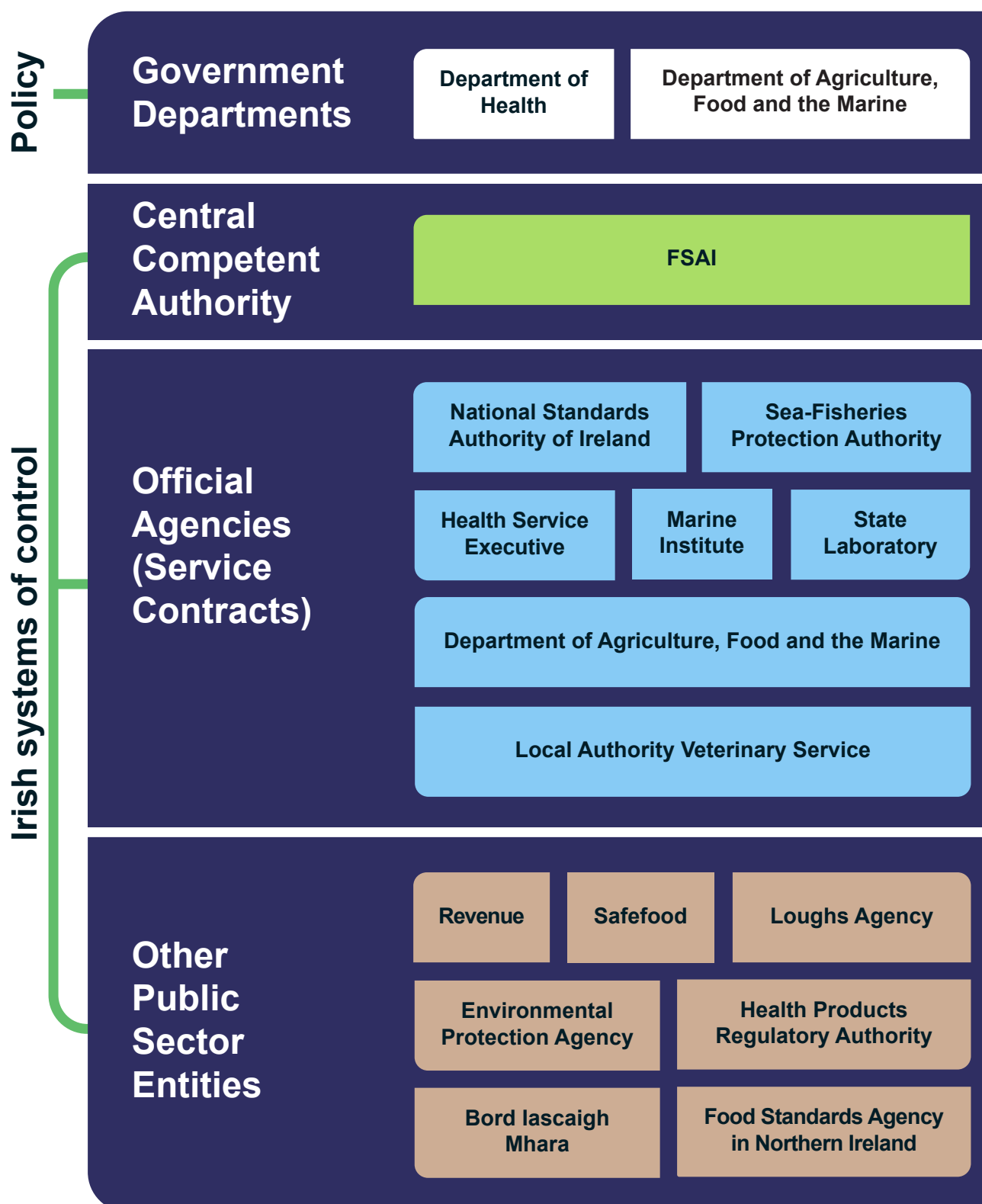


Figure 1. The Irish food safety control system in 2024



02

Governance and management

2.1 Governance structure

The Authority comes under the aegis of the Minister for Health. It has a **Board**, which is advised by the **Scientific Committee**. The **Chief Executive Officer** (CEO) is the direct link to the FSAI Board.

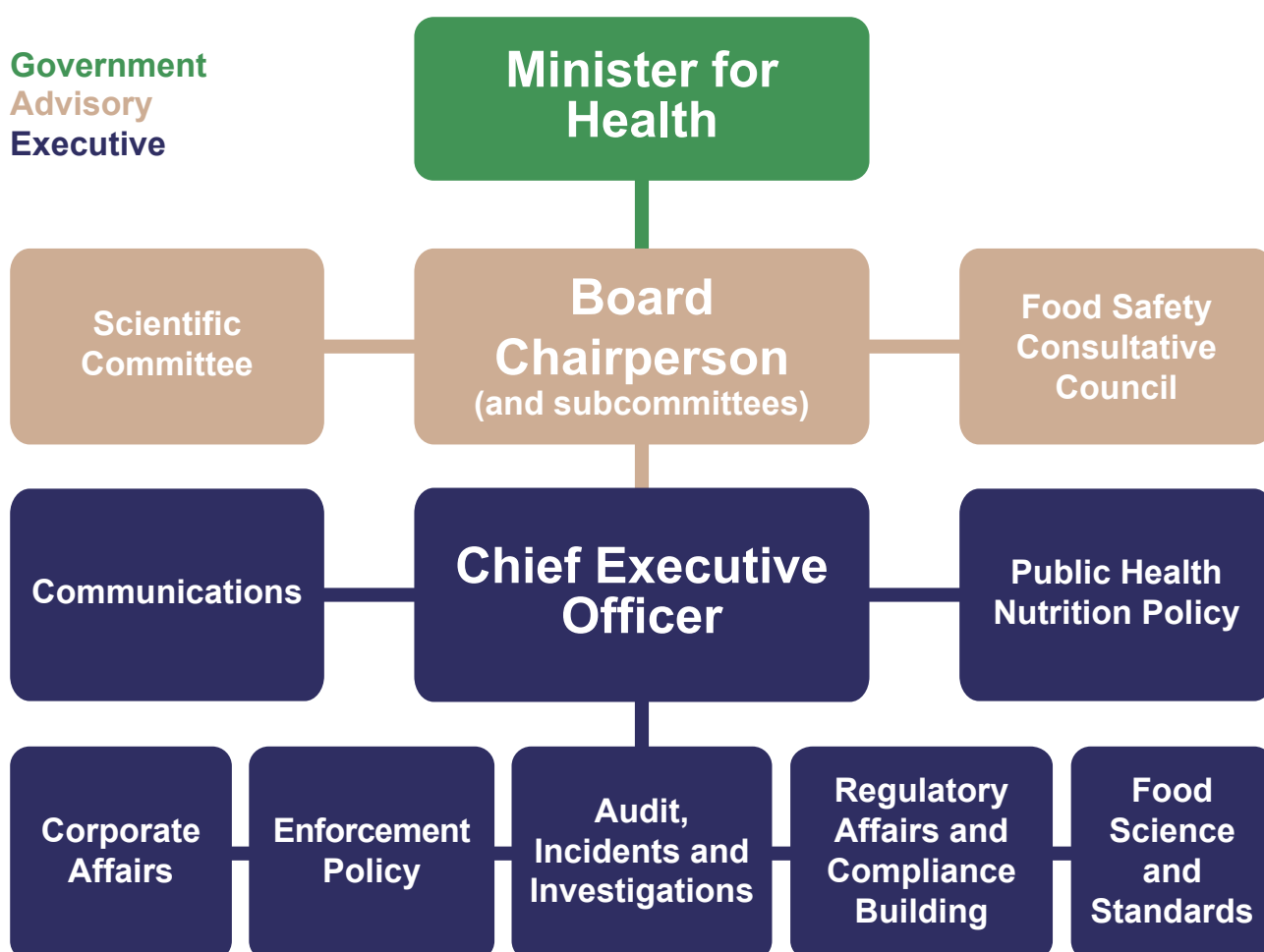


Figure 2. The FSAI organisational chart

2.2 Our Board

The Authority has a non-executive Board. It is the governing body of the Authority and it is appointed by the Minister for Health. It is responsible for the oversight of corporate governance in accordance with government guidelines and the appointment of the CEO.

Membership of the Board is made up of a Chairperson and nine non-executive directors who have been appointed by the Minister for Health through the Public Appointments Service (PAS). The key functions of the Board include setting the strategic direction for the Authority and agreeing major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets, and business plans with the executive. It is also responsible

for setting performance objectives and monitoring the implementation of the Authority's strategy and business plans, as well as for overseeing major revenue, capital expenditure, investment decisions and corporate risk management.

In order to fulfil the requirements of Section 41(1) of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, the FSAI provided the Minister for Health with the declarations of interests of Board members, Scientific Committee members, and relevant staff members of the Authority for the year ending 31 December 2024. Furthermore, as per the statutory responsibilities under the Ethics in Public Office legislation, statements of interest for the Board, Scientific Committee members and relevant staff members of the Authority were provided to the Standards in Public Office Commission for 2024.



The members of the Board during 2024 were as follows:



**Ms Ann Horan,
Chairperson**



Ms Mary Cullen



Mr Patrick Knight



**Professor
Martin Cormican**



**Dr Clíodhna
Foley-Nolan**



Mr Gerard McCurdy



**Professor
Francis Butler**



Ms Lisa Manselli



Ms Eilís O'Brien

2.3 Board meetings

During the year, the Board members attended seven scheduled Board meetings, while individual members also attended a series of strategy workshops, launch events, training seminars and other related meetings.

2.4 Board committees

Two Board committees support the activities of the Board in governing the FSAI: the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and the Performance and Remuneration Committee (PRC).

2.4.1 Audit and Risk Committee

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

During 2024, the ARC reviewed the following:

- Internal financial controls
- Procurement and contract management
- Corporate risk management.

In 2024, the ARC carried out an effectiveness survey and presented a report on its findings to the Board for consideration. The financial statements, as approved by both the ARC and the Board, were subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Audit and Risk Committee in 2024

Number of meetings	Five
Chairperson	Mr Gerard McCurdy
Membership	Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan, and in June 2024 the term of appointment of Ms Mary Cullen ended and Ms Ann Horan joined the committee on an interim basis. External ARC member Mr Fergal O'Brien's term of appointment ended on 31 December 2024.

2.4.2 Performance and Remuneration Committee

The PRC is appointed to assess the performance of the CEO, while maintaining a supportive confidential relationship, in which information, support and advice can be offered/sought on performance management. This remit of the PRC also includes overseeing the procedure for the selection of the CEO and ensuring, on behalf of the Board, that in the recruitment process all best practice guidelines are adhered to. Additionally, the PRC ensures compliance with statutory and administrative requirements in relation to the approval of the appointment, number, grading and conditions of staff, including remuneration and superannuation. The PRC convenes as required by the Board. In 2024, the PRC successfully oversaw the appointment of a new CEO.

The Performance and Remuneration Committee in 2024	
Number of meetings	Three (not including meetings related to the appointment of the new CEO)
Chairperson	Ms Ann Horan
Membership	Mr Patrick Knight and Professor Francis Butler

2.5 Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

In compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (published in 2016), the Authority has a Corporate Governance Framework in place.

This Framework was developed to assist in improving efficiency and enhancing openness and transparency. The Framework provides guidance for the FSAI, detailing aspects such as conducting Board business, strategic planning, operational processes, risk management, financial controls and standards of behaviour. During 2024, the Authority ensured and maintained compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (published in 2016).

2.6 Secretary to the Board

Kevin Roantree, Director of Corporate Affairs, is the Secretary of the FSAI Board. The Secretary supports the Board through the Chairperson in relation to governance matters and ensures that all relevant information is available to the Board and its committees. Along with the Chairperson, the Secretary is responsible for the formal induction of new members of the Board and for organising training, development and mentoring for Board members where required.

2.7 Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee is composed of 15 independent scientists appointed by the Minister for Health in consultation with the Board of the FSAI. The Chairperson of the Scientific Committee is a member of the Board. The Scientific Committee advises the Board on scientific matters underpinning food safety and nutrition. The Scientific Committee establishes subcommittees to carry out its work. The subcommittees are composed of independent scientists; consequently, the Authority is advised by the work of approximately 80 scientists. The work programme of the Scientific Committee is published on the FSAI website along with the Committee's opinions.

In 2024, the membership of the Scientific Committee was composed of:

- **Professor Martin Cormican**
(Chair) (member of the FSAI Board),
University of Galway and the Health
Service Executive (HSE)
- **Professor Kevin Cashman**,
University College Cork
- **Dr Geraldine Duffy**,
Teagasc
- **Professor Séamus Fanning**,
University College Dublin
- **Professor Mark Fenelon**,
Teagasc
- **Dr Andrew Flanagan**,
Public Analyst's Laboratory, Dublin
- **Dr Montserrat Gutierrez**,
Department of Agriculture, Food
and the Marine (DAFM)
- **Professor Alan Kelly**,
University College Cork
- **Ms Ita Kinahan**,
State Laboratory (retired)
- **Professor Anne Molloy**,
Trinity College Dublin (retired)
- **Dr Lois O'Connor**,
National Health Protection Office
- **Professor Dolores O'Riordan**,
University College Dublin
- **Ms Ann Marie Part**,
HSE
- **Professor Dagmar Stengel**,
University of Galway
- **Professor Martin Wilkinson**,
University of Limerick.

2.8 Food Safety Consultative Council

The Food Safety Consultative Council (**FSCC**) is a statutory Council established under Section 14 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. Its purpose is to facilitate consultations for the purpose of promoting higher standards or for any other matters relating to the functions of the Authority. Membership of the FSCC is made up of representatives from the Authority's stakeholders, including consumer representatives, food industry professionals, members of the inspectorate and academics representing the food sector.

During 2024, following an appointment process, Mr Jamie Knox (Keurig Dr Pepper) was appointed by the FSAI Board as Chair of the FSCC. He replaced Mr Ray Bowe, who completed his term as Chair at the end of 2023 after 10 years of service in this role. During 2024, the Council Chair also sought nominations for a Deputy Chair, with both Dr Paula Barry Walsh and Mr Dave Lang appointed to share this position.

During 2024, two new members joined the Council following Board appointment. Ms Elaine Clohosey (BWG Foods) was appointed to represent the retail supermarket sector following an open call for nominees for this sector. Mr Andrew Mahon (Bord Bia) was appointed on a temporary basis to cover scheduled leave of Ms Deirdre Ryan.



Image 1. Mr Jamie Knox (Keurig Dr Pepper), photographed here with Ms Gail Carroll (FSAI), was appointed Chair of the FSCC by the FSAI Board in 2024

The membership of the FSCC in 2024 included:

- **Mr Jamie Knox**,
Keurig Dr Pepper (Chair)
- **Mr Adrian Cummins**,
Restaurants Association of Ireland
- **Mr Dale Crammond**,
Meat Industry Ireland, Ibec
- **Mr Dermot Jewell**,
Consumers' Association of Ireland
- **Ms Siobhán Murphy**,
Health Service Executive (HSE)
- **Mr Dave Lang**,
Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland
- **Mr Andrew Mahon**,
Bord Bia (temporary appointment covering leave of Ms Deirdre Ryan)
- **Mr Eamonn Quinn**,
Kelsius
- **Mr Mark Christal**,
Enterprise Ireland
- **Ms Annette Sweeney**,
Technological University Dublin
- **Dr Paula Barry Walsh**,
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) (retired)
- **Mr Paul McKeown**,
Health Protection Surveillance Centre
- **Mr Jonathan Griffith**,
Irish Health Trade Association
- **Mr Patrick Farrell**,
Keelings
- **Ms Sorcha Kavanagh**,
Repak
- **Ms Catherine Morrison**,
Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- **Ms Janis Morrissey**, Irish Heart Foundation
- **Mr Conor Mulvihill**,
Dairy Industry Ireland, Ibec
- **Ms Alice McGlynn**,
Consultant
- **Ms Louise Reynolds**,
Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute
- **Ms Regina Sexton**,
University College Cork
- **Ms Elaine Clohosey**,
BWG Foods.

2.9 Senior Leadership Team

The Authority is led by the Senior Leadership Team, which is responsible for the FSAI's business functions.

The membership of the Authority's Senior Leadership Team as at 31 December 2024 included:



Dr Pamela Byrne
Chief Executive Officer
(CEO)



Mr Kevin Roantree
Director, Corporate
Affairs



Dr Bernard Hegarty
Director, Enforcement
Policy



Dr Michelle Minihan
Director, Audit, Incidents
and Investigations



Ms Gail Carroll
Director, Regulatory Affairs
and Compliance Building



Dr Wayne Anderson
Director, Food Science
and Standards



03

Strategy

On 3 December 2024, the Authority launched its **new strategy**. This 5-year strategy will be in place from 2025 to 2029, and sets out the Authority's vision, purpose, values, goals and objectives, including its high-level deliverables for the first 3 years. The strategy was developed in consultation with internal and external FSAI stakeholders including staff members, the Board, the FSCC, partner organisations, Government representatives, food industry experts, food business operators (FBOs) and consumers.



Image 2. Photograph of the Chairperson (Ms Ann Horan) and the CEO (Dr Pamela Byrne) at the launch of the *Strategy 2025–2029*

3.1 Our vision, purpose and values

Our vision

Safe and trustworthy food for everyone

Our purpose

As Ireland's independent regulator and the central competent authority for the enforcement of food safety legislation, we will protect consumers' health and interests by:

- Building a culture of food safety
- Improving food safety within a risk analysis framework
- Leading a robust food safety control system
- Continuing to drive organisational excellence.

Our values

We develop and inspire people to build a better organisation through **teamwork**.

We act with **integrity** and are honest, open and independent in all we do.

We are **passionate** about protecting consumers.

We act with **respect** and take personal responsibility.

We recognise and value **collaboration** with our partners.

We are **transparent** and open, and we communicate clearly.

Goal 1

Advocate and Engage

Advocate for the importance of food safety and authenticity in our engagement with all stakeholders to better protect consumers' health and interests and increase compliance.

Goal 2

Reduce Risk

Enhancing our ability to protect consumers' health and interests by anticipating, assessing, and managing risks that impact on the safety and authenticity of food.

Goal 3

Enforce Food Law

Ensuring and verifying compliance with food law, taking appropriate enforcement action, to protect consumers within a coherent national regulatory framework.

Goal 4

Drive Organisational Excellence

Delivering better food safety outcomes for consumers through empowering our people, aligning our systems, and demonstrating adaptive, values-driven leadership.

3.2 Implementation of our strategy

A number of objectives have been set against each strategic goal in the *Strategy 2025–2029*. These 5-year goals and objectives will help to guide the activities of the Authority. They are supported by high-level deliverables which the Authority will achieve within the first 3 years of its strategy.

The Authority will report annually on its progress against the high-level deliverables. The Authority will also review the strategy at its midpoint, to ensure we stay responsive to the external environment and adapt our approach accordingly.



04

Our activities

4.1 The official food control system: The numbers at a glance

4.1.1 Enforcements

During 2024, food inspectors in the official agencies served food businesses with 115 Closure Orders, 2 Improvement Orders, 16 Prohibition Orders, and took 7 prosecutions against food businesses throughout Ireland (see Table 1 and Figure 3).

Table 1. Enforcement notices and prosecutions, 2020–2024

Enforcement action	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Closure Order	31	47	65	76	115
Improvement Notice	104	106	156	173	158
Improvement Order	2	2	0	3	2
Prohibition Order	9	10	12	13	16
Prosecution	5	10	6	8	7
Total	151	175	239	273	298

Recurring issues of food safety negligence were identified in food businesses which resulted in Enforcement Orders being issued in 2024. These food safety issues included a lack of pest control procedures; inadequate regular and thorough cleaning; failure to maintain correct temperatures of foodstuffs; unsuitable food storage facilities; and inadequate staff training in relation to food safety and hygiene.

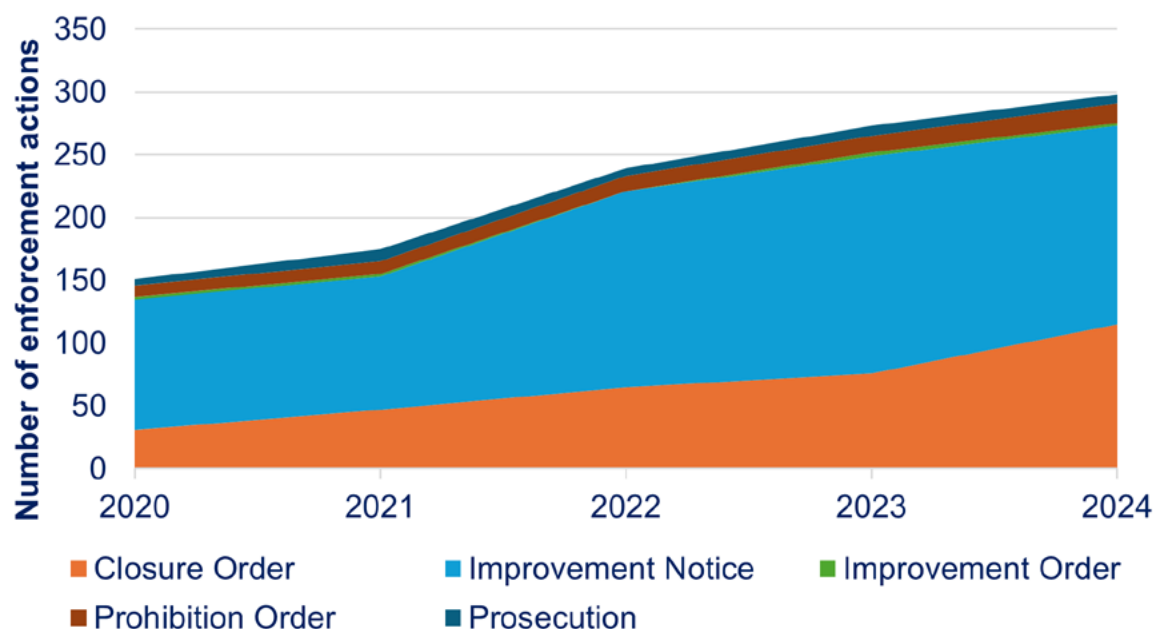


Figure 3. Enforcements and prosecutions, 2020–2024

4.1.2 Food businesses supervised by Ireland's official agencies

In 2024, 53,144 food businesses were under the supervision of official agencies that have service contracts with the Authority (Table 2). These food businesses carry out a wide range of activities, from importing and manufacturing to distributing, retailing and catering operations.

Table 2. Number and type of food businesses under the supervision of official agencies, 2020–2024

Official agency	Premises type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DAFM	Primary producers	355	480	495	568	573
	Manufacturers and packers	494	424	429	373	457
	Distributors and transporters	108	115	113	111	102
Total		957	1,019	1,037	1,052	1,132

Official agency	Premises type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
HSE	Service sector	28,769	29,267	28,722	28,881	29,764
	Not assigned	160	285	505	771	1,066
	Transporters	128	130	131	130	133
	Wholesalers/ distributors	1,193	1,222	1,295	1,367	1,428
	Packers	107	121	120	118	107
	Retailers	13,673	14,537	14,153	14,268	14,378
	Manufacturers	1,526	1,571	1,641	1,609	1,580
	Third-country importers/ exporters	36	37	32	32	33
	Administrative food businesses	306	344	372	384	383
	Total	45,898	47,514	46,971	47,560	48,872
Local authorities	Slaughterhouses	166	175	164	154	145
	Small meat manufacturing plants	199	216	194	194	188
	Poultry plants	35	38	37	34	33
	Cold stores	42	53	50	53	50
	Butcher shops	7	7	5	5	5
	Mobile businesses	32	31	35	37	33
	Traders/brokers	6	7	9	10	10
	Total	487	527	494	487	464

Official agency	Premises type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)	Fishing vessels	2,080	2,081	2,085	2,107	2,102
	Molluscan production areas	189	189	190	190	191
	Registered food businesses on land (including ice plants)	15	15	15	14	11
	Food brokers	1	1	2	2	2
	Freezer and factory vessels	57	62	59	55	52
	Processing plants	105	101	98	90	87
	Fresh fishery products plants	68	66	65	59	58
	Importers	56	55	54	35	33
	Cold stores	5	5	6	8	9
	Shellfish farmers	30	33	33	32	32
	Purification plants	23	24	22	22	18
	Dispatch centres	15	15	15	16	16
	Transporters	8	9	11	10	11
	Wholesalers/distributors	48	53	53	49	48
	Auction halls	1	1	1	1	1
	Other	1	1	1	1	5
Total		2,702	2,711	2,710	2,691	2,676
Total number of food businesses		50,044	51,771	51,212	51,790	53,144

4.1.3 Official controls and inspections

All official agencies operate risk-based programmes of official controls, and each agency categorises risk in agreement with the Authority. Those food businesses that 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, so that food businesses can be assessed while they are operating under normal conditions in order to determine their compliance with food legislation.

Food businesses are also inspected for other reasons, such as for food sampling and investigating incidents and outbreaks. In addition to planned inspections, a significant number of unplanned inspections take place – for example, to investigate food incidents or to follow up on complaints from the public, and through advisory visits to food businesses. With the easing of COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions on official controls, the figures for inspections have steadily increased since 2020. There was an 12.1% increase in the number of food inspections in 2024 compared with 2023 (Table 3).

Table 3. All reported inspections in food businesses, 2020–2024

Official agency	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
HSE (National Environmental Health Service)	26,820	26,903	38,337	40,473	43,427
DAFM (Inspectorate)	7,408	9,538	11,375	13,770	18,081
Local authorities	3,790	3,445	3,643	3,548	3,352
SFPA	1,911	2,237	1,982	2,339	2,591
National Standards Authority of Ireland	37	40	76	47	29
Total number of food business inspections	39,966	42,163	55,413	60,177	67,480

4.1.4 Staff working in official controls

The official agencies report to the Authority annually on the staff resources they have dedicated to official controls under the service contracts. In 2024, 1,635 whole-

time equivalents (WTEs) were involved in carrying out official controls in Irish food businesses (Table 4). The food safety inspectorate continues to develop its expertise, including through training courses, such as those provided or supported by the FSAI.

Table 4. WTEs by official agency, 2020–2024

Official agency	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DAFM					
Inspection Service	495	533	548	601	591
Laboratory Service	88	93	87	101	93
HSE					
National Environmental Health Service	425	431	479	500	472
Laboratory Service	132	131	142	148	149
FSAI	87	103	96	105	112
Local authorities	88	91	93	93	91
Marine Institute	39	38	26	27	42
National Standards Authority of Ireland	1	1	1	1	1
SFPA	47	52	59	59	60
State Laboratory	18	18	20	21	24
Total number of WTEs	1,420	1,491	1,551	1,656	1,635

4.1.5 Food sampling (as reported by laboratory analysing)

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 2024, 53,055 samples were taken and tested, compared with 59,693 in 2023 (Table 5).

Table 5. Number of samples taken and tested by the official agencies, 2020–2024 (as reported by laboratories analysing samples)

Sampling agency	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DAFM	30,934	25,511	26,981	32,958	27,224
HSE (National Environmental Health Service) Laboratory	7,626	11,648	11,792	13,747	13,555
Marine Institute	6,434	6,244	6,561	6,903	6,805
Local authorities	2,088	2,506	2,573	2,503	1,962
State Laboratory	3,234	3,793	3,755	3,582	3,509
Total	50,316	49,702	51,662	59,693	53,055

4.2 Key activities in 2024



Launch of our new
5-year strategy



Publication of
world-class advice,
research and guidance



Publication of
consumer and industry
attitudes survey



Launch of the FSAI
Learning Portal



FSAI Conference:
*Towards 2049: Shaping
the Future of the Food
Safety Control System*



Management of **8,596**
queries and complaints



Delivery of
68 food alerts and
58 food allergen alerts



Completion of **64**
investigations and **22**
online investigations



Management of **133**
protected disclosures



Completion of **206**
risk assessments



Establishment of the new
E-commerce and Online
Food Business Forum



Publication of **673**
media outputs



05

Directors' reports

5.1 Mr Greg Dempsey

Chief Executive's Office

The CEO is the accounting officer for the FSAI and is responsible for the overall strategic and operational management of the Authority, as well as for providing leadership among their peers in food safety agencies across Europe and beyond.

Mr Dempsey reports directly to the Board and is supported by the Senior Leadership Team, which oversees operations within the Authority's five functional areas. The CEO represents Ireland on the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum and the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies. The CEO's Office has responsibility for liaising with the Authority's Board and coordinating the FSAI's communications function, which includes facilitating stakeholder management and engagement; managing the FSAI Advice Line; organising events; designing and publishing the Authority's publications; running the FSAI website; and promoting the Authority's work in the media. The CEO of the FSAI is a prescribed person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. The Public Health Nutrition Policy function is also a responsibility of the CEO's Office.

5.1.1 Communications

The Authority actively engages with its stakeholders through a variety of online and in-person communication channels. These channels facilitate the flow of information, two-way dialogue and engagement on important food safety issues and topics.

During 2024, the Authority's Communications Team continued to manage the FSAI Advice Line, press office, website, social media pages, events, publications and webinars. These platforms enable the Authority to communicate important messages and provide advice on food safety to key stakeholders. By embracing online channels, the Authority is able to reach a wider audience in real time, and this ensures that consumers have access to timely and accurate information, which in turn allows the Authority to protect consumers.

5.1.1.1 Media

In 2024, the Authority responded to 118 media queries and issued 20 press releases, which directly resulted in 673 outputs in print, online and broadcast media. Authority staff were regularly invited to speak on national and local radio throughout the year. The team continued its work on stakeholder engagement in order to create a wider understanding of the Authority's role, to keep stakeholders updated on the latest scientific developments and changes in regulation, and to communicate with consumers with regard to food safety hazards.

5.1.1.2 The FSAI Advice Line

The Authority's Advice Line is a critical communications channel for active engagement with our stakeholders. During 2024, the Advice Line handled a total of 8,596 queries and complaints from various stakeholders and consumers. The Authority actively encourages consumers to contact it about any food safety complaints or issues they may have.

In 2024, of the 4,996 complaints received from consumers, 1,597 related to unfit food, 1,449 to suspected food poisoning and 1,289 to poor hygiene standards. This was a 13.7% increase compared to 4,395 complaints in 2023, which continues an overall upwards trend in the number of complaints from 2020 to 2024 (see Figure 4). All complaints received by the FSAI in 2024 were followed up on and investigated by food inspectors throughout the country.

The Advice Line also provided advice and information throughout the year. In 2024, the Advice Line received 3,600 queries from people working in the food industry, including caterers, food manufacturers, retailers and others, such as food safety consultants and researchers. Popular topics included: how to start a food business; food labelling information; best practice in food businesses; and food safety training.

5.1.1.3 Social media

The Authority has continued to enhance its social media channels, enabling it to alert consumers to food safety issues, respond to queries and engage one-to-one with consumers and food businesses. These social media channels also provide a key mechanism by which stakeholders can contact the Authority. In 2024, the Authority had an online community of 79,179 engaged stakeholders between its Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube accounts.

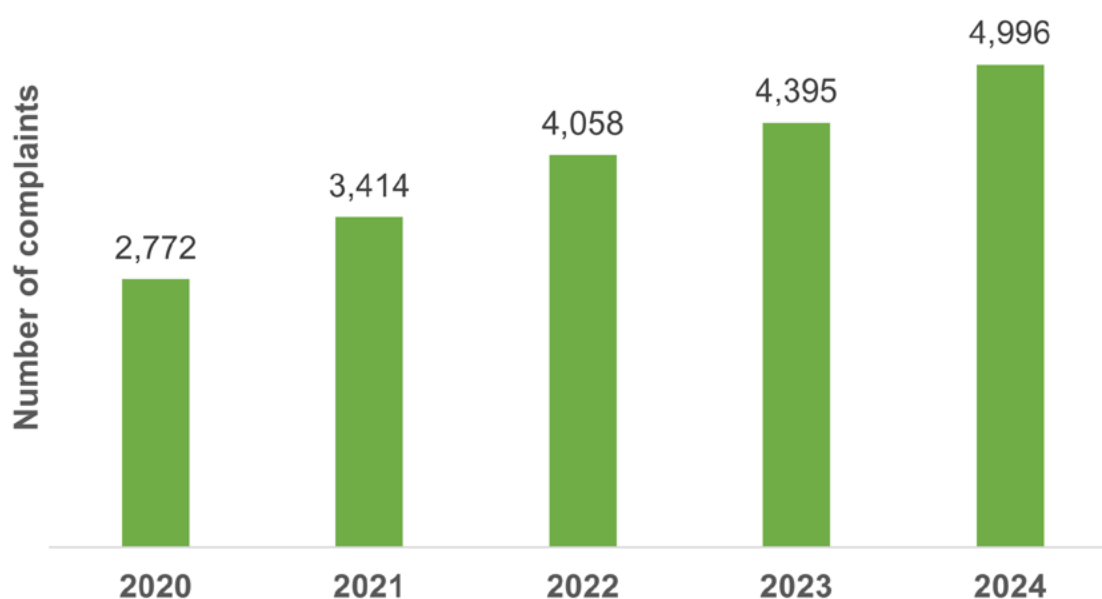


Figure 4. Consumer complaints received by the FSAI Advice Line, 2020–2024

During the year, the Authority ran social media campaigns on various topics, including making a complaint, food safety training, food allergens, FSAI Enforcement Orders, labelling, World Food Safety Day, food reformulation, and starting a food business.

The 'See Something, Say Something' advertising campaign ran for a month from July to August 2024, with the goal of increasing public awareness of the FSAI's advice line for reporting unfit food and poor hygiene practices. The campaign was delivered in both Irish and English across a range of digital platforms. Overall, the campaign had 1,981,201 total reaches, 7,773,649 impressions and 20,097 clicks. As a result of the campaign, there was a measurable increase in public interaction with the FSAI's Advice Line. Notably, during the campaign period there was a 900.18% year-on-year increase in visits to the FSAI's 'make it better' webpage.

5.1.1.4 Guidance

The Authority continues to be a leading expert in food safety for its stakeholders, providing timely food safety guidance, conducting studies and publishing scientific reports on a regular basis. During 2024, 19 new publications were published. All of these were published on the Authority's website, and they include reports from the DoH-funded Food Reformulation Task Force, guidance documents to support the food industry in legislative compliance, and a Scientific Committee report on the suitability of analytical methods for assessing food authenticity.



During 2024, **19 new publications** were published on the FSAI website.

5.1.1.5 Events

The Authority hosted a number of other events during 2024, including a conference for inspectors and a Food Reformulation Task Force workshop for food businesses working to reduce salt, sugar and fat in their products.

In April, as part of the FSAI's Breakfast Bite series, the Authority hosted a webinar on food safety training. This was attended by representatives from food businesses and included an opportunity for attendees to ask questions.



Image 3. Left to right: Mr Greg Dempsey (DoH), Mr Colm Burke (TD, Minister of State at the DoH) and Dr Pamela Byrne (FSAI) at the FSAI conference "Towards 2049: Shaping the Future of the Food Safety Control System"



Image 4. Left to right: Ms Catherine Curran (DoH), Dr Wayne Anderson (FSAI) and Ms Sinead O'Mahony (FSAI) at the Food Reformulation Task Force workshop

5.1.1.6 The Authority's website

The FSAI website is a valuable resource of food safety information for the Authority's stakeholders. The website had more than 1,404,370 pageviews in 2024, with the most popular sections being publications, Food Alerts, news, enforcement reports and business advice.

Almost 46% of users came from the United Kingdom (UK), 43% from Ireland and the remainder from the United States, India, Germany and other parts of the globe. The Authority's website is regularly updated with new information and has become a recognised source of accurate and timely information for all stakeholders as well as for other regulators across the world.

5.1.2 Public Health Nutrition Policy

The Public Health Nutrition Policy team led the global work of establishing Nutrient Reference Values for labelling foods targeting older infants (aged 6–12 months) and young children (aged 12–36 months) at Codex Alimentarius. Their work was the main agenda item at the week-long meeting of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) held in Dresden, Germany in October 2024. Just prior to this meeting, a full-day physical working group was chaired by the chief specialist of public health nutrition, assisted by the technical executive, in which participants reached an agreement on general principles and a stepwise process to establish these reference requirement values for the 24 nutrients.

The chief specialist assisted by the technical executive led the discussions at the Plenary meeting of CCNFSDU, where further agreement was reached on reference requirement values for 14 of the 24 nutrients. The Public Health Nutrition Policy team continues to lead the work to finalise the reference requirement values for the remaining 10 nutrients. This is the main agenda item for the next Plenary CCNFSDU meeting, which is scheduled for November 2026, during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU).

The Public Health Nutrition Policy team also provides scientific secretariat support for the Public Health Nutrition Subcommittee of the Authority's Scientific Committee. During 2024, diet modelling was undertaken to assess food requirements for adolescent boys, covering a wide range of body size and activity levels.



Image 8. Photograph from the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU) held in Dresden, Germany in October 2024

This work will continue to include girls for a Scientific Committee report on technical recommendations, which will underpin the DoH's national food-based dietary guidelines for adolescents (aged 10–19 years) living in Ireland. This work will also incorporate guidance on sustainable dietary habits to protect the environment. In April 2024, a workshop was held to explore the innovative approaches used in diet modelling developed by the Public Health Nutrition Policy team. This workshop was delivered by the chief specialist and a work placement student at the FSAI, and it was attended by academic staff and postgraduate students at Ulster University.

In April 2024, Oonagh Lyons, a technical executive on the team, successfully defended her doctoral thesis on research undertaken as part of the work of the Public Health Nutrition Policy team at the FSAI. This work was co-supervised over 6 years by academic staff at Ulster University and by the Chief Specialist of Public Health Nutrition at the FSAI. Oonagh Lyons's doctoral thesis was highly commended by the external examiners, who noted her three works that had been published in international scientific journals, including one in the global leading *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, which was based on the FSAI work on dietary guidelines for children aged 1–5 years.



5.2 Mr Kevin Roantree

Director, Corporate Affairs

The Corporate Affairs functional area, led by Kevin Roantree, ensures the quality and alignment of the Authority's corporate operations in order to ensure that supporting structures, processes and systems are in place to enable the delivery and maximise the impact of the FSAI strategy. During 2024, Kevin continued to progress an extensive programme of work, along with colleagues in the Senior Leadership and Management Teams, in order to develop a high performing and inclusive working environment aligned with the FSAI's values.

Corporate Affairs has responsibility for the FSAI's human resources (HR), finance, information technology (IT), information and data management, organisational development, freedom of information, corporate governance, data protection, risk management, legal services, and general facilities management functions. This functional area is key to ensuring that the Authority achieves its business objectives and utilises efficient and effective approaches in order to continuously improve its services and ensure the optimal utilisation of resources.

The Corporate Affairs team also leads the Authority's compliance with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2015 Quality management systems compliance certification by working with colleagues across the organisation in developing and delivering on the FSAI's business planning and reporting mechanisms.

During 2024, the Authority continued to put a blended working model into effect, where staff worked from the office for a minimum of 2 days per week and from home on the remaining days. An evaluation of the Authority's hybrid working model, completed in 2024, showed that it contributed to maintaining a high-performing organisation which met the needs of its stakeholders and supported the FSAI in its mission.

5.2.1 Organisational compliance

During 2024, the Authority ensured, and reported on, its compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (published in 2016), and it agreed its Oversight Agreement/Performance Delivery Agreement (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 against business objectives, as well as any deviations from planned work and the measures being taken to manage them.

5.2.1.1 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 and Scientific Committee, as well as designated FSAI staff, are required to submit a declaration of interests annually.

5.2.1.2 Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997

The FSAI's policy is to ensure that it makes all payments promptly, in accordance with the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997. The FSAI makes every effort to ensure that all suppliers are paid within the required time frame, consistent with proper financial procedures and in accordance with best practice. The FSAI publishes quarterly reports of compliance on its website.

5.2.1.3 Data protection

The FSAI endeavours to be compliant with all relevant data protection legislation. In so doing, it carries out all work required and updates its policies within this legislative framework. It has produced an information governance strategy, which includes maintaining compliance with data protection legislation, and it is rolled out on an organisation-wide basis.

In 2024, there were two Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs) made under data protection legislation. At year end, one request remained open.

5.2.1.4 Freedom of Information Act 2014

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the FSAI is a designated Freedom of Information (FOI) body. In compliance with this legislation, the FSAI provides its FOI Publication Scheme on the organisation's website and processes requests for information on a continuing basis.

In 2024, the FSAI received 25 requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Of these requests, 5 were granted, 6 were partially granted, none were withdrawn, none were transferred and 13 were refused. At year end, one case remained open.

The majority of requests for information processed under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 are for non-personal (that is, corporate) information. Requests generally seek information about the FSAI and its work.

5.2.1.5 Access to Information on the Environment Regulations 2007–2018

The Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Regulations 2007–2018 give people the right to request access to environmental information held by public authorities.

In 2024, the FSAI received no requests for information under the AIE Regulations.

5.2.1.6 Protected disclosures

The CEO of the FSAI is a prescribed person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. During 2024, 133 protected disclosures were made to the CEO. Where breaches of food law were detected, either the FSAI or the official agency took the appropriate enforcement action in order to ensure that consumer health and consumer interests were protected. Figure 5 shows the number of protected disclosures from 2020 to 2024.

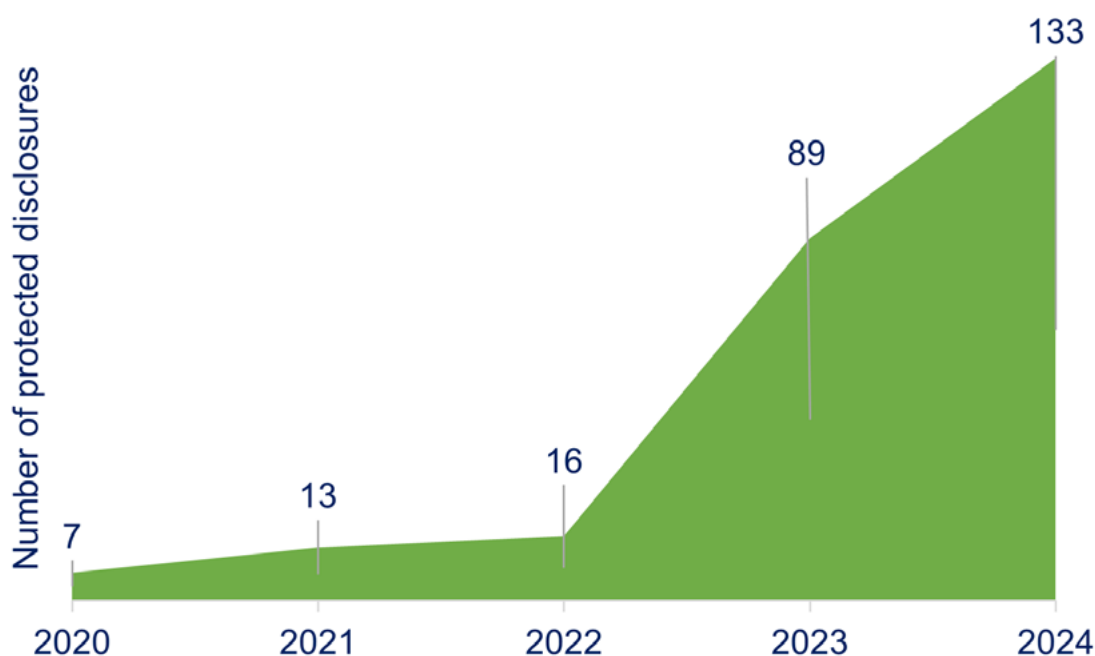


Figure 5. Protected disclosures, 2020–2024

5.2.1.7 Quality management

The Authority is committed to having a strong quality management system in place. This 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 2024, the Authority maintained its certification to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

5.2.1.8 Official languages legislation

The FSAI is committed to furthering the aims of the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. The FSAI's official languages officer liaises with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media on the requirements of the Official Languages Acts and endeavours to keep up to date with the work of An Coimisinéir Teanga (Official Languages Commissioner). To further its work in this area, the FSAI has devised and implemented an Official Languages Strategy. As per the requirements of the legislation, stationery, signage and recorded oral announcements are maintained in Irish and English, and the Annual Report is published simultaneously in Irish and English. In 2024, for example, an advertising campaign encouraging consumers to report food safety issues when eating out ran in both Irish and English. The Official Languages Officer provides regular reports to the CEO and Senior Leadership Team of the FSAI on progress made by the organisation in addition to general updates on developments in this area. At the core of the FSAI's approach is its ongoing commitment to comply with the Official Languages Acts and to monitor its performance accordingly.

5.2.2 Organisational development

The Human Resources and Organisation Development (HR and OD) Department focuses on creating a high-performing and engaged workforce. The department is applying strategic workforce planning to forecast future organisation needs. This allows the FSAI to attract, select and retain the talent which is aligned with its vision, mission, values, goals and strategic objectives.

The focus of learning and development is upskilling, and it encourages a growth mindset among those who participate in it. This equips employees with the skills and knowledge required to meet strategic objectives and organisational goals. Training programmes (including technical, leadership and soft skills) are tailored to meet business needs and are supported by coaching and mentoring for leadership and professional development.

Building on the FSAI's culture of employee engagement, the HR and OD Department supports diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) initiatives in order to create a fair and welcoming environment. It also supports the employee experience and well-being programmes for a supportive work environment, through collaboration, communication and fostering transparency and teamwork.

The focus of learning and development is upskilling, and it encourages a growth mindset among those who participate in it.

5.2.3 Finance

The Finance Department is focused on supporting other business areas in delivering their business objectives through the efficient and effective delivery of finance services in order to ensure appropriate management and control over resources. The Finance Department is also responsible for ensuring that relevant accounting standards are adhered to, and that effective financial management systems and controls are in operation.

During 2024, the internal auditors conducted a review of the internal financial controls systems, and the level of assurance achieved was “substantial to moderate”. The Authority also ensures that it has implemented the budgetary measures put in place by the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in terms of salary, travel rates, procurement and other expenditure savings.

5.2.4 Programme Management Office

The establishment and development of the Programme Management Office (PMO) has enhanced the FSAI's ability to deliver strategic initiatives efficiently and effectively. By implementing a standard approach to the management and oversight of projects, the PMO has improved project alignment with organisational priorities, supported improved resource allocation, and increased transparency in decision-making. It has fostered collaboration across departments, reduced risks through proactive monitoring, and improved achievement of key performance indicators.

A target of 70% of programme projects on track (number of projects completed or tracking to plan as a percentage of the total) was set for 2024; 73% was achieved. As per Figure 6 below, there has been a positive trend since this metric has been applied.

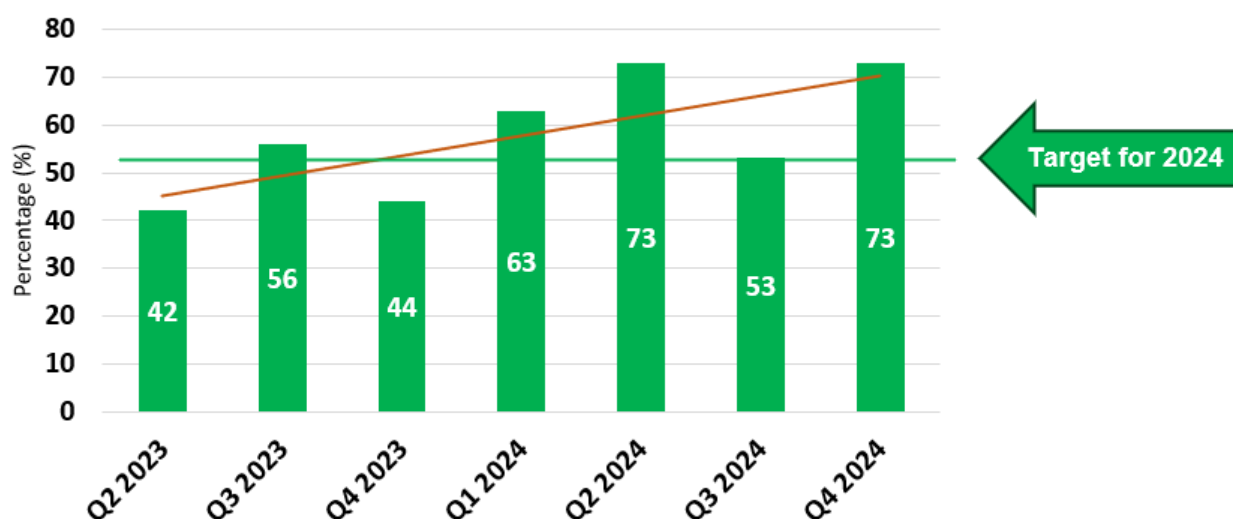


Figure 6. The percentage of programme projects on track, Q2 2023–Q4 2024

5.3 Dr Bernard Hegarty

Director, Enforcement Policy

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

In 2024, the Authority had 30 service contracts in place with official agencies of the State. These agencies undertake official control activities under these service contracts with the Authority. This mechanism for the enforcement of food safety legislation is set out under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, as amended. The Enforcement Policy team proactively manages these agreements to ensure that the official agencies are performing in accordance with the various indicators set out in the contracts. Contracts are signed by the Authority's Chief Executive and by senior management in the official agencies. The team also organises the preparation and follow-up for the cross-agency audits carried out by the European Commission and other bodies.

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 Forum).

The official controls on food continued to operate in 2024, with enforcement action taken where necessary. During the year, the Authority published 133 Enforcement Orders (including 115 Closure Orders, 2 Improvement Orders and 16 Prohibition Orders) which were served by either the official agencies or the Authority on food businesses for breaches of food safety legislation. This was a 45% increase on the 92 Enforcement Orders served in 2023, continuing the trend of an increase in enforcement activity in recent years. The total number of Enforcement Orders (133) served in 2024 was the second highest annual total since the Authority was established. The full texts of the Enforcement Orders served on food businesses were published in order to provide transparency on the official controls process and also to inform other food businesses of which practices to avoid.

Seven prosecutions were taken during 2024 for breaches of food safety legislation: five by the HSE and two by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

Most of the service contracts ran continuously through 2024, and therefore did not require renegotiation. Our service contract with the SFPA was due to expire in 2024 but was extended into 2025 to allow sufficient time to properly address issues raised during this renegotiation. The service contracts with the local authorities were also extended during 2024 up to 31 December 2024, when the Local Authority Veterinary Service (LAVS) functions, veterinary staff and funding transferred to the DAFM following the government decision of 24 July 2024. The FSAI and the official agencies continued to carry out management and monitoring of the service contracts through a combination of virtual and face-to-face meetings.

On 31 December 2024, the Local Authority Veterinary functions, veterinary staff and funding transferred to the DAFM.

5.3.1 Official controls legislation

During 2024, the Authority continued its activity on the EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625. This Regulation, supplemented by a set of detailed implementing and delegated legislation, sets out rules for EU Member States' performance of official controls in the agri-food sector.

A programme of work to implement Regulation (EU) 2017/625 continued during 2024, including:

- Collaboration with the official agencies to oversee the development of the official controls system
- Input into the development of tertiary legislation at EU level (implementing and delegating EU regulations) in relation to Regulation (EU) 2017/625
- Input into the development of EU guidance on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/625. The latest revision of the EU guidance was published on 8 November 2024.
- The provision of guidance to the official agencies on the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 and the implementing national legislation.

5.3.2 Management of service contracts

On 24 July 2024 the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine announced that the Government had decided to implement the planned transfer of official food controls undertaken by the LAVS to the DAFM. This followed years of extensive inter-Departmental and cross-agency discussion and ended a period of uncertainty for the Service. The Authority worked with the Departments, the Local Government Management Agency, the County and City Management Association and the veterinary inspectors to facilitate and expedite the transfer. The Authority agreed amendments to its service contract with the DAFM to cover the work being transferred. The transfer of veterinary inspectors and their functions on food safety (providing official controls over almost 500 small meat businesses) took place on 31 December 2024. The transfer is the most significant change in the official control system since the start of the service contract system in Ireland, and the Authority is convinced that it will be an improvement for all stakeholders.

Since the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, Ireland's official controls system has had to accommodate significantly increased levels of official controls on the import of food, reflecting the status of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) as a third country. With regard to exports, the Authority continued to work closely with the official agencies to ensure systems were in place for the UK's requirement that veterinary certificates accompany consignments of foods of animal origin from Ireland to or through Great Britain, effective from 31 January 2024.

S.I. No. 79/2020 – which gave effect to the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625 – assigned some new responsibilities to the FSAI, including oversight of official laboratories designated by the DoH, as well as a requirement for the FSAI and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to publish guidelines to support the implementation of various aspects of the EU Regulation, including the use of its enforcement powers. 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 series of meetings of a cross-agency group agreed changes to the existing guidance, to be published in 2025. This group also drafted guidance to improve the interagency consistency of processes for obtaining approval from an official agency when processing foods of animal origin – a legislative requirement for certain food businesses. *Guidance Note 41: Guidance on the approval of food establishments* was published in November 2024, and a training webinar for inspectors on Guidance Note 41 took place on 3 December 2024.

Údarás Sábháilteachta Bia na hÉireann
Food Safety Authority of Ireland

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GUIDANCE NOTE

Guidance on the approval of food establishments

The Enforcement Policy team coordinates the preparation and follow-up of the official agencies for the audits that the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Safety (DG SANTE) conducts in order to verify Ireland’s compliance with the official controls legislation. In 2024, Ireland was subject to one such audit. The objective of this audit was to assess whether the system of official controls on animal by-products (ABP) and derived products destined for the manufacture of pet food complied with EU requirements. This audit was outside the remit of the Authority.

The Authority also provided information on previous audits to the European Commission, including further details on Ireland’s competent authority response to the draft audit report DG(SANTE) 2021-7188 on bovine meat, including traceability, which was published in 2024.

5.3.3 Advisory work

In 2024, the Authority continued to prepare advice for the DoH on developments in national and EU legislation. This advice supported the Department’s preparation of a new order (S.I. No. 248/2024) under Section 5 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 to update the list of food laws within the remit of the FSAI and the service contracts. During 2024, the Authority also advised the Department on the following:

- The revision of provisions in the national legislation on European Union (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) Regulations for the purpose of giving further effect to Directive (EU) 2020/2184
- The provision of advice to the DoH on the designation of official laboratories under Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625. In 2024, the Minister for

Health through S.I. No. 395/2024 designated Eurofins WEJ Contaminants GmbH as an official laboratory to test illegal dyes Rhodamine B and Sudan dyes under Regulation (EU) 2019/1793, following an evaluation by the Authority

- The DoH's transposition of Directive (EU) 2022/2557 on enhancing the resilience of critical entities, as the Authority was considered a potential competent authority for the enforcement of this Directive in the food sector. The Authority advised on the significant changes that would be required to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 if this change were to proceed. Subsequently, it was decided that the DAFM would be the competent authority for this legislation in the food sector
- The Authority continued to participate in cross-Departmental discussions on Directive (EU) 2020/2184 on the quality of water intended for human consumption, transposed into national legislation as S.I. No. 99/2023. The FSAI chaired a cross-agency implementing group in order to develop a process for an exemption in the regulation for food businesses with their own private water supply from the requirements of the Directive.

5.3.4 EU engagement

The FSAI's engagement with the EU included continued participation in EU Member State and European Commission working groups and expert groups working on the legislation governing food contact materials and the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/265, and on updating EU guidance assisting national authorities on the application of said regulation. Enforcement Policy team members also participated in an EU working group examining compliance with EU rules on olive oil monitoring and reporting.

In 2024, the Authority represented Ireland on the European Commission's National Control Plan Network and actively participated in the development of new guidance on the planning and delivery of official controls.

In 2024, the Authority continued to prepare advice for the DoH on developments in national and EU legislation.

5.4 Ms Gail Carroll

Director, Regulatory Affairs and Compliance Building

The Regulatory Affairs and Compliance Building (RACB) functional area, led by Gail Carroll, works closely with staff in the official agencies in order to facilitate the informed, consistent and effective application of food law by supporting implementation and by providing clarity on the application of legal requirements, including through training and guidance and provision of regulatory and scientific support.

The team provides expert advice to the DoH, the DAFM and other Government Departments on regulatory issues in order to support the development of legislation and policy at national and European level and internationally through the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The team is also involved in the development of approaches to the implementation and enforcement of legislation at European level – for example, through the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies group.

RACB works to build compliance with food legislation and standards in the food industry through developing industry compliance supports and guidance, delivering training and seeking opportunities to influence the adoption of the highest food safety standards. The RACB team also leads the management of the food supplement online notification system to support food

businesses in meeting their statutory obligations in relation to supplement notification. The RACB team chairs the Authority's Retail, Food Service and Artisan Fora, as well as the newly established E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum, working directly with representatives from these sectors to improve compliance. The RACB team works with State bodies such as Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices to build food safety compliance in the food industry sectors they support. Our technical experts contribute to the development of industry standards, where we can support the prominence of food safety messages.

The RACB team provides the technical and administrative secretariat to the Authority's Food Safety Consultative Council, which facilitates consultations and discussions with the FSAI's stakeholders for the purpose of promoting higher standards with representatives of consumers, producers, retailers, distributors, caterers, manufacturers, the food inspectorate and academia. The RACB Chief Specialists in Environmental Health and Veterinary Public Health provide scientific support for the FSAI Scientific Committee's subcommittees. RACB has four teams with expertise in a range of professional, scientific, regulatory and administrative areas – Environmental Health, Training and Compliance, Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture, and Imports and Exports – all of which work together to protect consumers' health and interests.

5.4.1 Environmental Health

The Environmental Health team plays a critical and strategic role in protecting the consumer through supporting the FSAI, the National Environmental Health Service (NEHS), the HSE's Food Safety Laboratory Service and other official agencies in the consistent and effective implementation and enforcement of food legislation.

The Environmental Health team works closely with industry members in order to build compliance and foster a culture of food safety within Ireland's food industry, including leading the FSAI's Food Service and Retail Fora. In 2024, the RACB Environmental Health team led the provision of expert advice to official agencies, industry and consumers on a range of food safety and regulatory issues – including the consumption of slush ice drinks containing glycerol for young children – and organisations procuring catering services. The Environmental Health team manages the Enforcement Consistency Committee to support the delivery of consistent official controls by the NEHS in a range of circumstances, including the introduction of new legislation, developments in industry and the implementation of major initiatives such as the Hot School Meals Programme.

The team had regular engagement with trade bodies on food safety and regulatory issues, including those in relation to spirit drinks, dealing with industry complaints on labelling and various compliance issues. The FSAI worked on regulatory issues in collaboration with the DAFM and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), as well as with the Revenue Commissioners.

During 2024, the team regularly engaged with Food Drink Ireland (FDI), Enterprise Ireland and other trade bodies on a range of regulatory issues, including food labelling, food additives, food safety, spirit drinks and other matters.

In 2024, the RACB Environmental Health team led the provision of expert advice to official agencies, industry and consumers on a range of food safety and regulatory issues – including the consumption of slush ice drinks containing glycerol for young children – and organisations procuring catering services.

5.4.2 Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture

The Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture (VPHA) team provides expert support for the FSAI, the official agencies and industry members by advising on scientific, technical and enforcement issues; facilitating incident management; developing guidance; and supporting service contract management and liaison. In 2024, this internal support included providing expert support for the management of food incidents, as well as contributing to DG SANTE audits and corrective actions to reports received. During 2024, the team's capability and capacity continued to develop with the appointment of a senior agricultural officer, veterinary officer and administrative assistant.

In 2024, some key work areas for the VPHA team included providing support for the technical advisory committees of Bord Bia's Quality Assurance Schemes which were undergoing a revision initiative with regard to all primary producer standards. The VPHA team continued to provide technical support to food incidents, with focus on managing immediate risk and identifying root cause of the incident in order to effect systematic improvement. A particular effort it took part in was supporting Ireland's move towards compliance with the significant changes to the official control of residues of veterinary medicinal products in foods of animal origin. During 2024, the VPHA team led on the development of the FSAI's guidance on issues such as lectins in legumes and the official control of food safety culture legislative obligations. The VPHA team initiated a cross-agency working group on honey authenticity.

The team, working cross-functionally in the FSAI, undertook a holistic appraisal of the FSAI's approach to broader food chain initiatives, particularly those arising as a result of the pursuit of sustainability and Ireland's Foodwise 2030 strategy. Areas where policy advice was developed included the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and legal requirements for the production of foods of animal origin, including residue controls.

5.4.3 Imports and Exports

During 2024, the RACB Imports and Exports team continued to support the official agencies in all aspects of their official controls on imported food, with increased focus and collaboration for food exports.

In January 2024, the first export certifications for the UK market were issued by official agencies as part of the UK's implementation of their Border Target Operating Model. The RACB Imports and Exports team supported the official agencies responsible for issuing these export certificates. A number of bilateral meetings were held with official agencies, and advisory notes were published for FBOs.

Two meetings of a separate cross-agency working group on import controls on high-risk foods of non-animal origin were held during 2024 in order to discuss inputs to EU legislative developments relating to these commodities.

The RACB Imports and Exports team participated in EU working groups and expert groups on official controls and imports of food of non-animal origin (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793) and on veterinary import controls legislation.

The EU working group meetings led to amendments to the listing of products of non-animal origin subject to official controls on entry to the EU, while the meetings regarding the veterinary import controls legislation provided an opportunity for the exchange of information, experience and good practice between the European Commission and EU Member States. The Imports and Exports team also participated online at the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems CCFICS27, and it attended meetings of the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies working group on imports and certification.

During 2024, the RACB Imports and Exports team continued to monitor and examine the implications of regulatory divergence between the EU and the UK on foods destined for the Irish market, and it also considered the implications for foods produced Ireland destined for export. Some of the areas of potential regulatory divergence that were considered included amended EU limits for certain flavourings permitted in food, as well as divergence in certain ingredients permitted in the manufacture of food supplements. Throughout 2024, the RACB Imports and Exports team provided advice to the Irish Government, the official agencies and industry on the areas of imports, export controls and regulatory divergence.

The RACB Imports and Exports team continued to provide advice to the DoH on food safety and authenticity issues arising as a result of Brexit, and it developed and published online communication to enable industry to build compliance with import and export requirements.

5.4.4 Training and Compliance

In 2024, the Training and Compliance team developed training courses, resources and compliance-building materials, in support of achieving our vision of safe and trustworthy food by supporting FSAI staff, inspectors and laboratories in informed and consistent enforcement of food law, as well as supporting food businesses in complying with regulations.

In 2024, the FSAI launched a new food safety learning portal for food businesses, a free, easy-to-navigate digital platform designed to consolidate best-in-class compliance training content and resources on food safety and hygiene. The learning portal offers a wealth of specialised content to assist users in keeping up to date with the latest food safety requirements. It was developed to assist food businesses in building compliance, and it includes e-learning modules, webinars, short videos and explanatory materials covering a broad range of relevant topics.



Training was provided to food businesses and inspectors on the *Food Safety Management System Guide for Small Meat Manufacturing Plants*. The training focused on how food businesses could implement the guide in their own premises. It also included topics on legislative requirements and official controls.

The FSAI's Food Safety and You training programme is a 4-hour, induction-level food safety course for food handlers that promotes active learning and the application of training in the work environment. The FSAI employs a 'train the trainer' approach with this programme, whereby the FSAI trains managers, supervisors and trainers from food businesses so that they can deliver the Food Safety and You programme to their own staff.

Bespoke training courses were developed for inspectors from the NEHS and inspectors in the DAFM Dairy Control and Certification Division: "Implementation of Chocolate and Cocoa Legislation in Chocolate Manufacturers" and "Legal Requirements and Official Controls in Infant Formula Manufacturing Plants" respectively.

The FSAI facilitated the participation of inspectors from the HSE, SFPA and local authorities, as well as FSAI staff, in the EU Better Training for Safer Food programme, with almost 60 inspectors attending Better Training for Safer Food training courses in 2024.

The FSAI developed and commenced the delivery of a technical training programme for FSAI staff, to support building our team's skills. This programme is being delivered through a face-to-face Regulatory Affairs course and online through a series of e-learning modules that can be accessed from the FSAI Learning Portal. The 11-module bespoke Regulatory Affairs course is designed for staff working at technical and senior technical executive level. Three modules were delivered in 2024, and the remaining eight modules will be delivered in 2025, contributing to our accomplishing Goal 4 of the FSAI strategy: Drive organisational excellence.

5.4.5 Drinking Water Directive

The recast Directive (EU) 2020/2184 ("Drinking Water Directive"), as transposed into national legislation by the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 99/2023), includes a provision for exempting FBOs that have their own water source and use it for the specific purposes of their business. Such FBOs may be exempted from the full requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations provided that they comply with relevant obligations, in particular regarding hazard analysis and critical control point principles and remedial actions under relevant EU legislation on food. The exemption will apply from 13 January 2026. The FSAI's role is to work with the official agencies of the State to ensure a consistent approach in implementing the exemption.



Non-exempt food businesses will be subject to the full requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations, which come under the remit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

A subgroup of the DHLGH Drinking Water Expert Group has been established to support work around the implementation and practical application of the FBO exemption. The subgroup comprises representatives from the FSAI, the NEHS, the DAFM, the SFPA, the DHLGH and the DoH. In 2024, the subgroup met three times in addition to bilateral meetings that were held to discuss verification of FBO compliance and the approach to official controls across all food sectors to ensure potability of drinking water.

5.4.6 Food supplements

Food businesses introducing a food supplement to the Irish market for the first time must legally notify the Authority and submit a copy of the label. In 2024, the FSAI's online notification system received 4,492 food supplement notifications, ensuring compliance with this requirement. This represented an increase of 24.4% from 2023. Applying a risk-based approach, the Authority identified 768 supplements that, due to their ingredients notified, required follow-up in order to address any possible risks to consumers. There continues to be a high level of complex regulatory and enforcement issues arising upon the assessment of food supplement products available to Irish consumers, illustrated by the continued strong trend in their supply from non-EU countries through e-commerce.

These issues are further complicated by implications of the UK as a third country and other EU Member States using Ireland as their point of notification to the EU market. These include the increasing popularity and range of food supplements – including cannabidiol (CBD) supplements – and the presence of novel foods and substances that are not permitted in food supplements. 2024 saw the FSAI continue towards implementation of a risk-based approach to regulating this sector, which concluded in 2024. The FSAI regulates food supplements in conjunction with the HSE, and it carried out significant work in 2023 in order to address safety and compliance issues. The FSAI also works with other agencies, such as the HPRA, and collaborates with industry trade associations such as the Irish Health Trade Association.

In 2024, the FSAI's online notification system received 4,492 food supplement notifications, which was an increase of 24.4% from 2023.

5.5 Dr Michelle Minihan

Director, Audit, Incidents and Investigations

Michelle Minihan leads the Audit, Incidents and Investigations functional area, which is responsible for conducting audits, managing food incidents and investigating fraudulent and deceptive practices and protected disclosures.

The Audit, Incidents and Investigations team carries out audits of the official food control system, as well as targeted audits of food businesses to ensure compliance with the Authority's legal mandate. It also provides support during third-country and DG SANTE audits in Ireland.

The Audit, Incidents and Investigations team conducts 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 determine the nature and extent of non-compliance with food law and/or related food fraud offences. Outcomes from such investigations may result in enforcement actions and prosecutions being instigated. Protected disclosures made to the FSAI are investigated by the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team.

5.5.1 Audits

The Authority's 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](#).

There were no audit reports published in 2024. However, the following three audits have been completed/finalised and are pending publication:

- The targeted audit of ambient storage and distribution food business operations, from the 2023 audit programme. The audit looked at various food storage and distribution establishments, including wholesalers and retail distribution centres across Ireland
- The audit of official controls in food business operations supervised by the LAVS, from the 2023 audit programme. This audit assessed the suitability and effectiveness of official controls carried out by the LAVS within a variety of food businesses under their remit and supervision
- The audit of the effectiveness of official controls in ready-to-eat (RTE) fishery products establishments, from the 2024 audit programme. This audit focused on establishments producing RTE fishery products, with an emphasis on establishments producing RTE smoked fish and other RTE products such as pâté, prawn cocktail and cooked meat such as crabmeat.

There were two other audits carried out in 2024. Both are in advanced stages of the audit process and nearing the development of the audit summary reports, which will be published on the Authority's website.

These audits are:

- The targeted audit of FBO compliance in the takeaway service sector, from the 2024 audit programme. This audit looked at various independent takeaways and a variety of cuisines across Ireland
- The audit of official controls in approved poultry establishments, from the 2024 audit programme. This audit focused on the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls in poultry slaughter and non-slaughter establishments. It also assessed the effectiveness of controls with regards to *Salmonella* (*Salmonella* species of public health significance).

In addition to this, and following on from the fact-finding review of official controls and FBO compliance with food safety culture requirements which took place in 2023, the final summary report has been developed and will be shared with the relevant official agencies involved. A food safety culture working group with representatives from each official agency has been developed as an output from this fact-finding review.

5.5.1.1 International audits

Ireland's official controls system is subject to regular assessment by the DG SANTE audit function. In 2024, the European Commission had scheduled two audits for completion between June and October 2024. These audits included an audit of feed safety – hygiene, traceability and channelling of ABP and derived products – and a general follow-up audit. The latter of the two was postponed until 2025. The audit on feed safety was conducted with the relevant supervising official agencies.

Representatives of the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team were not in attendance, as the DAFM leads the policy in the area of ABP and derived products (including pet food).

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continues to carry out foreign surveillance inspections in Ireland to ensure that food business operations in Ireland that supply food to the United States meet the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). In September 2024, the FDA carried out six inspections of FBOs in Ireland. The implementation of any corrective action in response to non-compliances raised by FDA inspectors is monitored by official agency personnel in so far as they relate to compliance with EU or national food legislation. Representatives of the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team were in attendance during these audits.

The Authority also continues to represent and participate on behalf of Ireland in the European Commission-chaired National Audit Systems (NAS) Network. The Authority attended two NAS meetings in 2024 and participated on various NAS working groups on the updating and review of NAS reference documents.

5.5.2 Food fraud investigations

During 2024, authorised officers from the FSAI, together with other State regulatory authorities and official agencies, conducted 219 investigations, comprising 133 protected disclosures, 64 other investigations and 22 online investigations. These investigations required a variety of approaches, including engagement with the reporting persons, collaboration with official and other State agencies, and the monitoring of social media sites and posts in cases where the online operation of unregistered food businesses was suspected.

Outcomes from protected disclosures and investigations in 2024 resulted in seven Closure Orders, two Prohibition Orders, two Compliance Notices and two Improvement Notices.

Food safety concerns identified during these investigations necessitated the removal and disposal of more than 70,500 kg of products of animal origin and products of non-animal origin.

On behalf of the Authority, the Audit, Incidents and Investigations functional area acts as the national food fraud contact point for the European Commission. During 2024, the FSAI participated in two EU Agri-Food Fraud Network meetings.

The Authority continues to participate in the Food Industry Intelligence Network (FIIN) and meets with members of the management board on a quarterly basis. FIIN is a UK-based food industry network that collects, analyses and shares data on raw material and ingredient testing as well as information and intelligence. In Ireland, the Authority sits on the Emerging Risks and Threats Forum, which is jointly chaired by Ibec and the FSAI.

During 2024, authorised officers from the FSAI, together with other State regulatory authorities and official agencies, conducted 219 investigations, comprising 133 protected disclosures, 64 other investigations and 22 online investigations.

5.5.3 Food incidents: Alerting the public

A key aspect of liaison with both the food industry and the official agencies is dealing with food incidents. Food incidents occur when a food is either:

- Suspected of posing a risk to consumers' health
- Non-compliant with food law.

In either situation, a fast risk management response is required in order to remove unsafe or, as appropriate, non-compliant food from the market and alert consumers in cases where a risk to their health has been identified.

The FSAI's Food Incidents team is the national contact point for the EU Alert and Cooperation Network (ACN), which includes the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), a network for exchanging information between its members – EU Member States, the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) – on hazards identified in food, feed and food contact materials. The FSAI's Food Incidents team 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 World Health Organization.

In 2024, the EU Member States issued 5,250 RASFF dealt notifications. Of these, 101 were originally raised by Ireland. There were 37 notifications related to food which had been produced in Ireland and 227 notifications related to foods distributed throughout Ireland.

In 2024, the Food Incidents team dealt with 796 food incidents, which required a 24/7 response capability. This is an increase compared to the total number of food incidents in 2023 (773). However, the broad numbers do not reflect the increased complexity of incidents that involved complicated distribution chains, which required the coordination of multi-agency responses and third-country engagement and involvement.

Of the 796 food incidents notified to the FSAI in 2024, 496 were “full food incidents”, the most serious category. One of the key activities of the Food Incidents team is the management of food-related incidents together with FSAI staff and staff in the inspection and laboratory services, the official agencies and the affected food businesses, in order to ensure the removal of unsafe food from the market and the communication of the associated risk to consumers. A total of 126 public warnings about food being recalled from the market were issued in the form of food alerts (68) and food allergen alerts (58), an overall increase in comparison to 2023 figures (71).

In 2024, 68 food alerts advising the public not to consume unsafe food were issued. The principal reasons for food alerts in 2024 were the presence of a direct or indirect threat to consumers' health and interests, such as the presence of foreign matter,

chemical contaminants or pathogenic microbes such as *Salmonella* or *Listeria*. In 2024, the Food Incidents team managed several significant incidents of public health concern.

In addition to the 68 food alerts, the FSAI issued 58 food allergen alerts. Allergen alerts are issued when a food contains 1 or more of the 14 categories of allergens that are legally required to be declared on the label and has failed to do so. Three in every one hundred people in Ireland have food allergies, and as such it is important that consumers are notified of any product which contains an undeclared allergen. Subscribers to the Authority's alert system are informed of these alerts by text message.

In 2024, the FSAI reacted to several incidents of significant public health concern, such as *Salmonella* Hessarek in duck eggs, norovirus in oysters, three outbreaks of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) and peanut contamination of mustard powder which had been imported from India via the UK.

In 2024, the Food Incidents team dealt with 796 food incidents, which was a 3% increase on the 773 food incidents dealt with in 2023.



5.5.3.1 Peanut contamination of mustard powder imported from India via the UK

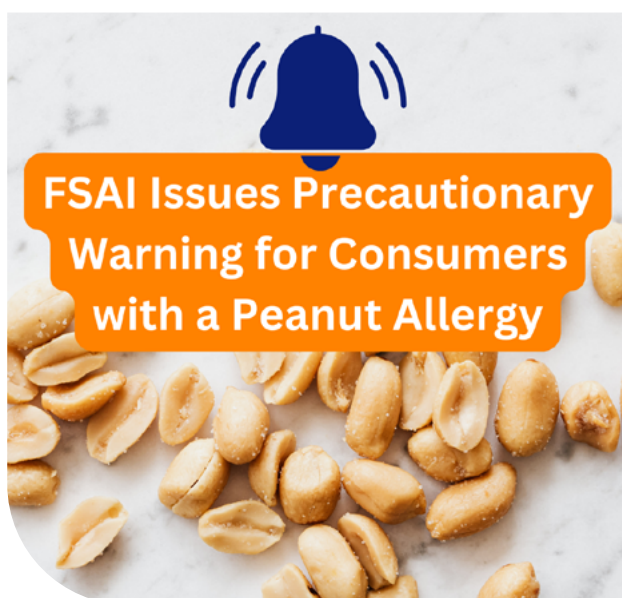
The FSAI responded to a serious incident relating to mustard powder that was contaminated with peanut, which had been imported from India into the UK by an FBO which used the powder as an ingredient in a wide range of products that were subsequently distributed throughout Ireland and the UK. Investigations carried out by UK authorities determined contamination of the mustard had likely happened at primary production level, as mustard plants were

grown in close proximity to peanuts and potentially transported in recycled bags used for both products. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) UK also determined that the UK importer did not have adequate cross-contamination controls in place, further compounding the issue. This resulted in the FSA issuing an instruction for the FBO to remove all its products from the market, some of which had been exported to Ireland.

As a result of this incident, the FSAI actioned recalls of multiple products and published 17 accompanying allergen alerts for products containing mustard powder that potentially contained peanut.

In addition, the FSAI issued an advisory note to industry informing it of the problem and requesting it to carry out verifications on the safety of its supply chains. The FSAI also carried out checks to determine if any Irish businesses were importing directly from the affected Indian suppliers, and none were found.

There were no complaints of illness or anaphylaxis related to this incident in Irish consumers. No members of Irish industry notified the FSAI that their supply chains had been impacted on foot of the FSAI's advisory note instructing them to evaluate their mustard supply chains.



5.5.3.2 *Salmonella* Hessarek in duck eggs

The FSAI in collaboration with the NEHS of the HSE, the DAFM and public health colleagues in the HSE responded to an outbreak of human illness of *Salmonella* Hessarek associated with the consumption of duck eggs. On foot of that investigation, the FSAI issued a recall for [Salmonella-positive duck eggs](#), issued a [press release](#) and [re-issued our advice to consumers on the importance of cooking duck eggs thoroughly](#).



FSAI reminds consumers on cooking duck eggs before consumption

5.5.3.3 Outbreaks of STEC

The FSAI, in collaboration with the NEHS, the DAFM and public health officials, investigated three outbreaks of illness linked to STEC. The first outbreak, caused by STEC O26, was linked to raw cow's milk, leading to a recall and the publication of a food alert. For the second outbreak, also involving STEC O26, no specific food source was identified despite investigations into various foods, including berries, flour and salads. Environmental or waterborne transmission could also not be ruled out.

For the third outbreak, caused by STEC O157, domestically grown herbs and salad leaves like kale, coriander and basil were considered as potential sources. However, no definitive food vehicle was identified, and environmental or waterborne transmission could not be ruled out.

5.5.3.4 Outbreak of suspected norovirus

The FSAI, in collaboration with the NEHS, and HSE public health officials investigated an outbreak of illness at an event in June 2024. Multiple cases of illness were reported, none of which sought medical care, thus preventing laboratory confirmation of the cause. A large proportion of the event's attendees reported consuming oysters in their food histories and displayed symptoms characteristic of norovirus infection. However, no oysters remained at the event following reports of illness, so no food sampling of the suspect batch could be taken. Follow-up investigations with the supplier of the oysters detected norovirus in another separate batch, leading to a voluntary recall of the oysters. Heavy rainfall leading to overflow events is suspected to have contributed to the oysters being contaminated with norovirus.

5.6 Dr Wayne Anderson

Director, Food Science and Standards

The Food Science and Standards (FSS) functional area has a team of dedicated scientists and administrators who work together to expand our knowledge and expertise, which they apply to protect consumers' health and interests.

In addition to risk assessments, FSS work includes developing compliance aids and drafting technical guidance for the food industry and enforcement officers, providing expert support for food incidents and investigations, coordinating national sampling plans in conjunction with the FSAI's official agencies, conducting direct official controls on certain foods and providing technical insight for Government Departments into the development of food legislation at EU level.

The FSS functional area ensures that the best scientific advice is available to the FSAI through management and support of the FSAI Scientific Committee, which consists of 15 independent scientists appointed by the Minister of Health. It contributes to the wider scientific community by providing lectures at third level and delivering papers at national and international scientific meetings. Its scientists collaborate extensively with EFSA and provide technical input into the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which sets international food safety standards.

5.6.1 Supporting food law enforcement

The official agencies strive for consistent, effective and efficient food law enforcement, which is carried out by their inspection officers and official laboratory staff. The FSS functional area supports this effort with scientific and technical advice. In 2024, along with official agencies, we co-created the 2025 Coordinated Control Plans on Contaminants (CCPC) in Food, submitted the data from the 2023 and 2024 CCPC to the European Commission, as well as compiled science-based chemical sampling priorities for the HSE National Chemical Sampling Programmes for 2025. The FSS team also provided expert input into the DAFM's 2024 control plans for veterinary medicines and its 2025–2027 control plan for pesticides. FSS chemical safety scientists, working with a University of Limerick postdoctoral researcher funded by Research Ireland, progressed development of an automated risk-ranking model for chemicals in food based on a concept developed by the FSAI Scientific Committee.

Pushing new boundaries, the team coordinated the first collection and collation of use level data on certain food additives by food businesses with the help of staff working in the food industry and official agencies. The team will submit these data to EFSA in 2025.

In 2024, the FSS team, in collaboration with the RACB training team, developed and delivered a course on infant formula labelling for DAFM inspectors. FSS also provided technical advice to the Enforcement Policy team to update official agency guidance on cocoa and chocolate products, provided training to the NEHS, updated the FSAI information on bottled water in response to the introduction of

the new Drinking Water Directive and made a significant contribution to the revision of *Code of Practice No. 5: Food Incidents and Food Alerts* by the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team.

FSS team members often provide the technical knowledge to help resolve larger, more complex food incidents and foodborne disease outbreaks. In 2024, examples of where such technical expertise was required for risk management included: peanut contamination of mustard, detection of *Cronobacter* in specialised powdered infant formula, two foodborne outbreaks of toxigenic *Escherichia coli* (STEC), an outbreak of *Salmonella* Hessarek linked to duck eggs, a case of infant botulism and an incident of *Listeria monocytogenes* in smoked fish. FSS scientists also provided specialist advice to assist in five audits and investigations during 2024.

In 2024, the FSS team continued to perform direct official controls on foods where technical expertise was required. In this context, FSS provided technical advice on 9 genetically modified (GM) foods and 24 novel foods to the DoH and the DAFM, handled 7 queries on GM foods and 244 queries on novel foods, and provided 4 decisions for food businesses on the novel food status of specific food products. In the area of foods for specific groups (FSGs), FSS utilised specialist nutrition and dietetic expertise to assess the safety and FSG legislation compliance of 200 foods for specific medical purposes, 82 infant formulas and follow-on formulas and 5 total diet replacements. Non-compliance issues with these foods were identified and mostly addressed with the manufacturers, with only one issue being escalated for further enforcement activity by the FSAI Risk Manager. In the area of health and nutrition

claims regarding FSGs, 112 compliance checks were completed by the FSS team and one health claim dossier was received and checked by FSS before transmission to the European Commission. In addition, 42 notified food supplements and 20 FSGs were checked for compliance with the additives legislation.

5.6.2 Strengthening science and evidence

In 2024, the FSAI Scientific Committee met 3 times and reviewed its 5-year workplan while work on 6 draft opinions continued in the various subcommittees. The Committee signed off on advice *The suitability of analytical methods for assessing food authenticity*. This and advice completed in December 2023, *Assessment of the safety of "probiotics" in food supplements*, were published both on the FSAI website as well as, under a new initiative, in the EFSA journal *Food Risk Assess Europe*, giving global reach to the work of the Scientific Committee.



In 2024, FSS scientists produced 206 risk assessments to support food safety incidents and investigations. Of these, 52 were on biological safety, 54 on chemical safety, 15 on nutritional safety and 85 dealt with the area of food science and technology. We also conducted a detailed risk assessment on the food additive glycerol (E 422) in slush ice drinks and issued food safety advice on the FSAI website in conjunction with the RACB team.

FSS scientists maintained FSAI influence on the direction of important food safety research by serving on the steering boards of eight major national research programmes funded by the DAFM and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), covering topics such as the safety of horticulture foods, control of mycotoxins, safety and shelf life of smoked foods and active packaging for shelf-life extension of packed fish. FSS scientists continued to work in a European consortium developing emerging risk tools called FoodSafeR. Along with the HSE, the FSS team completed food survey reports on the microbial safety of bottled water and on the microbiological safety of coated/breaded chilled and frozen food made from poultry meat intended to be eaten cooked. Both reports will be published early in 2025. Further work examined caffeine-containing food supplements and studied the patterns and compliance of health claims on food. Data on zoonoses in Ireland for 2023 were collated and will be published on the FSAI website in early 2025. These 2023 zoonoses data were also submitted to the EFSA.

2024 was the third operational year of the national Food Reformulation Task Force within FSS under a service level agreement (SLA) with Healthy Ireland in the DoH. Work progressed at pace with 206 stakeholder meetings and 6 food category meetings with industry to encourage reformulation of foods. The Task Force collected over 4,500 food product labels to assess nutrition declaration details and sampled 414 products to check levels of salt, sugar and fat. It published 5 newsletters and held an annual workshop, which was attended by 76 stakeholders. It published eight reports, including work that set maximum per serving salt targets for pizza sold in the food service sector, as well as work that established reformulation targets for commercially available complementary foods.

The infographic is titled "Food Reformulation Tools and Supports" and features the FSAI logo and the Healthy Ireland logo. It includes a navigation bar with "support", "tools", and "guidance" options. A green banner states: "Each food business's food reformulation journey will be different. See some steps to get your food business started on our webpage." Below this, under the heading "Have you:", there are three green checkmark icons, each followed by a blue rounded rectangle containing text:

- ✓ Checked if your food products are listed in the 40 priority food categories for reformulation and which nutrients they are targeted for?
- ✓ Used our Decision Tree and Calculator to understand your reformulation starting point (baseline) and the nutrient composition for your food product to meet by 2025?
- ✓ Considered your reformulation strategy e.g. such as incremental reduction or ingredient substitution? Check out the case studies and useful resources on our webpage for inspiration!

5.6.3 Scientific collaboration and technical advice

The FSS team makes significant contributions to EFSA's work, including organising and hosting the EFSA Focal Point for Ireland. This continued in 2024 under a new EFSA Focal Point agreement. The Focal Point visited third level Article 36 institutions to highlight the available research funding and emphasise opportunities for collaboration with EFSA. Munster Technological University and University of Limerick became new Article 36 organisations increasing the list for Ireland to 14 institutions able to access EFSA funding. The Focal Point handled 50 requests for information through the Focal Point network.

We continue to grow our partnership with EFSA, and in 2024 the FSAI was involved in three tailor-made tasks and successfully submitted a proposal for our first led tailor-made task on "A retail prevalence study to investigate microbiological contamination levels in ready-to-eat (RTE) plant-based dairy and meat substitutes", which will start in 2025. With EFSA funding, we were also able to recruit a dedicated person to focus on EFSA communication work. Finally, FSS scientists, assisted by other FSAI staff in collaboration with EFSA, designed and delivered the *EFSA and FSAI Serious Cross-Border Threats to Health Crisis Preparedness Training exercise for 2024*. This culminated in a simulated crisis exercise in Dublin with participants from five EU Member States, four EU agencies and the European Commission.

Scientists from the FSS team participated in 4 meetings of the EFSA Advisory Forum contributing scientific advice to EFSA and 10 EFSA network meetings with EU Member States on subjects such as nanotechnology, microbiological risk assessment, zoonosis data monitoring and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

EFSA also has the European brief for identifying emerging risks, and the FSAI participated in both meetings of the Emerging Risks Exchange Network. To support this activity, the FSAI Emerging Risk Screening Group met 3 times in 2024 to consider 15 briefing notes on possible signals of emerging risk. The FSAI attended the FDI Emerging Risks and Threats Forum twice to share information on 23 emerging issues with the food industry. In addition, the emerging risk team explored new data analysis tools and created a new model for predicting algal blooms in freshwater bodies, two dashboards for EU food fraud issues and a proof-of-concept framework for identifying food supplements sold via e-commerce.

In 2024, FSS team members attended 35 expert meetings and 5 meetings of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed. They also provided 11 briefing documents for the DoH on issues leading to votes for adoption of new EU legislation. One particular issue regarding a proposed ban on smoked flavourings required particular technical input from FSS scientists in support of the DoH.

In 2024, the FSAI collaborated with EFSA to design and deliver the *EFSA and FSAI Serious Cross-Border Threats to Health Crisis Preparedness Training exercise*.

On the international stage, Codex Alimentarius Commission meetings is where global food standards are agreed. The FSS team represented Ireland at the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods and the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. The FSS team provided technical input on standards under discussion, as well as participated in an e-working group developing a code of practice on prevention and reduction of cadmium in foods. FSS scientists also attended the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Working Party on the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds.

5.6.4 Engagement and communication

FSS scientists deal with many queries from stakeholders, both directly and through the FSAI Advice Line. In 2024, they responded to 510 queries. Of these, 37 related to chemical safety matters, 35 to nutrition, 157 to biological safety, 25 on food allergens, 244 to novel foods and 12 to other food technology issues. The FSS team responded to 14 media queries and provided extensive briefing on the safety of slush ice drinks.

During 2024, the FSS updated three chemical safety fact sheets on the FSAI website and the web information on health claims. Work continued on development of an EU Guide on shelf-life studies specifically related to the control of *L. monocytogenes* in RTE foods, as well as a national guide to environmental monitoring for *L. monocytogenes* for food businesses.

The FSAI engaged frequently with the food industry and its trade bodies, including FDI, whose regulatory affairs committee the FSAI attended on four occasions, each time providing briefs on legislation development at EU level, updates on FSAI activities and presentations on specific issues.

FSS scientists are also active in national and international conferences and meetings where they provide technical food safety and legislative information to a wide range of audiences. In 2024, they delivered eight presentations at international meetings on topics like risk management metrics, novel foods and microbiological risks. They also delivered seven presentations at national meetings. The FSS team published 3 abstracts and 1 peer-reviewed paper in the nutrition field and continued to support third-level institutions by delivering 16 lectures to both undergraduate and postgraduate students at 7 different universities and technological universities.

In 2024, FSS team members responded to 510 queries. Of these, 37 related to chemical safety matters, 35 to nutrition, 157 to biological safety, 25 on food allergens, 244 to novel foods and 12 to other food technology issues.



06

Stakeholder engagement

Collaboration is one of the Authority's core values. Only by working with our stakeholders and our international partners can we achieve our goal of consumer protection. The Authority recognises the value and commitment of its national partners and collaborators in delivering a comprehensive system of controls for food safety and authenticity during 2024.

In addition to the FSAI's engagement with its regulatory partners, the academic community and consumers, the Authority regularly engages with a number of relevant national and international stakeholders with the aim of maximising the safety and authenticity of Ireland's food.

In 2024, the Authority's stakeholders played key roles in disseminating the FSAI's messages and safeguarding Ireland's food systems. For example,

the Authority continued to maintain its close relationship with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Northern Ireland in 2024. This partnership, enabled through a Memorandum of Understanding, allows common issues related to the 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 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Loughs Agency and the Authority outlines the assistance that the Loughs Agency provides to the operation of the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme in Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough. During 2024, the Authority's collaboration with Safefood continued on issues of mutual interest, with a new MoU being finalised. The Authority also collaborates with 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 HPRA and the EPA.



Image 9. Photograph of Dr Pamela Byrne (FSAI) and Dr Gary Kearney (Safefood) finalising a new MoU in 2024

The Food Reformulation Task Force is a new strategic partnership between the FSAI and Healthy Ireland at the DoH. The purpose of the Food Reformulation Task Force is to implement the *Roadmap for Food Product Reformulation in Ireland*. The achievements of the Food Reformulation Task Force are detailed in [*The Food Reformulation Task Force Progress Report 2024*](#).

The Authority is an 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, but are not limited to: Bord Bia, Sport Ireland, Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland and the NSAI. The FSAI continues to be a member of Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI), a consortium of five Irish Government organisations that is led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The mission of SFSI is to share Ireland's core agri-food expertise with partner countries overseas in order to help them to build sustainable, safe and efficient value chains in agriculture and food. The Authority is also represented on the Board of the Irish National Accreditation Board.

6.1 European engagement

Engagement with our EU partners and legislators continued in 2024, with the FSAI's continued participation in expert groups of the European Commission and European Council, as well as participating as Ireland's representative in the Management Board, Advisory Forum and other groups within EFSA.

The Authority worked with heads of food agencies in other EU Member States to share best practice in enforcement approaches and collaborated in developing guidance in order to support enforcement and contribute to the work of the European Commission. During 2024, members of the Authority participated in the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies group's plenary meetings as well as working groups on food supplements, e-commerce, import controls, private assurance schemes and sustainable food systems.

6.2 Other engagement

In accordance with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, the FSCC facilitates consultations with a broad group of representatives from the Authority's stakeholders, including from the consumer base, the food industry, the inspectorate and academics representing the food sector.

In 2024, the FSCC hosted three meetings of the Council, in which various topics were discussed. These meetings covered a broad spectrum of the work carried out within the FSAI, including a presentation by Ruth Conefrey, Training & Compliance Manager, on the FSAI's work on training and compliance, including a consultation on the new FSAI e-learning platform. The FSAI also informed the Council of a new forum launched for industry on the topic of e-commerce, with the inaugural meeting taking place during December. The Council members were consulted during 2024 as part of the development of the new strategy plan and were invited to attend the launch of the FSAI *Strategy 2025–2029*, which took place in the FSAI office in December 2024.

A new subgroup within the Council was launched in 2024 to facilitate discussions and gather stakeholder views relating to a proposed food hygiene rating system for Ireland. This subgroup will work in conjunction with the Scientific Committee, which is also exploring this topic on behalf of the FSAI. During 2024, colleagues from the FSA of Northern Ireland (Kathryn Baker and Una Campbell) were invited to give a presentation on a similar food hygiene rating system recently launched in their jurisdiction. In December 2024, the Chair of the FSCC attended a meeting of the FSAI Board to discuss the work of the Council during the year.

On 1 October 2024, the FSAI hosted a conference in Dublin Castle to celebrate the 25th anniversary since the FSAI was established in 1999 under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 and the first service contracts between the FSAI and the official agencies. The conference, titled “Towards 2049: Shaping the Future of the Food Safety Control System”, provided a unique opportunity for senior level inspectors across the official control system to engage in high-level discussions about the future of the food safety system in Ireland. The conference was attended by over 185 people representing Government Departments, official agencies and official laboratories, as well as by participants from other national and European bodies. Some key themes from the event included the importance of increased collaboration, sharing of data to support the evidence basis for our work in an evolved food safety control system and the expanding legislative basis under which we work.



Image 5. Members of the FSCC and the FSA of Northern Ireland in the FSAI office in 2024

The FSAI continued to be the national contact point for INFOSAN, a joint initiative between the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The initiative involves 189 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.

The FSAI's Director of FSS is an active member of the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF). In addition, the FSAI continues to host foreign delegations who wish to learn more about its strategy and operations.

In 2024, the FSAI Award at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition was awarded to the project titled “Are air-fryers really as healthy as we think?”. The winners, from St Mary’s High School in Cork, investigated how levels of acrylamide differ between chips cooked in an oven and chips cooked in an air fryer.

In February 2024, the Authority published comprehensive industry and consumer research it had undertaken, which found that consumers believe that food safety in Ireland has improved in the past 5 years, with some 9 in 10 people considering food in Ireland to be safe. Overall, food safety concerns also decreased among food industry professionals due to a combination of what they perceive to be robust regulations, increased knowledge of food safety procedures and robust controls by food inspectors.

The attitudinal research conducted by Ipsos B&A showed that more than 3 in 4 (76%) food businesses cited the increased costs of doing business as the top issue affecting the industry. This was followed by concerns over the availability of staff (46%). The research also highlighted that, despite increased confidence among consumers that Irish food is safe to eat, numerous food safety issues remain for food businesses. Food allergens, food hygiene and handling, as well as food poisoning rank as the greatest food safety concerns for Irish food businesses, with over a third of food businesses listing these in their top three concerns. Overall, there is strong confidence in food safety measures among industry and consumers, with the industry also acknowledging the importance of food safety regulations in Ireland.



Image 6. Dr Pamela Byrne (FSAI), Ms Hildegard Naughton (TD) and Ms Ann Horan (FSAI) at the launch of the FSAI’s national attitudinal research results

6.3 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 to increase their compliance with food safety legislation through providing training and compliance events. The Authority has five industry fora which enable structured and focused engagement with specific parts of the food sector: the Artisan Forum, the Retail Forum, the Food Service Forum, the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee and the E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum. The FSAI meets with its industry fora in order to provide food industry professionals with a platform to discuss issues with, and obtain important information from, the Authority. The meetings allow the Authority to raise any ongoing issues with those working in the industry and create awareness of regulatory and legislative changes.

6.3.1 Artisan Forum

Artisan Forum members are a diverse and dynamic group of artisan, small-scale and domestic food producers. The Forum focuses on food safety management within production systems, emphasising traditional methods and not necessarily commercial volume. The Forum provides a useful setting through which such producers and regulators can engage, interact and exchange information and perspectives.

The Artisan Forum met three times in 2024, but communications continued throughout the year. Among the topics discussed were exemptions for small and local production of eggs, raw milk, parasites in fish, a proposed food hygiene rating system, dry ageing of beef, greenwashing practices such as false or misleading sustainability claims, official access to laboratory results and organic food standards.

The presence of chemicals in food – such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in smoked foods and residues of veterinary medicines – and the possible impact this might have on human health was a salient topic. The possibility of labelling foods with information on pesticides used on its ingredients was also raised.

The issue of official control harmonisation was also a recurrent topic, with the Forum seeking to develop approaches to influence third-level training of food safety professionals.

During 2024, the FSAI brought to the Forum's awareness various matters, including regulatory changes of relevance to the group and information on the FSAI's training portal and other guidance resources published to assist FBO compliance.

Concerns with regard to the authenticity of honey imported to the EU were discussed in detail in 2024, with the FSAI providing awareness of ongoing official control efforts to manage such risks, including incoming changes to honey origin labelling requirements and the European Commission's Honey Platform developing laboratory methods for verifying honey authenticity. The Forum also voiced its support for a Future Foods project that was presented by a representative from Teagasc, where the focus will be on using offal from animals to reduce waste.

During 2024, the Forum agreed some modifications to the Terms of Reference to clarify a role for the FSAI in bringing awareness of policy changes to the group, as well as a potential role for the Forum in formulating views on policy advice independently of the FSAI.

2024 involved a review of membership and attendance of the Forum, of both primary members and alternates, with some departures of previous forum members and the arrival of new members, contributing to the vibrancy, currency and value of the group. The FSAI is very grateful for the contribution of time and effort, and the commitment to food safety, by individual members of the Artisan Forum.

6.3.2 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 to share best practice. The Retail Forum held three virtual meetings in 2024, where the main issues discussed were the Food Reformulation Task Force, food incidents,

the E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum, marketing standards for fruit and vegetables, divergence, food supplements, the Honey Fraud Working Group, labelling of poultry meat standards, the Deposit Return Scheme and glycerol in slush ice drinks.

6.3.3 Food Service Forum

The Food Service Forum draws its membership from catering businesses, food service businesses and representative organisations. It disseminates food safety advice, shares best practice and improves understanding of relevant food legislation. The Forum held two virtual meetings in 2024 in which the main issues discussed were the war in Ukraine, the FSAI Learning Portal, food hygiene rating systems, glycerol in slush ice drinks, the E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum, food supplements and xanthan gum.

6.3.4 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 Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee is chaired by the Authority and includes representatives from a number of stakeholder groups. During 2024, the Committee met four times and discussed a wide range of issues, including issues relating to viruses and bacteria, water quality in classified production areas, sanitary surveys, sample coordination, and legislative developments. The SFPa and the Marine Institute provided operational and scientific updates, while other stakeholders provided user feedback on the operation of the monitoring programmes.

6.3.5 E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum

In October 2024, the inaugural meeting of the FSAI E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum marked a pivotal step towards addressing the evolving regulatory challenges in the online food business sector. The Forum facilitated open dialogue between key stakeholders, including the FSAI, official agencies, industry representatives, consumer groups and technology experts. It provided a platform for sharing insights, discussing emerging regulatory issues, and collaborating on the development of effective policies and guidelines tailored to the digital food marketplace. This collaborative approach aims to enhance consumer safety, ensure consistent regulation and build strong partnerships between regulators and industry stakeholders in order to support a safer, more transparent online food environment.

6.4 Regulation of e-commerce

In addition to establishing the new E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum in 2024, the FSAI also formed a Cross Official Agency E-commerce and Online Food Business Working Group to develop and share knowledge and expertise, and to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of official controls in this rapidly growing and dynamic industry sector.

The FSAI worked with the HSE in relation to FBOs' responsibilities for registration and other requirements of food law relevant to e-commerce FBOs and online platforms that facilitate the delivery of prepared food from restaurants and takeaways. The increasing prevalence of these operators requires the development of new regulatory approaches to food law enforcement.

During 2024, members of the Environmental Health team participated in EU working groups on general food law, e-commerce, food supplements, food information and labelling, official controls and import controls, contributing to the development of legislation at EU level. In addition to this, the team provided expert advice to the DoH in relation to food legislation.





07

Corporate social responsibility and organisational development

The FSAI is committed to developing its team and operating in a socially responsible manner. As a government agency, the FSAI is aware of the impact that its activities can have on its stakeholders, wider society and the environment, and this awareness informs the way the Authority operates, as well as its vision of “Safe and trustworthy food for everyone”. This section contains information on the activities that the Authority undertakes in order to both comply with regulations and give back to stakeholders.

7.1 Minimising environmental impact

The FSAI remains committed to fulfilling its statutory duties in an environmentally friendly manner. The FSAI offices are based in The Exchange building in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), Dublin. In 2024, the Exchange building achieved a Platinum certification in the LEED rating system, which reflects overall sustainability based on energy performance enhancements, energy cost savings and comfort level improvements, some of which included initiatives that had been supported by the FSAI. Introducing a blended working arrangement for staff has enabled the FSAI to reduce its carbon footprint.

The FSAI has also encouraged staff to use public transport, cycle or walk when coming into the office. This has allowed the FSAI to work and engage with stakeholders in a way that reduces its environmental impact and the Authority's carbon footprint, thus contributing to Ireland's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The FSAI is on target to meet the 2030 CO₂ targets (30,328 kgCO₂ in 2024 versus 32,051 kgCO₂ target in 2030 and 114,600 kWh final energy consumption versus 453,963 kWh in 2016 and a GHG baseline of 344,886 kWh). This noted reduction in energy consumption year-on-year from 2016 onwards demonstrates the FSAI is meeting its GHG targets. The FSAI continues to receive a high rating from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) as part of its annual legislative energy returns. Following an energy audit to assess whether it met the requirements of Regulation 6 in S.I. No. 426/2014 – European Union (Energy Efficiency) Regulations 2014, the FSAI progressed energy saving recommendations and further improved energy management practices during 2024. Finally, a member of the FSAI's Senior Leadership Team was nominated as the Climate and Sustainability Champion, in line with the requirements of the SEAI, with responsibility for implementing and reporting on actions taken by the FSAI to comply with the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

7.2 Knowledge transfer

Each year, the FSAI allocates time to the education of the future generation of food scientists and food safety inspectors, as well as those studying for a career in regulatory agencies, by delivering lectures and seminars across Ireland and providing student internships and placements in the FSAI. During 2024, student training was provided through offering student placements in the FSAI and by staff giving lectures at third-level institutions. A Student Placement Day took place in July 2024, during which directors from the FSAI, along with a past placement student, held a question-and-answer session with students on placement in the FSAI and spoke about their career journeys to date.



Image 7. Photograph of the Student Placement Day 2024

As part of the FSAI's lecture series, further outreach at third-level institutions included staff members delivering lectures at different universities and technical universities.



Image 10. The FSAI's lecture series was promoted on the FSAI's social media channels throughout the year

7.3 Fundraising

The FSAI team believes in the importance of giving back and in 2024, the team organised several fundraising initiatives for charities. In continuation of our long-standing tradition, a collection was also organised for the Cedar House Crosscare Homeless Shelter.

7.4 Organisational culture

One area of focus for the FSAI's Senior Leadership Team is the continuous improvement of the team's working environment. We ensure that our staff are supported in their roles through a number of means, one of which is that the **Staff Committee** and its subcommittees organise and promote initiatives to improve our team members' experience. These initiatives aim to improve inclusivity, recognition and workplace well-being within the FSAI. The Committee and its subcommittees are also the official mechanism through which staff can provide feedback to the leadership team.

Ensuring that the Authority has a culture based on its core values, particularly in a blended working model, the Values Group continued to promote and embed the FSAI's values into the daily work experience during 2024.

Ensuring that staff members feel like they belong on the team has also been an area of focus for the Senior Leadership Team. In 2020, it created the **Belonging@FSAI** team, which has been committed to creating a workplace culture where fairness is promoted, diversity is celebrated and staff and stakeholders feel valued. The Belonging@FSAI team achieves this by encouraging inclusion in all that the Authority does, celebrating difference and embedding real change into the way we do things in order to help the FSAI feel like a place where all our staff belong.

The Belonging@FSAI team is guided in its activities by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty legislation, and by the guidance document *Our Public Service 2020: Promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*.

The Belonging@FSAI team, together with the FSAI HR team and supported by the FSAI Board and Senior Leadership Team, has introduced various initiatives in order to succeed in our diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) mission as well as comply with the relevant legislation. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, staff and Board inductions and staff training in areas such as unconscious bias and psychological safety training.

Some of our 2024 activities involved culture information sessions, including: highlighting different celebrations such as International Women's Day, Pride Month and International Men's Day; implementing some of the recommendations from an accessibility audit of the FSAI office; and inviting staff to complete the e-learning modules from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

In addition, our business plan contains a specific objective relating to DEIB, and there are sections on DEIB on both our public website and internal intranet. Through these activities, we hope to embed DEIB in our workplace culture at the FSAI, creating an environment in which staff thrive and feel like they belong. In 2025, we will continue our DEIB journey.

The following is a high-level overview of the committees that were in place in the Authority during 2024.

The **Staff Committee** is a representative group of staff from across the FSAI. It provides a forum for consultation and communication on topics that support the continuous improvement of the Authority. In late 2024, the Staff Committee rolled out a staff survey designed to review and improve staff's experiences of working in the FSAI. The results of the survey will be presented to FSAI staff in 2025. Subcommittees of the

Staff Committee include the following:

- **The Health and Safety Committee** continued to deliver upon its mandate throughout 2024, which included the FSAI Safety Statement update with consideration for blended working arrangements. The Health and Safety Committee Work Plan 2024 objectives were met with the support of a cross-functional area team.
 - **The Staff Well-being Group** aims to support the well-being of FSAI staff by organising events and activities that promote both physical and mental well-being, as well as by bringing staff together to support one another.
 - **The Social Committee** organises social events for staff that serve to enhance employee engagement and connection, and support work-life balance.
 - **The Green Team** identifies and implements solutions to help the FSAI operate in a more environmentally sustainable fashion, while also educating, inspiring and empowering employees with regard to sustainability.
 - **The Working@FSAI Committee** was set up at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and was originally focused on supporting the team to deliver on its work programme. In 2024, in addition to extending the existing blended working policy, the Committee introduced a system for booking desks within the FSAI office in line with the central
- Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations, which promotes the use of shared workspaces managed by a desk-booking system and underpinned by a clean desk policy. This system is in place to ensure that all staff are treated with fairness and respect, in line with the FSAI values. At the end of 2024, after successfully meeting its key objectives, the Committee was disbanded and its work subsumed by the Staff Committee.
- **The Innovation Team** has been central to promoting a culture of creativity and continuous improvement, in line with both the FSAI's strategic objectives as well as Ireland's Public Service Innovation Strategy. A key highlight of 2024 was the FSAI's participation in Public Service Transformation Week – an event that allows public service organisations to showcase their journeys in transforming people, processes, technology and innovation – reinforcing our commitment to the Better Public Services strategy. Public Service Transformation Week provided a platform for the public service to highlight the extensive innovation and transformation happening across the sector, demonstrating the improved services it provides to the Irish public. As part of its participation in Public Service Transformation Week, the FSAI's Innovation Team organised several internal events, including a special session for staff on Advanced Data Analytics in Food Safety Regulation as well as the launch of Design Thinking Masterclasses to help staff better understand and apply this methodology in addressing processes, solving problems and fostering innovation.



08

Appendices

Appendix 1

Industry fora members

Artisan Forum, 2024

- **Dr Mícheál O'Mahony**
(Chairperson), FSAI
- **Blathnaid Bergin**,
Food safety consultant
- **Darina Allen**,
Slow Food Ireland/Ballymaloe
Cookery School
- **Dave Lang**,
Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland
- **Donal Lehane**,
Chair of Community Food Group
- **Eoin Cluskey**,
Bread 41
- **Hugh Maguire**,
Maguires Butchers
- **John Brennan**,
The Organic Centre
- **John Cunningham**,
Beekeeper
- **John Kent**,
Poultry producer
- **Kevin Brennan**,
Teagasc
- **Kevin Sheridan**,
Sheridans Cheesemongers
- **Libby Carton**,
Kinnegar Brewing
- **Mary Regan**,
Regan Organic Farm
- **Niamh Hegarty**,
BKultured
- **Sally Barnes**,
Woodcock Smokery
- **Tom Dinneen**,
CÁIS

Food Service Forum, 2024

- FSAI (Chair)
- Gather and Gather
- Eddie Rockets (Ireland) Limited
- Vintners' Federation of Ireland
- Restaurants Association of Ireland
- Aramark
- McDonald's
- Irish Healthcare Catering
Professionals Association
- Irish Hotels Federation
- Irish Prison Service
- Euro-Toques Ireland
- SSP
- KFC
- Sodexo UK and Ireland

Retail Forum, 2024

- FSAI (Chair)
- Musgrave Group – SuperValu, Centra,
Daybreak
- Retail Ireland, Ibec
- Aldi
- Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied Trades
Association (RGDATA)
- Avoca
- Sysco
- Dunnes Stores
- BWG Foods
- Boots
- Lidl Ireland
- Circle K
- Tesco Ireland
- Barry Group
- Gala Retail
- Marks & Spencer

Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee, 2024

- **Mr David Lyons and Ms Úna Walton** (Chairpersons), FSAI
- **Mr Dave Clarke, Mr Conor Duffy, Dr Sinead Keaveney, Mr Joe Silke and Mr Patrick Costello**, Marine Institute
- **Ms Patricia Daly, Ms Vicky Lyons, Ms Joanne Gaffney and Dr Gary McCoy**, Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- **Dr Sarah Buckley, Ms Aileen O'Sullivan, Ms Susan Coughlan, Mr Marc Shorten and Mr Bernard O'Donovan**, SFPA
- **Ms Teresa Morrissey, Mr John Harrington, Mr Pat Mulloy, Mr Finian O'Sullivan, Mr Kian Louet-Feisser, Mr Des Moore and Ms Nadia Ferguson**, Irish Shellfish Association and processing industry
- **Ms Valerie Hannon, Ms Kate Harrington, Ms Maeve O'Reilly, Ms Claire Cremin and Ms Marie Feehan**, Irish Water
- **Mr Liam Ó Súilleabháin**, EPA

E-commerce and Online Food Business Forum, 2024

- FSAI (Chair)
- Amazon UK
- Boots
- BWG Foods
- Cocoabyjudit
- DEMC Food Services Limited
- Dunnes Stores
- Helen O'Connell Food Safety Consultant Limited
- HelloFresh
- FDI, Ibec
- Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA)
- Just Eat
- The Lunch Bag
- Musgrave Group – SuperValu, Centra, Daybreak
- NIQ Brandbank
- Nutritics
- Olio
- SMC Food Safety Management Consultants
- Sysco

Appendix 2 Scientific Committee: Subcommittee members

Biological Safety Subcommittee, 2024

- **Dr Geraldine Duffy**
(Chair), Teagasc
- **Dr Declan Bolton**,
Teagasc
- **Dr Michael Callanan**,
Munster Technological University
- **Professor Theo de Waal**,
University College Dublin
- **Ms Anne Dwan**,
HSE
- **Professor Séamus Fanning**,
University College Dublin
- **Professor Cormac Gahan**,
University College Cork
- **Dr Patricia Garvey**,
Health Protection Surveillance Centre
- **Dr Montserrat Gutierrez**,
DAFM
- **Dr Sinead Keaveney**,
Marine Institute
- **Professor Noel McCarthy**,
Trinity College Dublin
- **Professor Grace Mulcahy**,
University College Dublin
- **Dr Lois O'Connor**,
Health Protection Surveillance Centre
- **Dr Helen O'Shea**,
Munster Technological University
- **Professor Fiona Walsh**,
Maynooth University

Chemical Safety Subcommittee, 2024

- **Dr Andrew Flanagan**
(Chair), Public Analyst's
Laboratory, Dublin
- **Mr Alan Breen**,
DAFM
- **Professor Enda Cummins**,
University College Dublin
- **Ms Jenny Fortune**,
HSE
- **Professor Iouri Gounko**,
Trinity College Dublin
- **Ms Rosemary Hayden**,
Irish National Accreditation
Board (INAB)
- **Ms Ita Kinahan**,
State Laboratory (retired)
- **Dr Celine Mannion**,
DAFM
- **Dr Declan McKernan**,
University of Galway
- **Associate Professor Tara McMorrow**,
University College Dublin
- **Dr Breige McNulty**,
University College Dublin
- **Dr Finbarr O'Regan**,
DAFM
- **Professor Fiona Regan**,
Dublin City University
- **Dr Craig Slattery**,
University College Dublin

Public Health Nutrition Subcommittee, 2024

- **Professor Kevin Cashman**
(Chair), University College Cork
- **Dr Annemarie Bennett**,
Trinity College Dublin
- **Dr Cathy Breen**,
HSE
- **Professor Lorraine Brennan**,
University College Dublin
- **Professor Eileen Gibney**,
University College Dublin
- **Dr Laura Kehoe**,
Munster Technological University
- **Dr Eamon Laird**,
Atlantic Technological University
- **Dr Sinéad McCarthy**,
Teagasc
- **Professor Helene McNulty**,
Ulster University
- **Dr Emeir McSorley**,
Ulster University
- **Professor Anne Molloy**,
Trinity College Dublin (retired)
- **Dr Anne Nugent**,
Queen's University Belfast
- **Dr Lisa Owens**,
St James's Hospital
- **Dr Lisa Ryan**,
Atlantic Technological University
- **Dr Audrey Tierney**,
University of Limerick
- **Dr Janette Walton**,
Munster Technological University
- **Ms Fiona Ward**,
DoH
- **Professor Mary Ward**,
Ulster University

Ad hoc Subcommittee on Analytical Methods, 2024

- **Ms Ita Kinahan**
(Chair), State Laboratory (retired)
- **Professor Martin Danaher**,
Teagasc
- **Dr Conor Graham**,
Atlantic Technological University
- **Dr Montserrat Gutierrez**,
DAFM
- **Professor Alan Kelly**,
University College Cork
- **Professor Kieran Kilcawley**,
Teagasc
- **Mr David Lee**,
Public Analyst's Laboratory, Cork
- **Dr Ed Malone**,
State Laboratory
- **Professor Anne Molloy**,
Trinity College Dublin (retired)
- **Dr Tom O'Callaghan**,
University College Cork

Ad hoc Subcommittee on Food Hygiene Rating Systems, 2024

- **Professor Dolores O'Riordan**
(Chair), University College Dublin
- **Ms Ann Marie Part**,
HSE
- **Ms Siobhan McEvoy**,
DoH
- **Ms Sara Boyd**,
Technological University Dublin
- **Mr Mark Elliott**,
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, UK
- **Associate Professor Joe McGrath**,
University College Dublin
- **Professor Anne Molloy**,
Trinity College Dublin (retired)

Appendix 3 Statement of Board members', Chief Executive Officer's and Scientific Committee members' interests (1/01/2024–31/12/2024)

Board member	Commercial interest		Non-commercial interest	
	Name of organisation	Nature of interest	Name of organisation	Nature of interest
Prof. Francis Butler	Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, UK Food Standards Agency	Committee Member	–	–
	International Scientific Advisory Board, Saudi Food and Drug Authority	Board Member		
Prof. Martin Cormican	None	–	Green Party	Member
			Land for wilding	Landowner
Ms Mary Cullen	None	–	None	–
Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan	Health Information and Quality Authority	Board Member	–	–
Ms Ann Horan	Glanbia	Ordinary shares	None	–
	Associated British Foods	Ordinary shares		
Mr Patrick Knight	Irish Aviation Authority	Independent non-executive Board Member	None	–
Ms Lisa Manselli	None	–	None	–
Mr Gerard McCurdy	None	–	None	–
Ms Eilis O'Brien	None	–	None	–

Chief Executive Officer	Commercial interest		Non-commercial interest	
	Name of organisation	Nature of interest	Name of organisation	Nature of interest
Dr Pamela A. Byrne	Coolestown Irish Draughts Limited	Owner of land and Director of company	EFSA	Vice Chair of the Management Board
			Irish Management Institute (Subsidiary of University College Cork – a public sector body)	Chair, Executive Training Provider
			Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre	Chair of Governance Board
			Global Food Regulatory Science Society (not for profit)	Vice President
			Horse Sport Ireland	Director

Scientific Committee member	Commercial interest		Non-commercial interest	
	Name of organisation	Nature of interest	Name of organisation	Nature of interest
Prof. Kevin Cashman	None	–	None	–
Dr Geraldine Duffy	None	–	None	–
Prof. Séamus Fanning	Dawn Farm Foods Limited	Scientific Advisor	None	–
Dr Mark Fenelon	None	–	None	–
Dr Andrew Flanagan	None	–	None	–
Dr Montserrat Gutierrez	None	–	None	–
Prof. Alan Kelly	None	–	None	–
Ms Ita Kinahan	None	–	None	–
Prof. Anne Molloy	None	–	None	–
Dr Lois O'Connor	None	–	None	–
Prof. Dolores O'Riordan	Kerry Group	Shares	None	–
Ms Ann Marie Part	None	–	None	–
Prof. Dagmar Stengel	None	–	None	–
Prof. Martin Wilkinson	No return received	–	No return received	–

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

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