

02 COORDINATE
NATIONAL RESPONSE,
CONDUCT SURVEILLANCE
AND MONITORING

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Introduction

Monitoring food hazards

Food incidents

Food recalls

Introduction

FSANZ performs a critical coordination function in the food safety system, bringing government agencies, industry, consumer and public health representatives together when needed.

Post-market control measures, such as incident response, recalls, surveillance and monitoring are important in minimising harmful effects and to maintain confidence in the food supply. These activities help to ensure that regulatory and non-regulatory activities are achieving their intended objectives.

FSANZ's work on risk management is a complementary part of this important role. A focus for FSANZ in the coming years is to be responsive to the developing needs of the community to have a better understanding of and confidence in the sources of food. A major focus of our work with industry and others will be the development of stronger systems of traceability so that any response can be immediate and targeted.

Monitoring food hazards

Monitoring

Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation (ISFR) Surveillance and Monitoring Working Group

FSANZ is Chair of the ISFR Surveillance and Monitoring Working Group, a group that formally replaced the Food Surveillance Network in 2014. This working group is an effective forum for jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand to discuss, plan and implement strategic food monitoring and surveillance activities. The working group proposes joint monitoring and surveillance work of national and bi-national significance on a yearly basis and implements these activities through its three-year, forward-looking Coordinated Food Survey Plan.

This year FSANZ completed the 24th Australian Total Diet Study and initiated a follow-on study on phthalates to determine levels of chemicals that may migrate from food packaging into food.

Surveys

Australian Total Diet Study (ATDS)

The most accurate estimate of consumers' dietary exposure (intake) to pesticide residues, contaminants and other substances can be determined by conducting a Total Diet Study. FSANZ undertakes such studies regularly to ensure that existing food regulatory measures adequately protect consumer health and safety.

The second phase of the 24th ATDS, published in January 2016, focused on food packaging chemicals, including: bisphenol A, epoxidised soy bean oil, phthalates, perfluorinated compounds and printing inks. The ATDS found that consumers' exposure to packaging chemicals is low. However, the screening study identified that a follow-up analytical survey needed to be done for two phthalates: di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate and diisononyl phthalate. This follow-up survey has begun. The results will allow a better estimate of dietary exposure for these two chemicals.

The 25th ATDS, which is investigating the concentrations of metal contaminants, agricultural and veterinary chemicals and radionuclides in Australian foods, is ongoing. Analytical results were received and reviewed.

Heavy metals in shelf-stable fruit

In 2015–16, FSANZ conducted a survey of domestic and imported shelf-stable peach, pear and apricot (in cans, tubs or snack packs) for concentrations of arsenic, lead and tin. The survey analysed 37 supermarket products and eight catering products. The report published in December 2015 found no evidence of non-compliance or any reason for public health and safety concerns.

Pharmaceuticals in weight loss products

In April 2016, FSANZ published an analytical survey of the levels of scheduled pharmaceuticals in weight loss products available in Australia. No pharmaceuticals were detected in 34 of 36 products. Oxedrine, which is a scheduled medicine and also occurs naturally in citrus species, was detected in two products. A detailed risk assessment on the affected products concluded that there are no public health and safety concerns associated with estimated exposure levels, when used according to label instructions.

Food incidents

Food incident response capability

During 2015–16 the Bi-National Food Safety Network (Network) was utilised 15 times. This Network was established in 2014 for health, agriculture and food agencies to routinely share and assess information regarding current food safety issues. Issues dealt with in 2015–16 included multi-jurisdictional outbreak investigations, such as *Salmonella* in lettuce products and *Salmonella* in mung bean sprouts.

Developing links with industry is another important part of the Network. FSANZ hosted the second National Food Safety Incident Response workshop in December 2015. Sixty participants from government and industry² attended the workshop. Topics included:

- a review of the recalls of coconut products
- exploring ways to effectively reach small business and importers to inform and educate on recalls, responsibilities and obligations
- identifying potential food-related issues that could challenge government and industry in the next five years
- determining how best to communicate the national food incident response process to industry and the public.

These workshops provide an opportunity to network and share ideas with colleagues and industry associates to gain a better understanding of challenges and hurdles in food safety incident management, as well as communicate with other regulators, associations, and industry representatives. The next workshop will be held in February 2017.

2 AusVeg; Australian Beverages; Produce Marketing Association — Australia and New Zealand; Australian Renderers Association; Australian Chicken Meat Federation; Australian Lot Feeders Association; Australian Egg Corporation Limited; GSF Australia; Australian Mushroom Growers Association; Barden Produce; GS1 Australia; Houston's Farm; Fresh Care; Unilever; Dairy Australia; Fresh Produce Group; Harris Farm Markets; Primary Industries and Regions South Australia-South Australian Research and Development Institute; Food and Beverage Importers' Association; NSW Farmers Association; Australian Food and Grocery Council; Woolworths Limited; Metcash Trading Limited; Coles Supermarkets Australia Pty Ltd; ALDI Stores; NSW Food Authority; Victorian Department of Health and Human Services; Safe Food Production Queensland; Dairy Food Safety Victoria; Department of Agriculture and Water Resources; South Australia Health; New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries; Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; Western Australia Health; Australian Government Department of Health; Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment; ISFR Chair, and the Communicable Disease Network Australia.

Food recalls

In the event that an unsafe food finds its way into the marketplace, the Australian jurisdictions, FSANZ and food businesses collaborate to withdraw that food from sale or, if already sold, to ask consumers to return the product to the place of purchase.

Statistics for 2015–16

There were **98** food recalls coordinated by FSANZ from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (Figure 1). The recalls were mainly due to undeclared allergens (Figure 2).

FSANZ seeks input on our performance from all companies who have undertaken a recall. In addition, FSANZ also provides a report on the performance of the food recall system to the implementation Sub-Committee for Food Regulation.

Figure 1: Number of recalls by month 2015–16

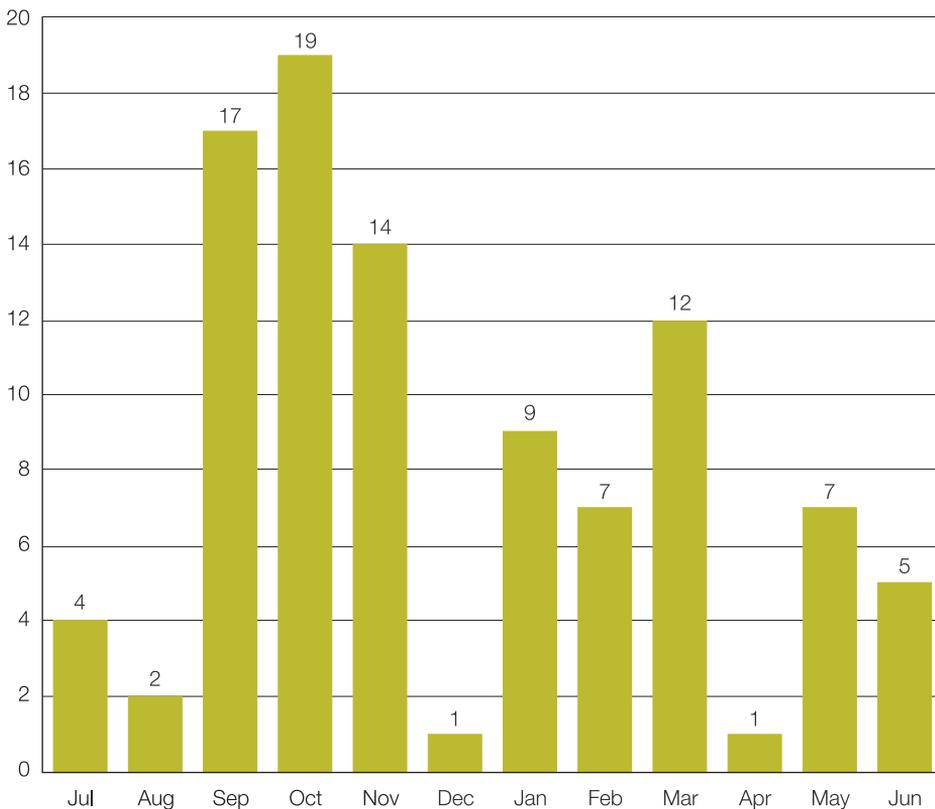
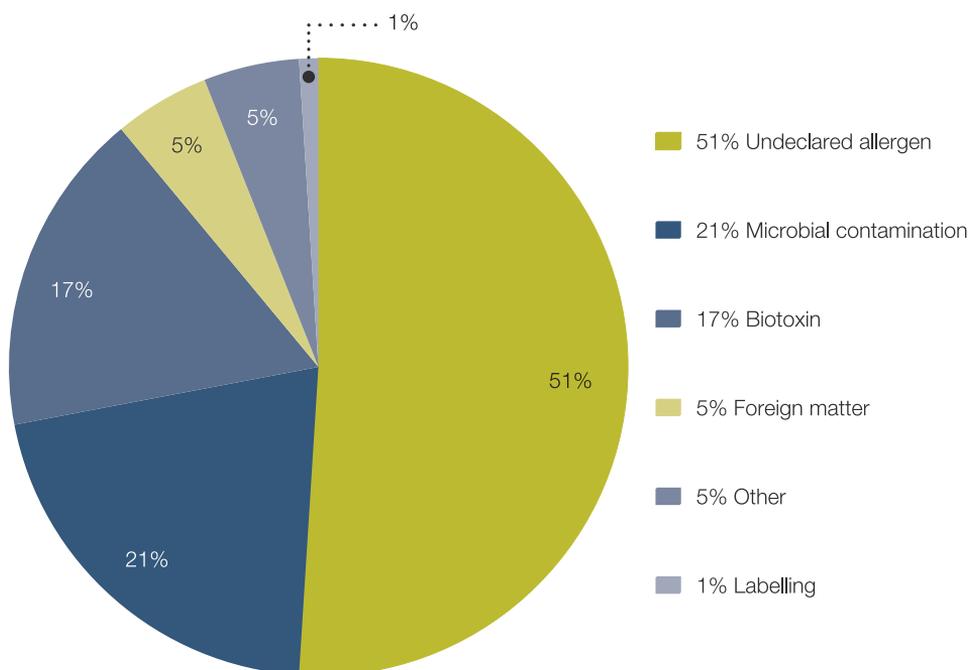


Figure 2: Proportion of food recalls coordinated by FSANZ in 2015–16, by recall category



Food Recall Plan template

FSANZ has produced a Food Recall Plan template aimed at small to medium enterprises (including importers). The template is ready to be used by businesses that need to develop or revise their own food recall systems and includes:

- quick reference contact information — business, suppliers and customers, and government
- business preparedness including product traceability, staff training, review of the recall plan and paying for a food recall

- a step-by-step guide for the food recall process
- attachments to use as templates and other useful information.

The Food Recall Plan template can be adapted to suit different food businesses' situations and requirements and is available for download from the FSANZ website.

Food recall tasks and timeline infographic

FSANZ has developed an infographic on food recall tasks and timeline.

This infographic is aimed at small to medium enterprises who have limited experience conducting a recall. The infographic provides information on what needs to be done by a company undertaking a recall, and by when, for customers, government, media and consumers in the event of a recall.

The infographic is available to download from the FSANZ website.

Food Incident Forum

The Food Incident Forum, a government and industry network, was established on 25 February 2016. The first issue to be considered, raised by the New South Wales Food Authority, concerned the increase in *Salmonella* Saintpaul cases, particularly in South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

The Food Incident Forum resulted from discussions between government and industry during 2015 on enhancing response arrangements. Its purpose is for government and industry to share information and collaborate on:

- potential food safety issues to determine if they are food safety issues and how prepared government and industry is, should they eventuate
- actual food safety incidents, including response and recovery.

Food Incident Forum activities may include:

- undertaking analysis of potential issues to determine whether they are potential food safety issues
- identifying the scope/location of the problem
- validating/verifying intelligence
- identifying/determining consistent testing methodologies
- coordinating industry data to inform/validate food issue/incident
- developing consistent communication messages and media responses (as appropriate)
- advising on relevant stakeholder and communication linkages
- facilitating better use of industry networks
- facilitating better use of government networks.

Information was provided for members to circulate to their immediate networks and provide any data or information on possible sources of *Salmonella* Saintpaul; or information on product flows that may be common to South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Food safety culture

Despite the development of quality assurance schemes, food safety management systems, hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) and legislation, food safety incidents still occur. Internationally and domestically, these incidents are often linked to non-compliance with food hygiene procedures or food handler error, often despite being trained, audited and assessed. The concept of 'food safety culture' is being actively looked at by industry and government.

Food safety culture is how and what the employees in a company or organisation think about food safety and the food safety behaviours that they routinely practice and demonstrate.

Delivering a food safety culture involves:

- leadership — creating a food safety vision, setting expectations, inspiring others to follow
- employee confidence — that the organisation values food safety
- managers demonstrating visible commitment — walk the talk
- accountability — everyone understands the food safety performance expectations of their job and are accountable for them at all levels

- sharing practice and knowledge — not just training but focussing on the gap between knowledge and its application in the workplace
- following best practice and understanding how the practices might be linked together or how they might influence each other and behaviour.

Many food businesses may already be fulfilling elements of a food safety culture but not be aware. Businesses assessing their food safety culture provides the opportunity to recognise what is and isn't already present and will form the foundation upon which food safety culture can be built or further enhanced.

FSANZ is developing a number of resources including guidance and checklists for creating and implementing food safety culture in businesses.

Traceability

FSANZ has continued to consult with industry on improving traceability during recalls and incidents, particularly working towards:

- defining and aligning data requirements across the food supply chain
- sharing information more quickly and accurately between local, state and commonwealth agencies
- identifying a consistent implementation approach for growers, producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and food service operators.

During 2015–16, FSANZ has been looking for a framework that is broader than specific food/product categories and is investigating the United States developed Critical Tracking Event/Key Data Elements (CTE/KDE) framework. The potential application of this tool in the Australian setting will be progressed during the latter part of 2016.

Review of Safe Food Australia

In 2015–16, FSANZ has been reviewing Safe Food Australia (2001 edition), the widely used explanatory guide to food safety standards.

FSANZ has consulted broadly with stakeholders including state, territory and local food enforcement agencies and food businesses, to identify how the guidance could be improved to address current food safety issues and trends. State and territory agencies have provided strong in-kind support and guidance material to be incorporated.

The revised edition has been drafted and includes:

- information on contemporary food processes and displays
- more scientific background to the food safety requirements
- collated information for temporary and mobile premises and for home-based businesses
- new best-practice examples and anecdotes
- links to jurisdictional guidance and other useful resources.

Final consultation with the state and territory enforcement agencies is now underway to ensure the revised Safe Food Australia will be up to date and fit for purpose. The guide will be available from the FSANZ website in the latter part of 2016.

Review of microbiological criteria

FSANZ continued its review of microbiological criteria during 2015–2016, establishing revised limits for powdered infant formula in the Food Standards Code through Proposal P1039.

Microbiological criteria included in the Food Standards Code will be referred to as food safety criteria and apply to food for sale. Process hygiene criteria are also being developed in collaboration with enforcement agencies and industry.

Microbiological testing is one of a number of indicators of effective process control in production areas and during processing. It can't be used as a sole measure of compliance or in isolation from other measures; rather it is used as an indicator of an effective food safety control system operating within a business. These criteria will apply at different stages throughout the food chain to:

- support and verify effective application of control measures
- provide information to food business operators on microbiological levels which should be achieved when applying best practices
- assist in identifying situations (products and processes) requiring corrective action.



During 2015–16, FSANZ and state and territory food regulatory agencies consulted with the poultry industry to finalise guidance on verifying the effectiveness of controls for the production and processing of poultry.

Process hygiene criteria and revised guideline criteria for ready-to-eat foods will be published on the FSANZ website in the publication *Compendium of Microbiological Criteria for Food*. This compendium will be updated and added to as each stage/commodity group is assessed and relevant process hygiene included, along with appropriate commentary as to its application. The dairy, meat and seafood sectors will be a focus for 2016–17.