Food Standards Agency
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ANNUAL REPORT OF INCIDENTS

REPORT
2015

This report acts as a public record of incident levels for reference purposes. It presents numbers and types of incident notifications to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) during 2014 that had the potential to impact on the safety of food or feed.

Incidents are defined broadly, and differ widely in types, causes, severity and the route of reporting. The report includes breakdowns of the number of reported food and feed incidents by incident categories, notifier, country of origin, and food commodity type.

The FSA will investigate incidents to determine whether there are any food safety implications. Where appropriate, it will then take action to safeguard the public. The FSA's Incident Database records the official audit trail of the investigations. It is the main source of the figures in the report.

The FSA also arranges the issue of food alerts to local authorities, other government departments, trade organisations, and Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notifications to the European Commission. Furthermore, as part of its incident prevention strategy, the FSA monitors food and feed safety patterns in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and promotes awareness, good practice and information sharing.

We try to always meet the needs of our users. If you have any feedback on the publication please send it to robin.clifford@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk. In particular, we would welcome your views on the changes planned for next year's report. Details of the proposed changes can be found at www.food.gov.uk/about-us/publications/busreps/miscbusrep

Executive summary

In 2014, the Food Standards Agency was notified of and investigated 1,645 food, feed and environmental contamination incidents in the UK. The overall number of incidents was similar to those seen in recent years. However, in most categories, the numbers of incidents differ considerably from year to year.

The four largest contributors to the total number of recorded incidents in 2014 were:

- microbiological contamination (24%)
- veterinary medicines (13%)
- environmental contamination (12%)
- natural chemical contamination (9%)

Microbiological contamination: This is the only category where incidents have been consistently increasing over time, from 147 in 2006 to 390 in 2014. In 2014, almost a third of microbiological contamination incidents (32%) resulted from shellfish bed monitoring. High counts of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) are used as an indicator of poor hygiene conditions in harvesting areas.

Veterinary medicines: The frequency of veterinary medicine incidents in 2014 was about five times the average in the years 2006 to 2012. This reflects a change in reporting procedures. The FSA is now notified of more results from on-going surveillance programmes.

Environmental contamination: In 2014, fires were the cause of almost four out of every five environmental incidents (79%). Almost all of the remainder referred either to spills and leaks or to contamination by heavy metals.

Natural chemical contamination: Algal toxins and mycotoxins (mainly aflatoxin) accounted for 87% of natural chemical contamination incidents in 2014. Mycotoxins can arise from certain moulds growing on cereals, nuts, spices and other foodstuffs. Algal toxins are a result of naturally occurring algal blooms and are potential contaminants of shellfish.

More than half of the incidents in 2014 were reported by local authorities (403), EU Member States and the European Commission (246) or central government bodies (266).

In 2014, 61% of incidents originated within the United Kingdom, including almost all of the environmental contamination incidents. Another 9% of incidents were related to foods from the rest of the EU, while about 21% were due to imported foods from outside. The origin of the remaining 9% could not be identified.

Action taken to protect consumers in relation to food safety included issuing 90 alerts and information notices to local authorities. The FSA also sent 279 notifications to the European Commission, via the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF).

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Context of the statistics

An incident is defined by the FSA as:

> ‘Any event where, based on the information available, there are concerns about actual or suspected threats to the safety or quality of food and feed that could require intervention to protect consumers’ interests.’

Incidents fall broadly into two categories:

- Incidents involving accidental and deliberate contamination of food or animal feed in the processing, distribution, retail and catering chains. These incidents may result in action to withdraw the food from sale and, in certain circumstances, to recall, alerting the public not to consume potentially contaminated food.

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

The number of food incidents notified is affected by various factors:

- Many types of incidents occur sporadically and so tend not to be spread evenly across time.

- The number of notifications related to a given issue will depend on the level of testing and investigation being carried out. This is turn influenced by changing concerns and priorities as new issues emerge and others are managed.

- Food business operators and local authorities are legally obliged to report every food incident that they identify. However, the frequency of notifications by other organisations and government bodies can be affected by revisions to reporting practices and policies.

- Natural chemical contamination incidents are likely to be influenced by the weather, as are fires and other environmental contamination incidents.

- The correct classification of notifications can be a matter of judgement, particularly where an incident involves multiple threats to safety or quality.

Therefore the number of notifications will not generally be a reliable indicator of the underlying level of food risk. It is also more a measure of how many incidents the FSA have been made aware of, rather than the extent of the FSA's response.

Known issues that may have influenced the number of notifications in 2014

1. In recent years, the reporting of monitoring results of shellfish harvesting areas has changed. The classification of an area may change if the level of *E. coli* exceeds the relevant maximum. Since 2012, such exceedances in Scotland have been recorded as incidents, although this is not routine practice in the rest of the UK.
2. Commission Implementing Decision 2014/88/EU imposed a temporary suspension of imports of paan leaves from Bangladesh from 13th February 2014 (which was subsequently extended to 30th June 2015) following persistent evidence of Salmonella contamination. This has most likely led to a decrease in such incidents.
3. One in ten of all consignments of paan leaves from India and Thailand had to be sampled and tested under Commission Regulation (EU) 669/2009, from 1st April 2014 to 1 January 2015. This may have improved detection of non-compliant consignments and may have deterred others from being imported.
4. Specific conditions applicable to the import of okra from India were imposed by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 885/2014 in August 2014, which repealed and replaced Commission Regulation (EU) No. 91/2013. Increased pesticide sampling of Okra from Vietnam was imposed from January 2013, although only two consignments were imported into the EU in 2014.
5. For several years, there has been a Statutory Surveillance Programme of residues of veterinary medicines in food producing animals. However, exceedances from this programme were not routinely recorded as incidents until late 2013. This will have substantially increased the notification of veterinary measures incidents in 2014.
6. Each year the National Coordinated Risk-based Food and Feed sampling Programme sets different priorities for Enforcement Authority risk-based sampling and surveillance. The levels of investigation may influence the numbers and types of incidents identified. The priorities for 2014/15 included:

    - undeclared species in meat and meat products
    - food contact materials from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong.
    - undeclared sulphites in dried fruits.
    - absence of peanut or almond labelling.
    - dangerous body building products
    - unauthorised health claims.

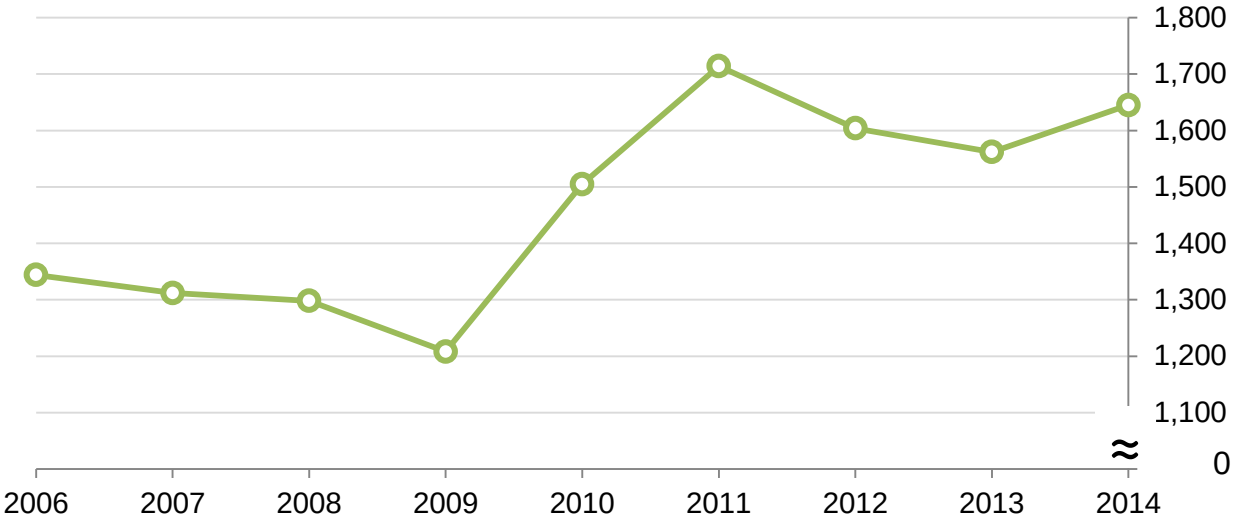
    Full details can be found at www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/food-priorities-2014-2015.pdf
7. Since March 2011, Regulation (EU) No. 284/2011 has laid down specific conditions and procedures for the import of polyamide and melamine plastic kitchenware originating in or consigned from People's Republic of China and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. These additional checks were introduced because of previous high incidence of non-compliance.
8. Imports of certain feed and food of non-animal origin, from particular non-EU countries, that are considered to be 'high-risk' are controlled under Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 and its subsequent amendments. This prescribes the frequency of checks that must be carried out. The current list of products can be found at eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:JOL_2015_084_R_0003&from=EN

9. On 13 December 2014, new legislation (the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation No. 1169/2011) came into force that changed how allergenic ingredients information is presented on pre-packed food labelling. It also introduced new requirements for food businesses to provide allergy ingredients information on food sold unpackaged.

Total number of incidents

In 2014, the FSA was notified of and investigated 1,645 incidents. This is a similar number to the previous three years. Overall, the frequency of reported incidents has increased over the last nine years. There were 301 more incidents reported in 2014 than in 2006.

Figure 1: Incidents notified to the UK Food Standards Agency, 2006 – 2014



The most common incident category is Microbiological contamination. In 2014, 24% of all notifications fell into this category. This was almost as many incidents as the next two largest categories combined: Veterinary medicines and Environmental contamination.

Figure 2: Incidents by incident category: UK, 2014

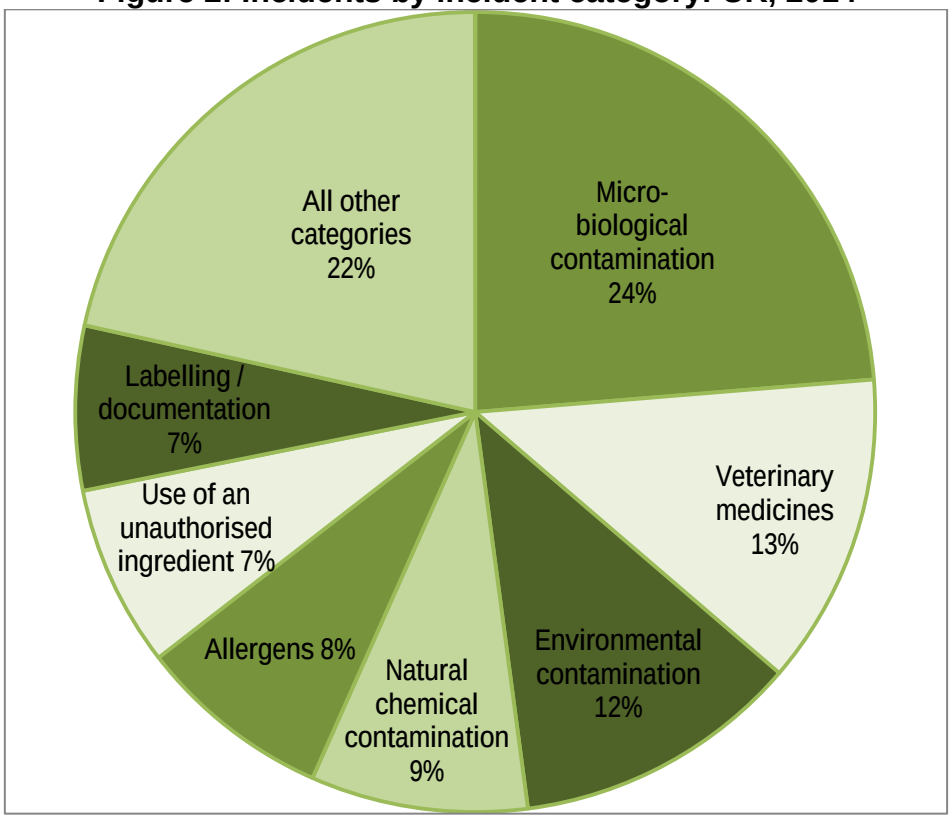


Table 1: Incidents by FSA category: UK, 2006 - 2014

Category	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Allergens	61	86	84	86	79	114	129	91	129
Animal feed contamination[1]	9	10	13	10	8	28	27	16	12
Biocides	2	0	1	2	2	0	3	4	1
Counterfeit products	6	3	6	7	11	11	9	23	21
Environmental contamination	376	226	186	211	342	356	235	239	191
Food contact materials	15	26	35	50	37	40	49	29	23
Illegal import / export	16	17	7	14	16	9	6	36	39
Irradiated ingredients	14	23	10	6	7	4	13	0	5
Labelling / documentation	93	82	126	77	95	120	127	132	109
Microbiological contamination	147	163	186	218	271	281	317	322	390
Natural chemical contamination	169	215	230	150	228	285	213	147	144
On-farm	99	160	139	144	122	134	107	87	89
Pesticides	20	35	16	28	55	102	120	114	48
Physical contamination	139	123	110	56	116	93	107	118	78
Process contamination	15	21	14	19	9	4	16	31	25
Radiological	11	14	6	7	4	7	4	3	2
TSE[2]	10	8	4	9	9	10	14	11	0
Use of an unauthorised ingredient	52	46	66	70	59	67	83	82	121
Veterinary medicines	78	45	47	36	31	47	24	75	207
Water quality	12	9	12	8	4	2	1	2	7
Unclassified	--	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Total	**1,344**	**1,312**	**1,298**	**1,208**	**1,505**	**1,714**	**1,604**	**1,562**	**1,645**

1. Refers to animal feed on the market.
2. Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy

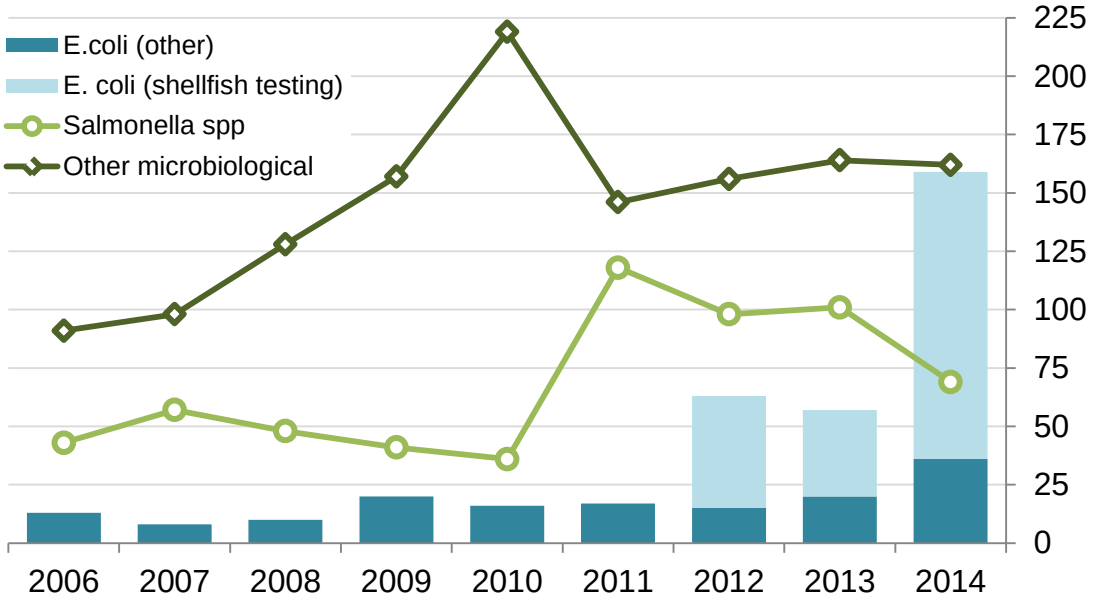
Key movements for individual incident categories

The overall number of incidents in 2014 was similar to those seen in recent years. However, in most categories, the numbers of incidents differ considerably from year to year. This section summarises the key changes for individual incident categories in 2014.

Microbiological contamination

The annual number of microbiological incidents has progressively increased each year. Between 2006 and 2014, the number of microbiological incidents has more than doubled (from 147 to 390). However, as Figure 3 shows, there have been very different trends for the most common types of bacterial contamination.

Figure 3: Microbiological contamination incidents by type: UK, 2006 - 2014



The number of incidents relating to *E. coli* contamination has sharply increased in recent years. This is caused by increased reporting of shellfish monitoring as described in "Known issues" 1 on page 5. In this context, high *E. coli* counts are used to identify poor hygienic conditions in harvesting areas.

In 2014, there were 123 *E.coli* incidents related to shellfish monitoring. This is more than double the numbers per year in 2012 and 2013. The increase appears to reflect natural factors such as variation in weather, rather than a change in reporting policy or monitoring. The number of *E. coli* incidents in 2014 is also about twice the level in previous years. There is not any obvious common cause.

Up until 2014, more microbiological contamination incidents were related to *Salmonella* than to any other identified bacterial species. Many of the *Salmonella* incidents in this period were associated with contaminated paan leaves, mainly from Bangladesh. Although no "paan leaves" incidents were recorded before 2011, they accounted for about half of the *Salmonella* incidents from 2011 to 2013. However, only 13 such incidents were reported in 2014, probably as a result of the import restrictions described in "Known issues" 2 and 3. Consequently, the total number of *Salmonella* related incidents for 2014 has dropped to nearer the pre-2011 levels.
The reported number of other types of microbiological contamination incidents also increased since 2006. The upward trend until 2009 does not have an obvious particular cause. In contrast, the peak in 2010 can largely be attributed to many norovirus notifications between January and

April 2010. There were 62 virus-related incidents in 2010, compared to 18 or fewer per year in other years. Since then, any upward trend has been less pronounced in the reported number of other types of microbiological contamination incidents.

Pesticide residue contamination

The number of pesticide residue incidents rose in 2010 and stayed at a higher level until 2014. A large part of this increase was associated with okra leaves from India. In contrast, there was only one such pesticide incident in 2014. This may be the result of the import restrictions described in "Known issues" 4. The number of pesticides incidents in 2014 was closer to the pre-2010 levels.

Veterinary medicines

The number of veterinary medicine incidents in 2014 was about five times the average number per year between 2007 and 2012. This appears to be largely the result of the change in reporting practices described in "Known issues" 5.

Use of an unauthorised ingredient

The number of reported incidents related to unauthorised ingredients rose from 82 in 2013 to 121 in 2014. The largest increase appears to be in notifications related to active ingredients of dietetic supplements. This may reflect the decision to make body building products as a 2014/15 sampling priority (See "Known issues" 6). There were also ten incidents related to the unauthorised colouring Rhodamine B, compared to none in 2013. It was chiefly present in Indian sweets.

Allergens

The number of allergen incidents were higher in 2012 and 2014 than in 2013 and earlier years. In particular, incidents related to sulphites, milk and lactose, and cereals including gluten appeared more frequently in those two years. Some of the increase in 2014 might be related to 2014/15 allergen sampling priorities (see "Known issues" 6). In contrast, the higher levels in 2012 were probably associated with EU legislation such as the Gluten Regulation No. EC 41/2009 coming into force.

Counterfeit products

The frequency of counterfeit product incidents in 2013 and 2014 is more than three times that over the period from 2006 to 2012. In 2013 and 2014, more than two-thirds of incidents were related to meat, whereas in 2012, most related to alcoholic beverages. This probably reflects meat authenticity being a 2014/15 priority (see "Known issues" 6), in response to horsemeat being found in beef products in early 2013.

Incidents by hazard type

It is also possible to group incidents by the Hazard classification used by the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The most commonly reported Hazard is "Pathogenic micro-organisms", and these incidents would usually fall into the Microbiological contamination incident category. The "Chemical contamination (other)" incidents mainly consist of fires. The "Residues of veterinary medical products" Hazard has very similar definition to the "Veterinary medicines" incident category. Other Hazard types are also very similar to certain Incident categories. For instance, the hazard types "Pesticide residues" "Foreign Bodies" and "Allergens" are very similar to the Pesticides, Physical contamination and Allergens categories.

Table 2: Number of Incidents by RASFF hazard category: UK, 2014

Category	2014
Pathogenic micro-organisms	377
Non-pathogenic micro-organisms	18
Mycotoxins	64
Biotoxins (other)	68
Parasitic infestation	1
Biocontaminants (other)	19
Residues of veterinary medical products	207
Pesticide residues	49
Feed additives	4
TSEs	-
Heavy metals	77
Migration	21
Radiation	7
Industrial contaminants (other)	32
Chemical contamination (other)	155
Allergens	127
Adulteration / fraud	69
Labelling absent / incomplete / incorrect	80
GMO / Novel Food	16
Food additives and flavourings	59
Composition	49
Foreign bodies	69
Poor or insufficient controls	30
Organoleptic aspects	6
Packaging defective / incorrect	6
Not determined / other	35
Total	**1,645**

Incidents by notifier type

Local authorities reported almost a quarter of all incidents in 2014. Together with central government and EU Member States, they accounted for 56% of all notifications. The number of incidents notified by EU Member States and the European Commission has noticeably risen over time. In 2014 there were 246 incidents, an increase of about 50% on 2010.

The number of notifications by the "Other" group in 2013 is more than double that reported in 2013. This increase seems to be mainly caused by increased reporting of shellfish and veterinary residue monitoring. (See "Known issues" 1 and 5.)

Table 3a: Incidents by notifier type: UK, 2010 – 2013

Notifying Organisation	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Local authorities[1]	376	297	346	359	403
Listed Central Government bodies [2]	192	231	176	227	266
EU Member States & the European Commission[3]	166	155	163	197	246
Fire services	223	246	179	177	154
Industry	95	113	139	119	125
Border Inspections Posts	233	426	397	270	93
General public	13	14	16	23	19
Single Liaison Body	83	85	71	31	14
Police	7	7	2	14	5
Scottish Agricultural College	12	5	6	4	5
Third country[4]	3	1	6	1	2
Water companies	0	28	5	6	2
Nuclear Power Stations	3	1	1	1	0
Other[5]	99	105	97	133	311
Total	**1,505**	**1,714**	**1,604**	**1,562**	**1,645**

1. Including Port Health Authorities (2 incidents in 2014).
2. This comprises of all bodies listed in Table 10b.
3. Includes RASFF notifications.
4. Any country outside the European Union and the EEA-EFTA (European Economic Area - European Free Trade Association).
5. Includes incidents recorded as being notified by "Laboratory".

The breakdown by notifiers should be treated with caution as there is evidence of inconsistences in how they have been classified. See Appendix 2 for a detailed description of the notifier types.

Table 3b: Incidents notified by certain central government bodies: UK, 2006 – 2013

Notifying Organisation	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Animal Health & Veterinary Laboratories Agency[1]	68	115	80	76	87
Department of Agriculture & Rural Development[2]	6	7	25	38	80
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	9	5	8	19	28
Public Health England (PHE)	26	21	15	18	26
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs	35	28	5	16	14
Food Standards Agency	19	19	19	25	10
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	0	0	0	7	7
Environment Agency (EA)	20	15	10	16	5
National Crime Agency (NCA)	-	-	-	0	3
Health Protection Scotland (HPS)	-	-	-	3	3
National Health Service (NHS)	5	1	2	4	1
HM Revenue and Customs	0	0	1	1	1
Department of Health (DH)	0	0	0	4	1
Maritime & Coastguard Agency	4	3	0	0	0
Ambulance Service	0	2	0	0	0
Former government bodies	0	15	11	-	-
Total	**192**	**231**	**176**	**227**	**266**

1. Now part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

2. Northern Ireland government body.

"-" indicates a period where this notifier was not in existence.

Incidents by country of origin

In 2014, more than half of incidents originated in the United Kingdom. In particular, 'on-farm' and 'environmental contamination' incidents are almost entirely of UK origin. This is because many of such contamination events are local and only occasionally have wider consequences.

Table 4: Incidents by country of origin: UK, 2014

Incident category	UK	EU	Non - EU	Unknown	Total
Allergens	67	13	18	31	129
Animal feed contamination[1]	3	0	3	6	12
Biocides	1	0	0	0	1
Counterfeit products	16	2	0	3	21
Environmental contamination	184	2	5	0	191
Food contact materials	2	3	18	0	23
Illegal import / export	3	1	28	7	39
Irradiated ingredients	1	0	4	0	5
Labelling / documentation	42	30	20	17	109
Microbiological contamination	264	42	56	28	390
Natural chemical contamination	73	12	50	9	144
On-farm	89	0	0	0	89
Pesticides	4	2	40	2	48
Physical contamination	42	23	6	7	78
Process contamination	8	8	7	2	25
Radiological	1	0	0	1	2
TSE2	0	0	0	0	0
Use of an unauthorised ingredient	12	12	75	22	121
Veterinary medicines	186	5	14	2	207
Water quality	6	1	0	0	7
Unclassified	4	0	0	0	4
Total incidents	**1,008**	**156**	**344**	**137**	**1,645**
As a proportion of total	**61%**	**9%**	**21%**	**8%**	**100%**

1. Refers to animal feed on the market.
2. Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy.

About 9% of incidents in 2014 involved foods from the rest of the EU, and 21% were related to imports from outside it. In 2014, the country of origin could not be identified or was not recorded for 137 incidents.

In 2014, the reported incidents related to food from more than 50 countries. The EU, China and the United States were the biggest contributors from overseas (156, 66 and 65 incidents

respectively). For China, the most common category of incidents was food contact materials (26%). This may reflect the raised levels of sampling resulting from "Known issues" 6 and 7. The most common category of incidents for the United States was use of unauthorised ingredients (77%), often related to additives in soft drinks and bodybuilding products as described in "Known issues" 6.

Table 5: Non-UK Incidents by country of origin: UK, 2014

European Union		Asia		Other	
Netherlands	24	China	66	United States	65
Poland	22	India	42	Nigeria	22
France	22	Bangladesh	17	Ghana	9
Germany	18	Turkey	12	Brazil	9
Ireland	17	Thailand	9	Costa Rica	8
Italy	13	Viet Nam	9	Dominican Republic	6
Belgium	12	Pakistan	8	Gambia	4
Spain	10	Philippines	4	Canada	4
Denmark	6	Indonesia	3	Egypt	4
Latvia	2	Iran	3	Peru	3
Lithuania	2	Korea, South	3	Morocco	3
Sweden	1	Israel	3	Australia	3
Slovenia	1	Sri Lanka	2	Argentina	3
Romania	1	Hong Kong	2	South Africa	2
Cyprus	1	Malaysia	2	Kenya	1
Hungary	1	Nepal	1	Sudan	1
Czech Republic	1	Myanmar	1	Barbados	1
Austria	1	Taiwan	1	Serbia	1
Malta	1	Japan	1	Faroe Islands	1
				Suriname	1
				Wallis and Futuna	1
				Madagascar	1
				Russian Federation	1
				Grenada	1
EU Total	**156**	**Asia Total**	**189**	**Other Total**	**155**

Incidents by food and feed type

Table 6a - Incidents attributable to a food commodity type: UK, 2014

Food commodity type	Number of incidents
Meat and meat products (other than poultry)	343
Bivalve molluscs and products thereof	201
Fruits and vegetables	118
Prepared dishes and snacks	83
Cereals and bakery products	72
Milk and milk products	71
Herbs and spices	58
Dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	56
Poultry meat and poultry meat products	53
Fish and fish products	47
Non-alcoholic beverages	42
Nuts, nut products and seeds	41
Confectionery	41
Feed for animals[1]	36
Other food product / mixed	27
Soups, broths, sauces and condiments	25
Crustaceans and products thereof	20
Ices and desserts	12
Cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	10
Alcoholic beverages	10
Eggs and egg products	7
Natural mineral water	6
Food additives and flavourings	5
Water for human consumption (other)	5
Honey and royal jelly	4
Fats and oils	4
Pet food	3
Wine	1
Compound feeds	1
Not attributable to a particular food commodity	243
Total incidents	**1,645**

1. Includes feed premixtures, feed materials, compound feeds, pet food and feed additives.

Incidents are associated with a wide variety of food and feed products. The food type associated with the most incidents was “Meat and Meat Products (Other Than Poultry)”. This included incidents related to livestock including 90% of On farm incidents and 83% of Veterinary medicines incidents.

The regular monitoring of UK shellfish beds accounted for more than 90% of “Bivalve Molluscs and Products Thereof” incidents. They mainly related to exceedances in *E. coli* and presence of algal toxins in harvesting areas. The majority of incidents involving “Fruits and Vegetables” related to Pesticides, Allergens and Microbiological contamination.

Between them, these three highest food commodities accounted for 40% of all food incidents in 2014. About 15% of incidents were not attributable to a specific commodity type. Most of these were caused by fires and events potentially contaminating areas of food production. Several other incidents involved potentially harmful chemicals inmaterials or articles such as cooking and eating utensils that can come into contact with a wide range of foods.

Table 6b: Incidents not attributable to a specific food: UK, 2014

Type of non – attributable Incident	Number of incidents
Related to environmental contamination	176
Related to food contact materials	23
Related to other reasons	44
Total	**243**

Food alerts and information notices

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

- Food Alerts for Action (FAFA) are issued when an incident requires enforcement action by Local Authorities.
- Recall Information Notices (RIN) are issued to inform consumers and local authorities that a food product is being 'recalled' (when customers are asked to return the product).
- Withdrawal Information Notices (WINs) are issued to inform consumers and local authorities that a food product is being 'withdrawn' from sale (taken off the shelves).
- Allergy Alerts are issued in cases where foods are being withdrawn or recalled, either because the allergy labelling is missing or incorrect, or if there is any other risk specific to consumers with an intolerance or a food allergy,.

In 2014, the Agency issued a total of 88 alerts and information notices of which 13 were updates. More than half of the alerts and notices were allergy alerts, which chiefly arise from the undeclared presence of allergens or from incorrect allergen labelling.

Table 7: Food Alerts and Information Notices by Alert Category, UK 2014[1]

Alert category	Allergy Alerts (AA)	Food Alert for Action (FAFA)	Recall Information Notice (RIN)	Withdrawal Information Notice (WIN)	Total Number
Allergens	60	-	-	-	**60**
Microbiological	-	0	14	1	**15**
Foreign Bodies	-	0	6	0	**6**
Chemical	-	0	1	0	**1**
Other	-	4	2	0	**6**
Total	**60**	**4**	**23**	**1**	**88**

1. Excluding updates.

EU RASFF Notifications

The FSA and UK Port Health Authorities also inform the Commission and other Member States of matters that they need to act on. The information is passed on using the European Commission's RASFF System. In 2014, the FSA issued a total of 279 RASFF notifications comprising 25 rapid alerts, 210 border rejection notifications and 44 information notices (source: RASFF Portal, accessed 20/02/2015).

Appendix 1: Detailed breakdown for certain incident categories

Allergens

The most frequent allergen issue was the presence of sulphites, which are used as preservatives in several foodstuffs. Many of these allergen incidents related to dried fruit, which was a 2014/15 sampling priority (see "Known issues" 6). Together the three largest categories accounted for over half of allergen incidents in 2014.

Table 8: Allergen incidents by allergen of concern: UK, 2014

Allergen	Number of incidents
Sulphites	32
Milk and lactose	22
Cereals including gluten	19
Peanuts	13
Soya	10
Tree Nuts[1]	8
Mustard	6
Eggs	4
Fish	2
Lupin	1
More than one allergen	7
Uncategorised	5
Total	**129**

1. Almonds, hazelnuts, pecan nuts, walnuts, cashew nut, pistachio, Brazil nut and Queensland or Macadamia nuts.

Environmental contamination

Almost four-fifths (151 out of 191) of environmental contamination incidents in 2014 were caused by fires. They present potential risks to food safety through contamination to crops or food stores by exposure to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are produced as by-products of the combustion of organic and fossil fuels and are potentially carcinogenic.

Spills and leaks were responsible for another 25 of the environmental contamination incidents in 2014. A further 11 incidents relate to contamination by heavy metals. Only seven environmental contamination incidents in 2014 were related to food from outside the United Kingdom. All were related to heavy metal contamination.

Counterfeit products

Of the 21 counterfeit product incidents in 2014, 13 were related to meat and meat products other than poultry.

Food contact materials

Twelve of the 23 incidents involving food contact materials in 2014 were related to primary aromatic amines (PAAs). Imports from China accounted for 17 food contact material incidents. Nine of them related to PAAs, which were a 2014/15 sampling priority (see "Known issues" 6 and 7).

Illegal Import / Export

Of the 39 Illegal Import / Export incidents, 17 related to concealed and/or unapproved products. The main issue was the illegal importation of paan leaves from Bangladesh, following the restrictions described in "Known issues" 3. Certification was missing or incorrect for 11 incidents and five incidents related to possible contamination caused by of illegal immigration.

Labelling and documentation

As in previous years, general labelling violations accounted for the greatest proportion of incidents in this category

Table 9: Incidents relating to labelling and documentation by type: UK, 2014

Incorrect labelling / documentation type	Number of incidents
General labelling violations	44
Unapproved premises	21
Documentation incorrect	19
Absent/incorrect ID or health marks	7
Unauthorised health claims	5
Date coding incorrect	5
Undeclared presence of ingredient	4
Other/ unspecified	4
Total	**109**

Natural chemical contamination

Algal toxins were responsible for 43% of natural chemical contamination incidents in 2014. These incidents referred to either notifications of shellfish poisoning or the detection of high concentrations of the biotoxins that can cause it, as a part of regular monitoring of shellfish beds in the UK. Furthermore, aflatoxins and other mycotoxins accounted for 31% and 13% of the natural chemical contamination incidents respectively in 2014.

Table 10: Natural chemical incidents by contaminant: UK, 2014

Natural chemical contamination type	Number of incidents
Algal toxins	61
Aflatoxins	45
Mycotoxins (other)	19
Scombrotoxin/ Histamine	10
Algal bloom	5
Other/ Unspecified	4
Total	**144**

Microbiological contamination

Specified bacterial incidents accounted for 85% of microbiological contamination in 2014, which included indicator and pathogenic strains of *E. coli* (41%), *Salmonella* (18%) and *Listeria monocytogenes* and other *Listeria* species (14%).

Table 11: Microbiological contamination incidents by type: UK, 2014

Microbiological contaminant species/type	Number of incidents
Escherichia coli: Shellfish monitoring	123
Escherichia coli: STEC[1]	20
Escherichia coli: Status unclear [2]	16
Salmonella species [3]	69
Listeria including *monocytogenes*	53
Bacillus species	15
Other specified bacteria	20
Viruses	15
Yeasts, moulds and fungi	9
Other [4]	50
Total	**390**

1. Clearly reported as *E. coli* O157 or other shigatoxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC).
2. Incidents unrelated to shellfish monitoring whose STEC status is not clearly identified. Also includes an incident where *E. coli* were detected along with *Bacillus* species.
3. Includes three incidents where *E. coli* was detected along with *Salmonella.*
4. Includes incidents involving poor hygienic state and high colony counts.

In total, there were 162 incidents related to some form of *E. coli* contamination. The vast majority refer to monitoring of UK shellfish harvesting areas, as described in "Known issues" 1. At least half of the remaining *E. coli* incidents relate to potentially harmful Shiga Toxin-producing *E.coli* (STEC). Where a single food commodity was identified, they were mainly associated with milk and milk products or imported herbs and spices.

Of the 53 *Listeria* incidents in 2014, at least 48 were associated with the pathogenic species *L. monocytogenes*. Of the 15 virus incidents, nine to eleven were suspected or confirmed to be related to Norovirus.

On-farm contamination

About 60% of on-farm contamination incidents in 2014 were related to the heavy metal poisoning of animals. Lead poisoning can result from the ingestion of paint and parts of dumped car batteries. Copper poisoning incidents can be caused by mistakes in the preparation of feed mixtures produced ‘on-farm’.

Table 12: On-farm contamination incidents by type: UK, 2014

On-farm contamination type	Number of incidents
Metal: Lead	45
Metal: Cadmium	6
Metal: Copper	3
Botulism	25
Biocontaminants	3
Other/Uncategorised	7
Total	**89**

The other main cause of on-farm incidents is botulism or suspected botulism in livestock, particularly cattle. The botulinum toxin types identified in animals (C and D) have rarely been associated with disease in humans, and the presence of these toxins is not considered to be a significant risk due to the low apparent susceptibility of humans to these toxin types. However, in line with general principle that diseased animals should not enter the food chain, if livestock are clinically affected by botulism then their meat and milk are restricted from entering the food chain.

Pesticide residues

Of the 48 incidents involving pesticides residues in 2014, 83% involved food imported from outside the EU. Nine incidents related to dichlorvos, whose residues were found in beans from Nigeria. Another nine incidents involved benzalkonium chloride, which was mainly found in eddoes (a tropical vegetable) from Costa Rica. The range of pesticides involved remains very diverse with no other single pesticide being identified in more than three incidents.

Physical contamination

In 2014, 18 of the 78 physical contamination incidents involved the presence of pests. Contamination by metal, glass and plastic was recorded in 16, 8 and 6 incidents respectively.

Process contamination

Eleven of the 25 process contamination incidents in 2014 related to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). These contaminants can be produced by incomplete combustion, petrochemical activities and certain types of food processes such as smoking and drying.

Use of unauthorised ingredients

Over a quarter (29%) of unauthorised ingredient incidents in 2013 were related to dietetic food supplements. Some contained banned substances used in body-building supplements and slimming aids. This may reflect the 2014/15 sampling priorities mentioned in "Known issues" 6. The other main issues related to dietetic food supplements were excessive levels of various substances in vitamin and nutritional supplements. Where a country of origin was recorded, about half of the incidents related to dietetic food supplements concerned products from the USA.

Table 13: Incidents related to the use of unauthorised ingredients by ingredient type: UK 2014

Unauthorised ingredient type	Number of incidents
Active ingredients in dietetic food supplements	35
Colourings	25
Benzoic acid and other preservatives	23
Emulsifiers and stabilizers	8
Genetic modification	7
Novel foods	5
Sweeteners	5
Uncategorised	13
Total	**121**

The most common prohibited colouring was Rhodamine B. This was found in 10 incidents, which mainly related to Indian sweets. There were 18 incidents relating to excessive levels of benzoic acid, mainly in soft drinks from the USA. The number may have been influenced by FSA activity to prevent the sale of these products on the ‘grey market’.

Veterinary medicines

Residues of over 40 different veterinary medicines were reported in 2014. Table 8 shows just the most commonly identified types. The most frequently encountered were residues of boldenone. This is a growth promotor, as are zeranol, taleranol and nortestosterone. Many of the other residues were of parasiticides like closantel or antibiotics like oxytetracycline and dihydrostreptomycin.

Table 14: Veterinary medicines by name: UK 2014

Unauthorised ingredient type	Number of incidents
Boldenone and its derivatives	31
Closantel	26
Oxytetracycline	24
Zeranol and/or Taleranol	19
Dihydrostreptomycin	15
Nortestosterone	12
Others	80
Total	**207**

Appendix 2: Who tells the FSA about incidents?

Food business operators

Food business operators have a statutory obligation to report incidents. European legislation[1] specifies the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and lays down procedures in matters of food safety.

Food business operators are required, under Article 19 of Regulation No. 178/2002, to inform the competent authorities where they have reason to believe that a foodstuff that they have imported, produced, manufactured or distributed is not in compliance with food safety requirements. In the case of the UK, the competent authorities are the Food Standards Agency and the food authorities (local and port health authorities). Both industry and local authorities can report incidents online. The online report form is available on the FSA website at: incidents.foodapps.co.uk/IncidentReportForm/login.aspx

Local authorities

Under the Food Law Code of Practice[2], local authorities have a requirement to notify the FSA of food incidents. The code of practice provides instructions and criteria that food authorities should have regard to when engaged in the enforcement of food law. Food authorities must follow and implement the provisions of the code that applies to them.

Local authorities regularly undertake inspections of premises and sample products from wholesale or retail outlets. Where breaches of food safety requirements are identified, the authority will contact the Incidents Branch using our incident report form. In 2014, Local authorities provided information to the FSA under the Single Liaison Body (SLB) system. The Food Standards Agency is the SLB for the UK as designated under Article 35 of Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004.

The Single Liaison Body:

- assists and coordinates communication between EU member states on food issues.
- forwards complaints and requests for information to member states.
- receives incoming requests for assistance and directs these to the appropriate originating authority (local authority).
- resolves difficulties in communication and liaison.

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

[2] *Food Standards Agency publish this document, which provides instructions and criteria to which local authorities should have regard to when carrying out their food law regulatory and enforcement duties*

Port health authorities (PHAs) have somewhat different responsibilities from inland LAs. In particular, several act as EU-approved entry points for imports that are of non-animal origin. This function is similar to the role that Border Inspection Posts take for products of animal origin (see below).

The European Commission

The European Commission operates the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The RASFF is a network of member states, the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority. Whenever a member of the network has any information relating to the existence of a serious direct or indirect risk to human health, this information is immediately forwarded to the Commission using a rapid alert form. The Commission then immediately transmits this information to the members of the network. Likewise when the Food Standards Agency finds an issue that affects or could affect other member states or third (non-EU) countries, they notify the Commission through the RASFF system.

Members of the public

Occasionally, Food Standards Agency will receive notification of food incidents and quality issues from members of the general public, although Food Standards Agency stress that the public should always contact their local authority first. To find your nearest food enforcer, use the search facility on our website at: www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enforceessential/yourarea/

Regarding food complaints from consumers who may have suffered food poisoning, or found food on sale past its use-by date, investigation of isolated complaints of this kind is the responsibility of local authority food enforcement officials and Food Standards Agency promptly forward any complaints Food Standards Agency receive to the relevant local authority to investigate.

Emergency services

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

Other government departments/agencies

Notifications may be received from many government departments or agencies: for example, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, Public Health England and the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Organisations in devolved countries

Food Standards Agency receives notifications from Public Health Wales, the Scottish Agricultural College and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland.

Border inspection posts (BIPs)

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

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

The FSA also receive rejection notifications from Designated Ports of Entry for consignments of non-animal origin. They are treated in the same way, but would the notifier may be recorded as "Local Authority".

Miscellaneous organisations and facilities

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

Appendix 3: How can you get in touch with us?

We try to always meet the needs of our users. If you have any feedback on the publication please send it to robin.clifford@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk. In particular, some changes are planned to the content of next year's report and we would welcome your views on them. Details of the proposed changes can be found at

www.food.gov.uk/about-us/publications/busreps/miscbusrep

How to report a food incident

Food Incidents should be reported using an incident report form located at:
incidents.foodapps.co.uk/IncidentReportForm/login.aspx

Contact details for FSA headquarters (England)

Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH
Tel: 020 7276 8448 (out of hours: 0345 051 8486)
Fax: 020 7276 8788 email: foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Contact details for FSA Wales

11th Floor, Southgate House, Wood Street, Cardiff CF10 1EW
Tel: 029 2067 8999 (out of hours: 07789 926573)
Email: wales.foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Contact details for FSA Northern Ireland
10a- 10c Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG
Tel: 028 9041 7739/7708 (out of hours: 07784 473022)
Email: incidents.ni@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Contact details for Food Standards Scotland

4th Floor, Pilgrim House, Old Ford Road, Aberdeen, AB11 5RL
Tel: 01224 285 138 or 01224 285 196 (out of hours: 07881 516867)
Email: incident@fss.scot

Appendix 4: Glossary of terms

AA	Allergy Alert
BIP	Border Inspection Post
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DH	Department of Health
E. coli	Escherichia coli
EA	Environment Agency
EC	European Commission
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
FAFA	Food Alert – For Action
FSA	Food Standards Agency
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HPS	Health Protection Scotland
ID	Identification
LA	Local Authority
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
NCA	National Crime Agency
NHS	National Health Service
PAA	Primary aromatic amines
PAH	Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
PHA	Port Health Authority
PHE	Public Health England
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
RIN	Recall Information Notice
SLB	Single Liaison Body
STEC E. coli	Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli
TSE	Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WIN	Withdrawal Information Notice

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