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Food
Risk Insights

Eurofins Food Testing UK Ltd.

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In Focus

Emerging issues, trends and legislative changes

Welcome to the April 2026 Food Risk Insights from Eurofins Food Testing UK Ltd's Compliance and Risk Management Team.

In this issue, regulators tighten controls as outbreaks, import risks, recalls and food crime expose system vulnerabilities.

We are here to offer expert advice and support; to help you manage the ever-evolving risks faced by food businesses.

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EU considers maximum levels for contaminants in seaweed

The EU is proposing maximum levels (MLs) for cadmium, inorganic arsenic, lead and iodine in seaweed. At present, no maximum levels have been set for these substances in seaweed, except for cadmium, which is regulated under Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/915 for food supplements made exclusively or primarily from seaweed or seaweed-derived products.

These developments come alongside the wider commercialisation of seaweed, as farming moves from small-scale operations towards large-scale, economically viable production. As the sector prepares for major expansion in the coming years, the UK and Europe are increasingly viewing seaweed as a strategic growth opportunity. Seaweed is increasingly recognised as a sustainable, low-impact biomass with applications across food, pharmaceuticals, bioplastics, cosmetics, biofuels and environmental restoration.

Recognising the health risks associated with heavy metals the EU used monitoring data for arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury collected from seaweed and halophytes during 2018, 2019 and 2020 to help in the setting of maximum levels for these as well as providing more data to improve the risk assessments regarding the consumption of these foods. This monitoring was carried out under EU Recommendation (EU) 2018/464. As seaweed can contain high concentrations of iodine, data on iodine levels were also collected during this monitoring period.

The proposed maximum levels (MLs) would apply to dry seaweed placed on the market as food or used as a food ingredient. For fresh seaweed, the maximum levels would apply on a dry matter basis.

Lead

- Brown seaweed (Ochrophyta) 1.5 mg/kg
- Red Seaweed *(Rhodaphyta) Xylella*
- Laver / Nori (*Porphyra, Pyropia spp.)* 0.50 mg/kg
- Red seaweed (*Rhodophyta*) other than laver (*Porphyra and Pyropia spp.*) 2.0 mg/kg
- Green seaweed (Chlorophyta) 2.0 mg/kg

Cadmium

- Brown seaweed (*Ochrophyta*) 3.0 mg/kg
- Red & green seaweed (*Rhodophyta and Chlorophyta*) 4.0 mg/kg

Inorganic Arsenic

- Brown and green seaweed (*Ochrophyta and Chlorophyta*) 1.0 mg/kg
- Red seaweed (*Rhodophyta*) 0.50 mg/kg

Iodine

- Seaweed placed on the market to the final consumer or used as an ingredient in food. 1.0 g/kg

Spain’s olive harvest

Spain's olive harvest, the largest in the world, typically runs from October to March. Weeks of persistent rain and flooding across the major olive producing regions in Spain have severely slowed the 2025/2026 harvest, creating a growing threat that the country will miss its output targets despite initial expectations for a recovery year

Producers reported repeated stoppages due to waterlogged groves and inaccessible terrain, leaving large volumes of olives still unharvested well into the critical season window.

‘Drive-bys’ avoiding border checks

There is growing concern within the farming and horticultural sectors that limited biosecurity checks are putting UK livestock and crops at significant risk. Recent outbreaks of African Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth in Europe, along with plant disease incidents such as those linked to *Xylella*, have heightened these worries.

Xylella fastidiosa, and its sub-species, are seen as one of the most dangerous plant-infecting bacteria worldwide, causing a variety of diseases with huge economic impact for agriculture, public gardens and the environment.

In mainland Europe, most notably France (Corsica and mainland France) and Italy there have been several outbreaks of different sub-species which have led to significant impacts on plants both in the wider environment and those grown commercially for olive production. Currently it is not known to occur in the UK.

These concerns are reinforced by evidence that, owing to reportedly inadequate controls at the Port of Dover, criminal groups are bringing into the UK products that would not legally be permitted for sale elsewhere in Europe.

According to information from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) only a proportion of flagged meat and plant consignments arriving in Dover are being transported to the Sevington Border Control Post, situated 22 miles away.

Defra released figures for November 2024, August and November 2025. These showed that in November 2025, 18% of animal origin consignments failed to attend for inspection, up from 8% in August 2025. These failures, described by Defra as “drive bys”, meant the goods were not checked by Border Control Post officials.

A full month-by-month assessment of inspection rates is not currently possible due to gaps in the data collected by Ashford Port Health Authority, which operates the Sevington facility.

Egg council urges action on egg risk

A report published by the British Egg Industry Council (BEIC), warns that UK egg imports, largely from lower welfare, lower safety systems, pose growing risks to consumers as they increasingly bypass effective border checks. This rise has coincided with several food safety incidents across Europe, including Salmonella outbreaks and antibiotic tainted imports. The report urges government action to align import rules with UK standards and calls on retailers, manufacturers, and foodservice operators to review sourcing. Last year a survey of environmental health professionals in the United Kingdom highlighted similar concerns over the use of imported eggs.

Salmonella over 80 sick in UK

More than 80 people in the UK have fallen ill in a Salmonella outbreak linked to a dry cured meat brand. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reported that, in late January 2026, whole genome sequencing data, revealed a rise in cases of monophasic *Salmonella* Typhimurium from a single strain.

By late February, 84 confirmed cases had been identified, with closely related isolates indicating a common source of contamination. They have traced infections back to a dry cured sausage which was withdrawn from sale.

France Listeria outbreak

Two people have died and 10 others have fallen ill in a Listeria outbreak in France linked to meat products. In February, epidemiological investigations identified several patients who had consumed pâté en croûte. Traceability investigations pointed to products marketed by the Drôme Ardèche Tradition company, based in Bourg-de-Péage.

Recall because of contamination risk

Various porridge pots and sachets have been recalled because of possible mouse contamination at the manufacturing site. The FSA alert states ‘These products may contain mouse contamination making them unsafe to eat.’

FSS milk allergen failures

In a previous survey, 2023/24, Foods Standards Scotland (FSS) found 85 percent of 68 milk alternative lattes from coffee shops had detectable milk protein. The presence of milk protein indicates that cross-contact can occur during the preparation of these drinks and may pose a serious risk for individuals with a milk allergy. As part of the prevention strategy FSS has been helping coffee shops and cafes understand the risks to people with milk allergies and how to manage the risks.

Alcohol, illegal meat & confiscation orders

A man has been arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to defraud over the importation and distribution of counterfeit and misrepresented wine and prosecco.

Officers from the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) seized over 67,000 bottles worth an estimated £500,000. The man was later released under investigation and enquiries continue. The operation involved multiple partners, including the Metropolitan Police, local authorities, Trading Standards teams, and the FSA’s Wine Inspection Team.

In another case a man pleaded guilty to placing unsafe food, specifically illegal ‘smokie’ meat, on the market, an offence under the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and the Criminal Law Act 1977. He is awaiting sentencing.

‘Smokies’ are skin-on sheep carcasses produced by singeing off the fleece, giving the meat a distinctive smoky smell and appearance. Their production is illegal in the UK and typically takes place in unapproved premises unlikely to meet hygiene or safety standards.

In a previous case where the director of Fear Animal Products Limited, was sentenced to 42 months in prison for diverting unfit meat back into human food chain, a Proceeds of Crime Act confiscation amounting to a combined total of £70,967.26 has been ordered. Fears Animal Products Limited is due to be sentenced in the coming months.

FSA & FSS food regulation modernisation plans

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has set out plans to modernise the food regulatory system. The areas being explored by the programme include:

1. Enhancing the food business registration system to make it more effective
2. A national approach to regulation for some large businesses, which makes better use of existing data and assurance systems, alongside in-person inspections
3. Improving the way guidance is provided to local authorities and businesses
4. Strengthening enforcement powers where necessary to enable swift, proportionate action where needed
5. Improving consumer information, including making the display of Food Hygiene Ratings mandatory in England

In another thematic report produced jointly by the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland (FSS), they offer a forward-looking assessment of emerging food innovations that are expected to pose significant food safety, risk analysis, and regulatory preparedness challenges for the UK over the next 5–15 years.

The work is informed by horizon scanning insights and desktop research and builds on the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's 2025 Food Safety Foresight.

Key innovation areas identified as likely to have the biggest effect or influence in the near future included in the report are:

- Controlled environment agriculture (CEA) commonly known as vertical farming
- Fermentation
- Cellular agriculture including cell cultivated foods
- Edible insects

Longer term technologies and conceptual technologies were also discussed.

FSS first CBD novel food applications

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has opened a 12-week public consultation on the first three cannabidiol (CBD) products seeking approval as novel foods in Scotland. The consultation is aimed at consumers, businesses, enforcement authorities, and anyone with an interest in CBD, food safety, or consumer protection. These three applications are the first to be submitted in Scotland since CBD was formally classified as a novel food and made subject to pre-market approval.

FSS is requesting input on several areas, including safety evaluations, proposed authorisation conditions, labelling rules, enforcement implications, and measures to protect vulnerable groups. The feedback gathered will shape FSS's recommendations to Scottish Ministers, who will make the final decision on whether each product can be authorised for sale in Scotland.

FSS survey plans

For the 2025 to 2026 survey, the sampling program will test unpasteurised French cheese, beansprouts, and ready to eat salad leaves for Salmonella, Listeria, and STEC. Sunflower, sesame and chia seeds and tomatoes will be sampled for Salmonella, oat milk will be analysed for *Bacillus cereus* and vegan cheese alternatives for Listeria and Salmonella.

Fresh or frozen tuna and mackerel will be sampled for histamine, garlic powder will be sampled for peanut and gluten, and dairy-free Indian takeaway meals tested for milk.

Annual IFSAC Report

The Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC) was created by the three federal agencies (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Food Safety and Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture) to improve estimates of the sources of foodborne illness. Its latest report used outbreak data from 1998 – 2023.

Key Findings include:

- **Salmonella**; over 75% of illnesses were attributed to six food categories: chicken, fruits, seeded vegetables (such as tomatoes), pork, other produce (such as nuts), and beef
- ***E. coli* O157**; more than 85% of *E. coli* O157 illnesses were attributed to vegetable row crops (such as leafy greens) and beef
- ***Listeria monocytogenes***; above 75% of illnesses were attributed to dairy, vegetable row crops, and fruits

The full report can be found **here**

FSAI issues new Listeria guidance for ready-to-heat meals

⚠ The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has released a new Guidance Note titled *Control of Listeria monocytogenes and Ensuring Food Safety in the Production of Certain Cook / Chilled Ready-To-Heat Meals*. The document provides practical advice to help food businesses strengthen their food safety management systems and improve the detection and control of *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Listeria monocytogenes is a harmful bacterium that can cause listeriosis, a serious foodborne illness posing particular risks to older adults, pregnant women, and individuals with certain underlying health conditions.

The new guidance forms part of the FSAI's ongoing response to recent listeriosis outbreaks, including those in Ireland and the United States in 2025, both linked to ready-to-heat meals.

These incidents underline the importance of robust food safety controls for such products. Notably, the guidance highlights that in the event of product becoming contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* following heat processing, domestic cooking by the consumer may not be sufficient to reduce or eliminate the risk.

EU MOAH legislation moves forward

The EU has notified the World Trade Organization (WTO) of plans to amend Regulation (EU) 2023/915, setting strict Maximum Levels (MLs) for Mineral Oil Aromatic Hydrocarbons (MOAH) in food to manage the health risks identified, with enforcement expected by 2027. The final vote on this issue is expected in May 2026.

The drafted revision 7 with specific maximum levels for MOAH (C10-C50) includes the following product groups:

- Oilseeds and oilfruits
- Animal and vegetable fats and oils >50% fat
- Tree nuts
- Pulses
- Cereal grains and cereal products (ML depending on fat content)
- Milk
- Dairy products (ML depending on fat content)
- Cocoa beans (from 2030), cocoa mass, cocoa powder
- Confectionary, cocoa and chocolate products (ML depending on fat content)
- Spices and dried herbs, tea and herbal infusions as food ingredient
- Baby food (ML depending on fat content)
- Food supplements
- Food additives produced from food sources
- Processed and compound foods containing certain ingredients listed above (from 2030, ML depending on fat content)

Belgium record high food safety complaints

Belgium recorded over 6,200 food safety complaints in 2025, according to the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC). The service logged 6,268 complaints, rising from 5,222 in 2024 and 4,865 in 2023.

Hygiene issues made up about a third of reports, including worries about cleanliness, staff hygiene and pest activity. The next largest category involved people who believed a food product had made them ill, followed by complaints about poor storage practices, such as incorrect temperatures and expiry date issues.

FASFC uses these complaints to flag potential problems and prioritise inspections; over 90% were handled within 30 days. In half of the inspections triggered by complaints, the issue was confirmed, and in 5% of cases inspectors uncovered additional violations.

This comes as the FASFC has been told it will have to reduce its budget by 24 percent by 2029, with more than half of these savings starting from this year. Some are claiming this will undermine food safety in Belgium, jeopardising consumer health and trust in the food supply chain.

April in brief | Regulatory developments, outbreaks and emerging risks

In this issue, Food Risk Insights Issue 20 highlights a number of regulatory developments, outbreak investigations and emerging risks that food business operators should continue to monitor.

Regulators are advancing proposals that may have significant future implications, including the introduction of proposed maximum levels for contaminants in seaweed and progress towards EU legislation setting limits for mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH) in food. These developments reflect increasing regulatory focus on novel foods, environmental contaminants and long-term dietary exposure.

Several outbreak investigations underline the continued importance of robust microbiological controls. A large Salmonella outbreak in the UK linked to dry cured meat, alongside Listeria outbreaks in Europe, reinforce the need for effective hygiene controls, supplier assurance and ongoing vigilance across meat and ready-to-eat food sectors.

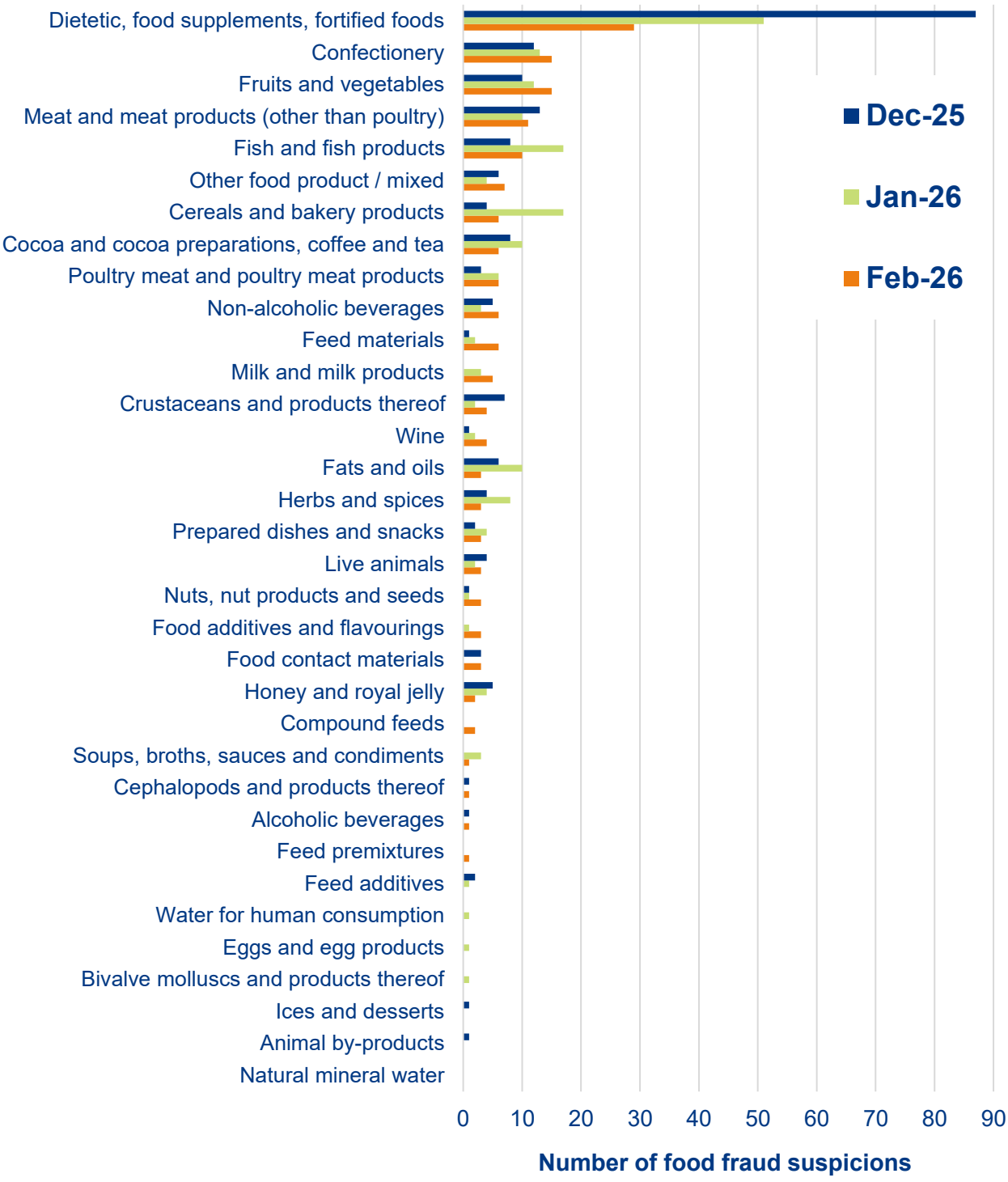
Updated guidance from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland further stresses the importance of controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-heat meals.

Supply chain integrity and import controls remain key concerns. Reports of products bypassing border checks, increased scrutiny of egg imports, and ongoing food crime investigations highlight vulnerabilities that could impact sourcing decisions and brand protection. Surveillance data and official surveys continue to shape enforcement priorities across allergens, food fraud and microbiological hazards.

Together, these developments reinforce the importance of proactive risk assessment, horizon scanning and strong food safety management systems to anticipate regulatory change, respond to emerging hazards and demonstrate due diligence.

Eurofins Food Testing UK supports food businesses with accredited testing, environmental monitoring and technical consultancy to help identify emerging risks, verify controls and maintain compliance across the supply chain.

Summary of Food Fraud Suspicions



Source: https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/acn/ffn-monthly_en

Food Risk Insights

The Eurofins Compliance and Risk Management Team can work with you to identify and mitigate risks within your business, whether they be microbiological, contaminants, allergens, pesticides, authenticity (food fraud) or risks to your supply chain such as price changes or climate fluctuations.

We are here to work with you to protect your customers, brand and reputation.

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