Deliverable 2: As-Is Report

Implementation and Embedding a Reform Programme for the Better Regulation of Food in Ireland

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Disclaimer

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

AAC	Administrative Assistance and Cooperation System
ABP	Animal By-products
AES	Agriculture, Environmental and Structures
AFIT	Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing System
AHCS	Animal Health Computer System
AIMS	Animal Identification and Movement System
AMR	Anti-Microbial Resistance
API	Application Programming Interface
ARMS	Contains all information in relation to queries, requests and food complaints received through the FSAI advice line
BCP	Border Control Post
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
BTSF	Better Training for Safer Food
CA	Competent Authority
CB	Control Body
CCS	Corporate Customer System
CIH	Central Intelligence Hub
CP	Contingency Planning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland Executive)
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DAU	Data Analytics Unit
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
DOH	Department of Health
DORA	Database of Rapid Alerts
DPI	Dairy Produce Inspectorate
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICF	ICF Consulting Services
IMSOC	Integrated Management System for Official Controls
IMT	Information Management and Technology Division
INIS	Imports Notification and Inspection System
ISPAF	Inspections of Animal Feeding stuffs
IUNA	Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
L&D	Learning and Development
LAVS	Local Authority Veterinary Service
LIMS	Laboratory Information Management System
MANCP	Multiannual National Control Plan
MI	Marine Institute
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCP	National Control Plan
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NFSS2	National Food Safety Surveillance Database
NRL	National Reference Laboratories
NSAI	National Standards Authority of Ireland
OAPI	Official Agencies Premises and Inspections
OC	Official Controls
OCB	Organic Certification Bodies

ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
EC	European Commission
eDocs	Document Management Software
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EHIS	Environmental Health Information System
EHO	Environmental Health Officers
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERAD	Disease Eradication
EU	European Union
EURLs	EU Reference Laboratories
eZone	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's intranet
FAIP	Feedingstuffs Annual Inspection Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FBO	Food Business Operator
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FFGP	Feeding Stuff, Fertiliser, Grain and Poultry
FIC	Food Information to Consumers
FOI	Freedom of Information
FSA (NI)	Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland)
FSAI	Food Safety Authority of Ireland
FSFA	Food Safety and Food Authenticity
FSLS	Food Safety Laboratory Service
FSLU	Food Safety Liaison Unit
FSMCP	Food Safety Management Crisis Plan
GAFTA	Grain and Feed Trade Association
GB	Great Britain
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GI	Geographical Indications
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
OCR	Official Controls Regulation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PALs	Public Analyst Laboratories
PARNUTS	Foodstuffs for Particular Nutritional Uses
PAS	Public Appointments Service
PDO	Protected Designation of Origin
PGI	Protected Geographical Indication
PSB	Public Service Body
QA	Quality Assurance
RA	Risk Analysis
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
RM	Risk Management
RPII	Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland
SFPA	Sea Fisheries Protection Authority
SI	Statutory Instrument
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SUDS	Sustainable Use Directive System
TRACES	Trade Control and Expert System
TSE	Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy
TSG	Traditional Specialities Guaranteed
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
VPHIS	Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTE	Whole-Time Equivalent

Abstract

Introduction and Background

This independent report is submitted to the European Commission DG Reform as part of a Request for Service on aspects of the Implementation and Embedding of a Reform Programme for the Better Regulation of Food in Ireland. This request was launched under the Multiple Framework Contract for the Support to Structural Reforms in EU Member States. **The focus of this report is the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, its internal structures and procedures, and its interactions with other organisations, entities, and agencies which also participate in Ireland's food safety and food authenticity system**. While the summary title of this document is an As-Is Report on the Food Safety and Authenticity System, it is important to recognise that the review is focused on the role of DAFM. The outcome of the project should over the longer-term contribute towards greater competitiveness and an enhanced reputation for Irish food. This As-Is report includes a review of existing datasets, as well as wider resources and competencies. Gaps in existing datasets and in other resources are outlined as well as a new analysis of Food Safety and Food Authenticity (FSFA) Programme benefits and risks. As part of our analysis, we undertook a detailed review of the documentation, reports, and broader resources including, but not limited to, selected civil and public service reform strategies and national and EU legislation. We also conducted information gathering exchanges with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; the Food Safety Authority of Ireland; and other organisations. Our approach to this assignment also included a detailed Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector, which sought the views of the sector on a range of FSFA-related matters. The Broad Reach Survey was distributed to a range of entities in the food production sector which represented food business operators registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Overview of the Irish Food Safety System

The Irish food safety system operates on two levels related to policy and to the system of controls. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health (DOH) are the Government Departments responsible for policymaking. The central Competent Authority in the system of controls is the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI). Official agencies of the system include the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Health Service Executive (HSE), and the Local Authority Veterinary Service.

Legislation in Ireland, based on EU Regulations, specifies that the primary responsibility for food safety and food authenticity in Ireland rests with Food Business Operators (FBOs).[1] FSFA standards are verified by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's system of inspection, analysis, and audit. The Department, alongside other agencies, plays a leading role in ensuring food safety and food authenticity from production to consumption.

The Department developed a Food Safety and Authenticity Strategy following consultation with various stakeholders. The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020 sets out a pathway for providing assurances on the safety, provenance, and integrity of food produced in Ireland. A central aim of the strategy is to further enhance the culture of compliance across the agri-food sector in a way that maximises the potential for collaboration across Government and industry to work together to ensure the safety of consumers both domestically and internationally. The goals of the FSFA Strategy are underpinned by the wider Irish Government objectives embodied in the Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy and the Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023. The initiative of the European Commission in supporting the current project is aligned with this Civil Service Renewal Strategy as it will also support end-to-end digital solutions and online services.

As part of our evaluation of the As-Is position we note that the European Commission undertakes detailed audits of different aspects of the food safety and food authenticity regulatory regime in all Member States. The findings of these audits indicate a positive overall assessment of the system of controls that are undertaken in Ireland and highlight the overall effectiveness of the systems in terms of maintaining high levels of food safety. This is aligned with the initial findings from the Consultancy Team's review. The EU Audits also identified a number of areas where possible improvements can be made.

[1] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 'Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020', July 2018 - https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/608472-food-safety-food-authenticity-its-your-business-food-forum-2019/.

Datasets, Resources and Capabilities

The Department's divisions with a FSFA remit maintain a variety of datasets to meet their reporting requirements in respect of the FSAI, Multiannual National Control Plan (MANCP), and the EU Commission, as well as for internal use. Aspects of these data are also used to inform the various divisions' risk assessments when determining which premises to inspect in a single year, which is in line with the attributes of an effective food safety regulatory system. The Consultancy Review Team understands that a number of divisions have standalone user-developed systems for managing their data and information. Often these have been organically developed by staff members within the division rather than being part of a central IT plan. We note, however, that there has been a recent welcome initiative by the IT division to plan to replace IT systems.

In reviewing the As-Is position, it is important to assess the existing resources, competencies, and capabilities within the Department. Of the 70 divisions in the Department, approximately 22 are involved in FSFA activities at varied levels which accounts for approximately 1,400 staff. Of the 1,400 staff, 600 are involved in food safety and food authenticity controls as a core part of their duties and 800 more tangentially. In a number of divisions, FSFA activities are a small proportion of the work of the staff.

The Broad Reach Survey examined the food sector assessment of the adequacy of existing datasets for measuring food safety and food authenticity. The evidence indicates that most of the food sector respondents believed that the existing information and datasets were good or very good. However, of note is that only a small percentage rated them as very good, suggesting the potential for improvement. The fact that this current EU Reform project includes the preparation of a digitalisation plan for an integrated IT system for Food Safety and Food Authenticity activities will assist in achieving improvements in datasets and their accessibility.

An important finding from the Consultancy Review Team's analysis is that there are a number of data gaps and deficiencies compared to the data required for an 'ideal state' future framework. One of the key gaps is the lack of a centralised system for food safety and food authenticity. It should be noted that despite the gaps, the various divisions involved in FSFA comply with the current reporting requirements set out by FSAI and DG SANTE.

Analysis of the current gaps and areas for improvement of the current system against best practice principles is outlined in the executive summary and elaborated upon further in the main report. Addressing these gaps will be facilitated by the proposed Governance Plan which will be developed as a future deliverable of this project.

Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

This report is submitted to the European Commission DG Reform as part of a Request for Service on aspects of the Implementation and Embedding of a Reform Programme for the Better Regulation of Food in Ireland. This request was launched under the Multiple Framework Contract for the Support to Structural Reforms in EU Member States. **The focus of this report is the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine ("the Department"), its internal structures and procedures, and its interactions with other organisations, entities, and agencies which also participate in Ireland's food safety and food authenticity system.** While the summary title of this document is an As-Is Report on the Food Safety and Authenticity System, it is important to recognise that the review is focused on the role of DAFM. The outcome of the project should over the longer term contribute towards greater competitiveness and an enhanced reputation for Irish food.

Scope of Assessment and Methodology

There are six deliverables for this project as outlined below. Deliverable 1 Inception Report was submitted to the European Commission in 2021. This current report represents Deliverable 2 and was prepared by AARC, Indecon Research Economists, and Farrelly & Mitchell ("Consultancy Review Team").

Key Tasks of Project
1. An **Inception Report** outlining the methodology, timeline and indicators to be adopted for the successful delivery of the project; 2. An analytical **As-Is Report**, including a gap analysis, describing the current policy and regulatory context and institutional framework; 3. A **Programme Governance Plan** setting out the requisite structures, norms and procedures for the successful delivery of the Programme; 4. A **Change Management Plan** comprising: a) a communications, coaching and resistance management plan; b) a benefits management plan and, c) a sponsor activity plan and roadmap; 5. An analytical **To-Be Report** describing the required 'ideal state' future framework of policy, regulations and institutions; and, 6. A **Digitalisation Plan** for an integrated IT system for food safety and food authenticity activities including indicative costs and timeframe for development.
Source: Consultancy Review Team

This As-Is Report represents Deliverable 2 and involved four specific tasks which have informed the findings presented in the individual chapters. This As-Is report includes a review of existing datasets, as well as wider resources and competencies, as presented in Chapter 5. The report presents new analysis of Programme benefits and risks in Chapter 6.

Review of Documentation and Information Gathering

A detailed review of the documentation, reports, and broader resources including, but not limited to, selected civil and public service reform strategies and national and EU legislation was undertaken. This included an analysis of the existing policy and regulatory framework, institutional arrangements, and administrative capacities in the context of official controls on food safety and food authenticity under Regulation (EU) 2017/625 in the Irish food sector. We also conducted detailed information gathering exchanges with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, and other organisations. We extended the stakeholder engagement to external agencies including the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE), and Bord Bia, with whom we held bilateral engagements. Agencies were also invited

to make written submissions. We also reviewed in detail the seven Phase I projects which were undertaken by the Department for the Food Safety and Food Authenticity (FSFA) Strategy 2018-2020.

Food Safety and Food Authenticity Food Forum

As part of the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme, an annual Food Forum is held to update internal and external stakeholders on developments in relation to Food Safety and Food Authenticity. The most recent Food Forum was organised by the Department in November 2021. The European Commission and the Consultancy Review Team presented to this Forum.

Broad Reach Survey

Our approach to this assignment included a detailed Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector, which sought the views of the sector on a range of FSFA-related matters. The Broad Reach Survey was distributed to a range of entities in the food production sector which represented food business operators registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Consultancy Review Team had originally envisaged that it would be appropriate to attempt to target responses from around 100 respondents. We are, however, very pleased that 169 responses have been secured and we are very grateful to the sector for their level of engagement which reflects the importance of this issue. The organisations responding to the survey on aggregate account for 36,004 employees across the agri-food sector. In line with the focus at the scope of the study, the Broad Reach Survey was distributed to entities in the food production sector which are registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. FSAI has oversight of a much larger group of FBOs through service contracts with other official control agencies such as the HSE.

In interpreting the results of the Broad Reach Survey, it is important to recognise that its findings primarily represent the views and opinions of the sector rather than detailed factual data. These views are however important in the evaluation of the sector's perspectives and priorities. In our overall assessment we have supplemented the survey results with wider consultations and empirical evidence.

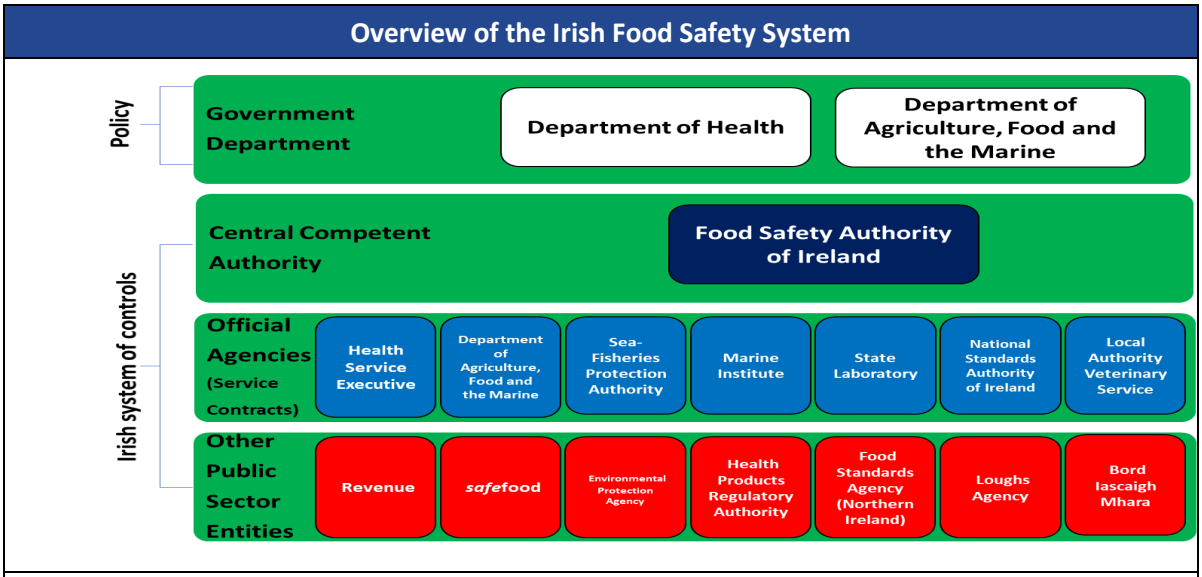
Respondents to the Broad Reach Survey	
Number of respondents	169
Employment in respondent organisations	36,004
Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector	

Overview of the Irish Food Safety System

The Irish food safety system operates on two levels related to policy and to the system of controls. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health (DOH) are the Government Departments responsible for policymaking. The central Competent Authority in the system of controls is the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI). The official agencies of the system are:

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- HSE
- Local Authority Veterinary Service
- Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority
- Marine Institute
- State Laboratory
- National Standards Authority of Ireland

In addition to these official agencies with service contracts, the other public sector entities are shown in the figure overleaf.



Source: Food Safety Authority of Ireland Annual Report 2020

Legislation in Ireland, based on EU Regulations, specifies that the primary responsibility for food safety and food authenticity in Ireland rests with Food Business Operators (FBOs).[2] FBOs are obliged to establish, maintain, and provide evidence of an appropriate food safety culture within their business which involves key management commitments. To promote compliance and culture, it is important that all food and feed safety requirements for businesses are implementable and understandable. The Department and other agencies verify this through official controls and inspections.

The Department developed a Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy following consultation with various stakeholders. Food safety standards are verified by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's system of inspection, analysis, and audit. The Department, alongside other agencies, plays a leading role in ensuring food safety and food authenticity from production to consumption. The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020 sets out a pathway for providing assurances on the safety, provenance, and integrity of food produced in Ireland. A central aim of the strategy is to further enhance the culture of compliance across the agri-food sector in a way that maximises the potential for collaboration across Government and industry to work together to ensure the safety of consumers both domestically and internationally. The overarching FSFA Programme report was completed in November 2020 and outlined a number of key themes and trends that emerged from the Phase I FSFA projects. These themes and trends were aligned with the five strategic goals set out in the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy.

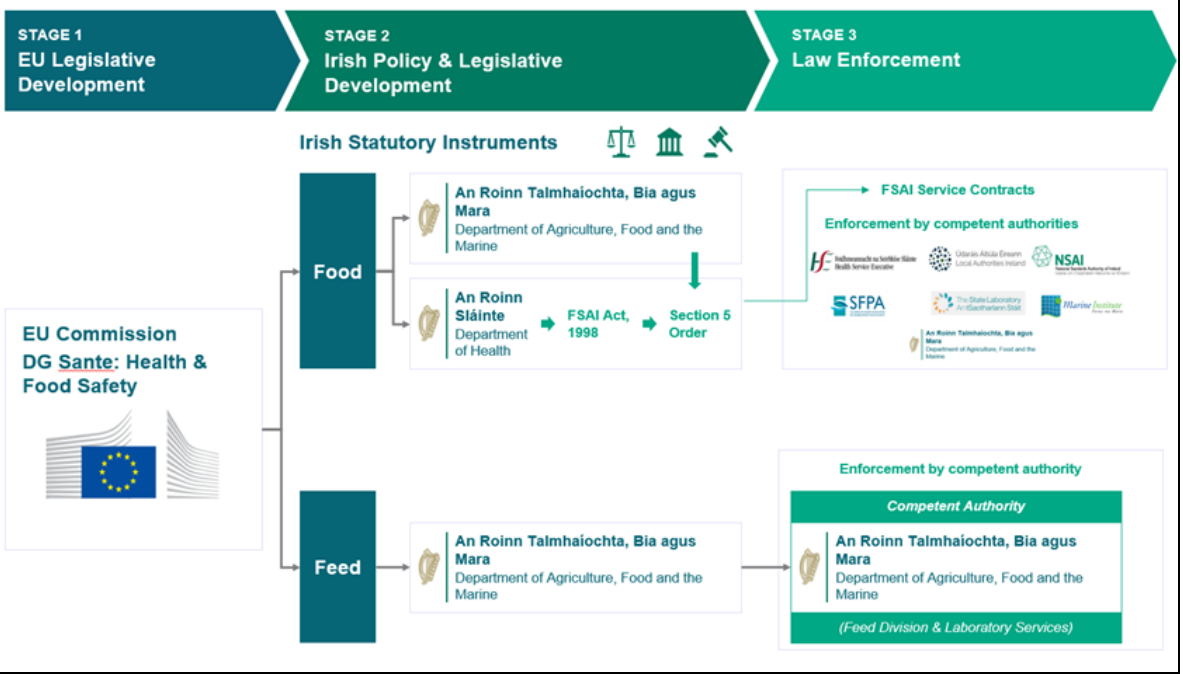
Mapping of National and EU Legislative Framework

In reviewing the current state of the policy, regulatory and international context of the Irish food sector, it is useful to map the existing national and EU legislative framework. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health are responsible for formulating food policy and the implementation of legislation and are supported in their role by the FSAI, of which the Department of Health is the parent Department. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine is responsible for the development of policy; the negotiation of rules at the European Community level; and, implementation in the national law of those rules. Official controls are carried out by the competent authorities to verify business compliance with the requirements set out in food and feed legislation. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health[3] designate Irish official agencies as 'competent authorities'[4] in national legislation or through administrative procedures. The mechanism for how official controls are carried out is outlined in the

[2] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 'Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020', July 2018 - https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/608472-food-safety-food-authenticity-its-your-business-food-forum-2019/.
[3] The Minister for Health also has a significant policy development remit under the area of food safety.
[4] Irish official agencies are equivalent to Irish competent authorities.

National Control Plan (NCP) for Ireland.[5] The NCP is prepared jointly by the FSAI and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This fulfils the requirement of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, that each Member State shall prepare a single integrated Multiannual National Control Plan (MANCP). The processes involved in the transposition and enforcement of European food and feed legislation in Ireland are graphically outlined in the next figure.

The Key Stages of the EU Legislative Transposition and Enforcement in Ireland for Food and Feed Safety



Source: Consultancy Review Team

EU Audits on Compliance with Requirements

As part of our evaluation of the As-Is position, we note that the European Commission undertakes detailed audits of different aspects of the food safety and food authenticity regulatory regime in all Member States, including Ireland. A summary of some of the selected findings of these audits concerning Ireland is presented in the next table. The findings of these audits indicate a positive overall assessment of the system of controls that are undertaken in Ireland and highlight the overall effectiveness of the system in terms of maintaining high levels of food safety. This is aligned with the initial findings from the Consultancy Team's review. The EU Audits also identified a number of areas where possible improvements can be made.

[5] Ireland's current Multiannual Control Plan (2018-2022) can be found on the FSAI website. https://www.fsai.ie/about_us/service_contracts/national_control_plan.html.

EU Audits of Ireland's Food Safety and Food Authenticity Regulatory System – Selected Findings	
Name of Audit	**Selected Findings**
Evaluate the use of quality controls and indicators for animal welfare (2020)	*"The competent authority's approach to setting objectives, planning and reporting of official controls is strategic."* *"The competent authority has a systematic, focussed, evidence and risk-based approach in organising and delivering the official controls on animal welfare at the farm level."*
To discuss policies relating to anti-microbial resistance (2019)	*"The commitment of actors, in all sectors and at all levels, to the control of AMR in Ireland is a positive example for other countries."* *"The environmental and veterinary sectors have undertaken multiple actions on AMR surveillance, awareness raising and research."* *"There has been progress in AMR control on many levels."*
Evaluate the control systems related to Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG) (2019)	*"The report concludes that there is a legal framework and competent authorities are designated for the implementation of official controls of PDO/PGI/TSG and GI spirit drinks with a good communication and cooperation between the competent authorities responsible for official controls."* *"All operators using the registered names are subject to regular controls, which are planned based on risk analysis and take place following documented procedures."* *"Enforcement measures are in place for operators who are found to make an illegal use of the registered name."*
Evaluate the control system in place governing the production of horse meat including traceability (2019)	*"The control system also includes official sampling for species identification and specific residues analyses, with overall satisfactory results."* *"It has put in place several measures to investigate suspected irregularities and to enhance awareness and has made efforts to strengthen cooperation between the various actors."* *"The identity checks by the passport issuing bodies prior to their issue are accurate."*
Evaluate official controls on feed additives, their ingredients and traceability (2019)	*"The planning of official feed controls – inspections and sampling – is risk-based with inspections being generally well performed and capable of adequately verifying operators' fulfilment of relevant legislative requirements."* *"The competent authority's actions following identification and follow-up of non-compliances are comprehensive and sufficient to verify that deficiencies have been remedied by the operator."*
Evaluate the implementation of measures to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides (2019)	*"A certification system has been developed for training professional users, distributors and advisors of plant protection products."* *"The competent authorities have effectively introduced or extended specific official controls to verify the compliance of professional users, including both agricultural and non-agricultural operators with many of the requirements of the Directive."*
Assess the official controls on the production of ready-to-eat food (2018)	*"The report concludes that the official controls over production of ready-to-eat food are well established, risk-based, organised and in general implemented based on comprehensive documented procedures and guidance covering relevant aspects."* *"The actions taken by the competent authorities when non-compliances are identified during their official controls are largely satisfactory."*
Evaluate the implementation of hygiene, traceability and trade requirements of processed animal proteins, including exports, imports and intra-union trade (2018)	*"The structure and functioning of the official control system, notably, the relatively high number of risk-based inspections and the number of official samples taken, which have not identified any particular problem with the compliance of processed animal protein with microbiological criteria, provides a good basis for assuring that processed animal protein is produced, transported and traded in line with relevant requirements on hygiene and traceability."*
Evaluate the system of documentary checks at the union borders (2017)	*"In general, the documentary checks are performed correctly and provide assurances that animal health and welfare, and public health requirements for imported goods are observed."* *"Corrective measures are undertaken when non-compliant consignments are detected at the borders and a confirmation of their destruction and/or re-dispatch is always sought."* *"The staff are qualified and knowledgeable about the legislative requirements for imports."*
Evaluate the control systems for organic production and labelling of organic products (2016)	*"Ireland has a control system in place with clear division of tasks between the competent authority (CA) and the control bodies (CBs) to which official controls are delegated."* *"Regular coordination and communication between all bodies involved supports the harmonisation of organic controls."*

Review of Civil and Public Sector Reform Strategies

The FSFA Strategy is a reform programme published in 2018 and developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Its objective is to ensure that the Department has an effective, efficient, coordinated, and harmonised framework for the organisation of all activities, including official controls, on food safety and food authenticity. Key to the success of the FSFA programme has been the involvement of expert staff from across the Department who have undertaken the detailed research and analysis presented in Section 3 of this document. This programme objective is underpinned by the wider Irish Government objectives embodied in the Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy and the Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023. The Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy is built on three core themes:

1. Delivering evidence-informed policy and services;
2. Harnessing digital technology and innovation; and
3. Building the civil service workforce, workplace and organisation of the future.

The Civil Service Renewal Strategy aims to develop more effective responses to emerging risks and opportunities, including through the strengthening of evidence-based policymaking. The initiative of the European Commission in supporting the current project is aligned with this Civil Service Renewal Strategy as it will also support end-to-end digital solutions and online services. A mapping of the high-level goals of the FSFA Strategy with the themes of the Civil Service Renewal Strategy can be graphically interpreted by the next chart.

Mapping of FSFA Strategy Goals to Civil Service Renewal Strategy Themes			
Theme	**Delivering evidence-informed policy and services**	**Harnessing digital technology and innovation**	**Building the civil service workforce, workplace and organisation of the future**
Goals	➢ To enhance and harmonise risk systems based on the best and most up-to-date methodologies and scientific evidence available, enabling the Department to achieve its strategic objective to safeguard public health, food safety and food authenticity. ➢ To ensure that the Department develops and implements a cohesive policy and regulatory framework that safeguards the consumer and promotes compliance within the food industry.	➢ Maximise the quality, accessibility and applicability of food safety and food authenticity data, information and knowledge by both internal and external users.	➢ Enhance communication leading to greater awareness and collaboration on food safety and food authenticity within the Department, with stakeholders and the wider public. ➢ Ensure that the Department has an open, transparent and robust framework for the organisation of all activities including official controls on food safety and food authenticity.
Source: Consultancy Review Team			

The Irish Government's Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023 sets out an approach to dealing with data in a unified and harmonised manner. It notes that Public Service Body (PSB) data should provide ease of access to and consistency of information. A move to standardised data management practices is required across the public service through data reuse, promotion of data sharing between agencies, in compliance with the Data Sharing and Governance Act 2019, to provide better efficiencies for citizens and businesses to share information in a way to protect commercial sensitivity. A key outcome of the Irish Government's approach is that it will

reduce the number of independent copies of data being collected and maintained by PSBs, helping to reduce duplication of effort across the public service.

Datasets, Resources and Capabilities

Datasets

The Department's divisions with a FSFA remit maintain a variety of datasets to meet their reporting requirements in respect of the FSAI, MANCP, and the EU Commission, as well as for internal use. Aspects of these data are also used to inform the various divisions' risk assessments when determining which premises to inspect in a single year, which is in line with the attributes of an effective food safety regulatory system. In general, these data are held in respect of three core areas: inspections/audits, official controls, and reporting. Although a register of approved establishments is publicly available on the Department's website, as required, the majority of data (including registrations) are held internally. In examining existing datasets and to inform of any potential gaps, it is useful to consider the databases and IT systems used to support the maintenance of these datasets. These are summarised in the table below. We note that there has been a recent welcome initiative by the IT division to plan to replace some of these systems.

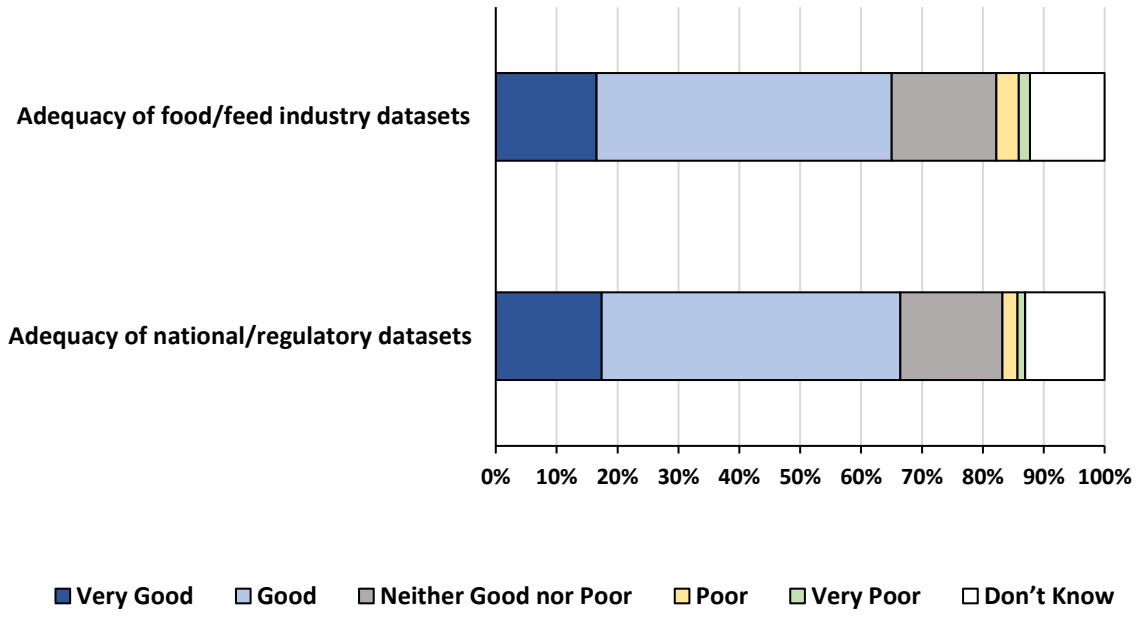
IMT Supported Systems and Databases Used by FSFA Divisions	
IT System	**Description**
AFIT	Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing System used for recording inspections
AHCS	Animal Health Computer System
AIMS	Animal Identification and Movement System
CCS	Corporate Customer System used for customer registration
eDocs	Document management software
INIS Import Portal	Imports Notification and Inspection System (Shared with other agencies)
LIMS	Laboratory Information Management System
MS Access	Database management system
MS Excel	Spreadsheet programme
SUDS	Sustainable Use Directive System for customer registration
Source: Consultancy Review Team	

Existing Resources and Capabilities

In reviewing the As-Is position, it is important to assess the existing resources, competencies, and capabilities within the Department. Of the 70 divisions in the Department, approximately 22 are involved in FSFA activities at varied levels which accounts for approximately 1,400 staff. Of the 1,400 staff, 600 are involved in food safety and food authenticity controls as a core part of their duties, and 800 more tangentially. In a number of divisions, the number of staff involved in FSFA activities is a small proportion of their work. These numbers refer to staff members and may not equate to full-time equivalent. Each of these divisions is headed by the equivalent of a Principal Officer on the civil service grading structure. They are overseen by the members of the Department's Management Board whose remit includes FSFA. The Consultancy Review Team note the high level of commitment of the Management Board to the FSFA programme.

The Broad Reach Survey examined the food sector assessment of the adequacy of existing datasets held by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, other regulators, and the wider food sector for measuring food safety and food authenticity. The evidence indicates that most of the food sector respondents believed that the existing information and datasets were good or very good. However, of note is that only a small percentage rated them as very good, suggesting the potential for improvement. The fact that this current EU Reform project includes the preparation of a digital plan for an integrated IT system for Food Safety and Food Authenticity activities will assist in achieving improvements in datasets and their accessibility.

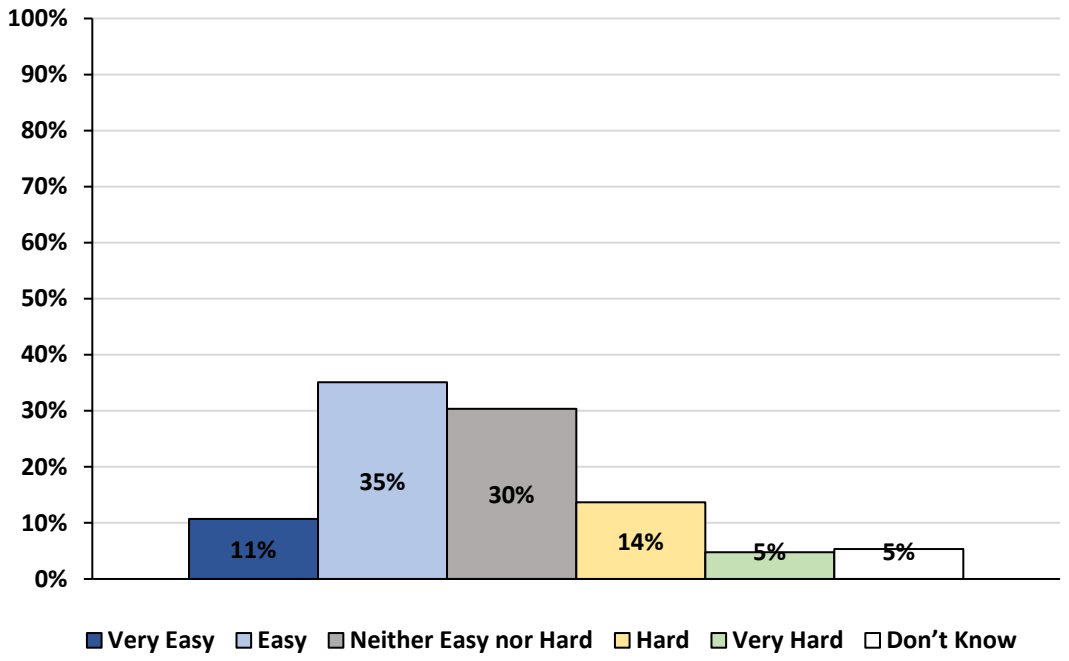
Views on the Adequacy of Existing Information and Datasets for Measuring Food Safety and Food Authenticity



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

The Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector sought respondents' opinions on the level of accessibility of legislation, and guidance related to food safety and food authenticity. While fewer than half found it easy or very easy to access, only 19% indicated it was hard or very hard to find the relevant legislation/guidance. The evidence presented in the next chart suggests the merit of additional ongoing measures to promote updates and guidance.

Views on How Easy it is to Find Legislation/Guidance or Updates on Food Safety and Food Authenticity



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

Gaps in Datasets, Resources and Capabilities

An important finding from the Consultancy Review Team's analysis is that there are a number of data gaps and deficiencies compared to the data required for an 'ideal state' future framework. It must be noted that despite the gaps, the various divisions involved in FSFA comply with the current reporting requirements set out by FSAI and DG SANTE. One of the key gaps that the previous analysis highlights is the lack of a centralised system for food safety and food authenticity. A summary of the main gaps and deficiencies in datasets is presented in the next table.

Summary of Data Gaps and Deficiencies	
1.	Variation in data management systems between divisions prevents the sharing and analysis of data
2.	Lack of timely and robust datasets can make data unreliable for use in reports
3.	Poor streaming of information between central and regional offices
4.	Many data management systems are outdated (e.g., email attachments, Excel spreadsheets)
5.	Lack of a centralised data management system prohibits visibility of the lifecycle of FBOs
6.	Inspections are paper-based and must be reproduced electronically, creating duplication of effort
7.	Paper-based inspections make analyses of non-compliances difficult, and audits are relied on instead
8.	Lack of a dedicated data analyst/system manager hinders data from being used for policymaking

Source: Consultancy Review Team

A summary of the observations from our analysis and from the engagement with the Department's heads of division concerning issues for development relating to competencies and capabilities is presented in the next table.

Resources, Competencies and Capabilities within FSFA Divisions			
Skills Profile	**Recruitment Experience**	**Mobility**	**Gaps**
• Mix of generalists and specialists • Specialists hold a minimum Level 8 degree in their area of expertise • Admin staff across the majority of grades typically join with varying entry requirements through open recruitment • New recruits require in-house training and induction** to develop the required skills/knowledge gaps	• Difficulties retaining staff due to promotions • Vacancies often take a long time to fill (12+ months) • Loss of staff due to promotions can leave divisions 'unexperienced' • Unable to recruit to specific positions within the divisions • Location and working hours are key considerations for candidates • Private sector may be more attractive for some specialised skill areas	• Mobility may not make sense for very specialist divisions • Potential for more mobility between control divisions operating under the same legislation • Flexibility in terms of staff sharing would be useful during crises • Plenty of transferrable skills between implementation divisions • Potential for one inspector to take multiple samples from the same site on behalf of different divisions	• Lack of harmonisation in risk training • Limited skills in data management and analysis • Need for guidelines and training to ensure consistency in enforcement • Constraints on use of temporary staff to address temporary shortages* • Divisions would benefit from ongoing training in administrative skills, especially for new staff in responding to FOIs, complaints etc • Merit of increased strategic planning for future challenges
We note that there are Industrial relations and Public Service constraints in relation to the use of temporary staff *****A new induction programme is under development*** ***Source: Consultancy Review Team***			

In reviewing any potential gaps in existing datasets, or in wider aspects of the policy, regulatory and international context, it is informative to consider how the current regulatory system aligns with a number of key principles for a best practice food safety and food authenticity system. These requirements have been developed by the Consultancy Review Team following a detailed review of Regulation EU 2017/625 that requires the Department, as a competent authority, to have procedures/arrangements in place to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls and other official activities. These have also taken account of international best practice. Analysis of the current gaps and areas for ongoing monitoring of the current system against these principles is outlined in the next table. Addressing these gaps will be facilitated by the proposed Governance Plan which will be developed as part of Deliverable 3 as well as the work in Deliverables 4 and 5 of this project.

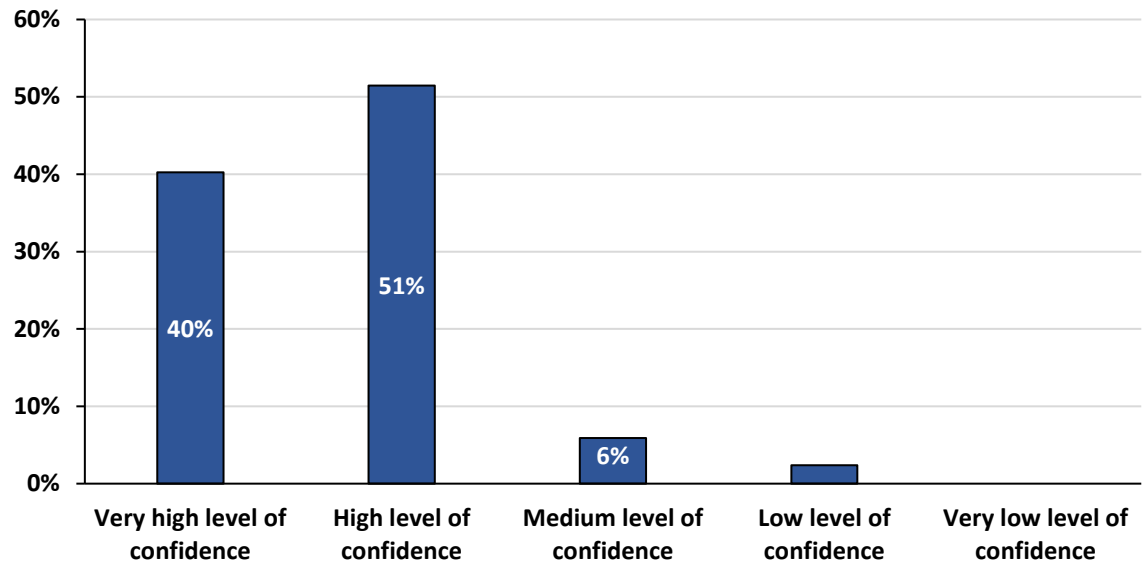
Gap Analysis and Areas for Ongoing Monitoring (Current Regulatory Framework)	
Best Practice Principle of Regulatory System	**Potential Gaps and Areas for Ongoing Monitoring**
Legal Provision	- Improvements in the way information and data on enforcement and monitoring activity are captured will enable the Department to evaluate the effectiveness of current legislative provisions and also inform the direction of new legislation and policy.
Transparency	- In order to promote compliance, FBOs must have easy access to the legislation, guidance, and trader notices for their sector. The evidence from the Broad Reach Survey suggests that regulatory information sources are good or very good, but a small percentage of the sector finds it hard to access relevant information. - The Department could consider enhanced access to information on its official control and enforcement activities, to give a better understanding of the control activities it carries out and the compliance status of the sector being controlled.
Competency	- The approach used in the Learning & Development Training for Authenticity Project would be useful, for addressing training requirements in other areas. - The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy Risk Project 2020 identified training needs in the area of risk analysis and mentions strengthening scientific capacity in the Department.
Independence	- The Department acting as policy maker and enforcement agency as well its role in relation to promotion of trade requires careful management. The Consultancy Review Team notes that there are rules in Regulation 2017/625 which ensure independence.
Risk Analysis	- Limitations in the way data is currently capable of easy analysis was identified in the Report of Food Safety and Food Authenticity Data Capture and Analysis Project Team November 2020. - New eRisk system now in place but this system highlights divisional/organisations risks rather than providing risk profile at operational level for the purposes of food safety.
Enforcement Mechanisms	- Information recorded on official controls could include the measures/actions taken when non-compliances are detected. - The Department should, on an ongoing basis, use detailed information and updated evidence to determine the suitability of the enforcement mechanisms in place.
Risk-based controls	- Procedures are in place to ensure the inspection system and sampling/surveillance plans are based on the evaluation of risk. - Work is ongoing to ensure consistency across all of the sections of the Department involved in food and feed controls.
Laboratory Resources	- A cohesive strategy is in place for the development of the Department laboratory resources. We understand work is ongoing in the implementation of this strategy.
Documented Procedures	- The Harmonisation Project team developed a template for standard operating procedures. - Work is needed on an ongoing basis to improve access to current electronic documented procedures. - In its most recent contract with FSAI (signed July 2021) the Department has agreed to work towards maintaining a library of current controlled documented procedures for food controls, on the Department's intranet service. - It is important to ensure there are documented procedures in place in all divisions regarding the supervisory checks they undertake to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of official controls. These supervisory checks should include a review of the appropriateness of documented procedures.
Coordination and Cooperation	- Co-ordination and co-operation within the Department could be enhanced to ensure that the Department has an effective, efficient and co-ordinated framework for the organisation of all FSFA activities guided by an overarching policy. Implementation of the recommendations from the Phase I projects will assist in this. - Co-ordination with other Departments and agencies is also important
Source: Consultancy Review Team	

Programme Outputs, Benefits and Risks

The following figure illustrates the level of confidence that respondents to the Broad Reach Survey have in the day-to-day regulation of food safety in Ireland. The high level of confidence by the sector in the regulation of food safety is an important finding. There is, however, a need to build on the existing regulatory and policy

context. Given the importance of this area, it is essential to avoid complacency and for this reason, the Department sought support from the European Commission DG Reform for this current project.

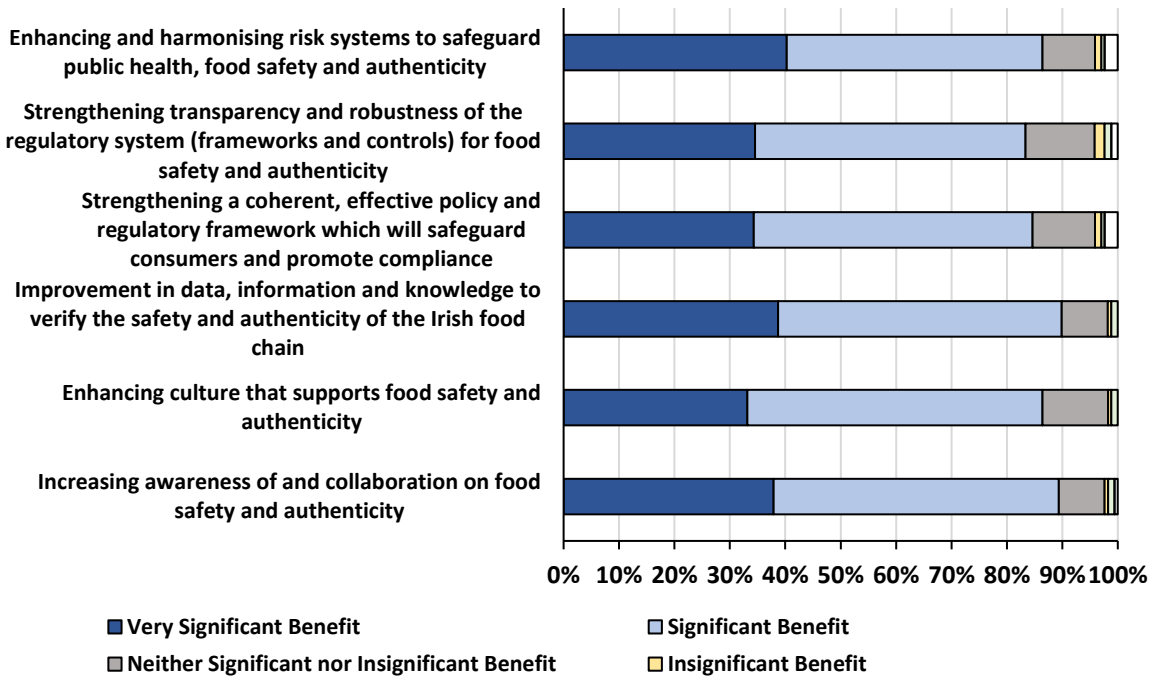
Level of Confidence in How Ireland Regulates Food Safety on a Day-to-Day Basis



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

The Broad Reach Survey sought respondents' views on the FSFA Programme and the likely extent of its effects on the agri-food sector, customers, and consumers. The next figure presents the responses for a range of expected benefits due to the programme. Identification of whether the FSFA Programme will benefit the sector and customers and consumers is an important issue for the future To-Be Report. Encouragingly the evidence suggests that the programme, when implemented, will have significant potential benefits in a range of areas.

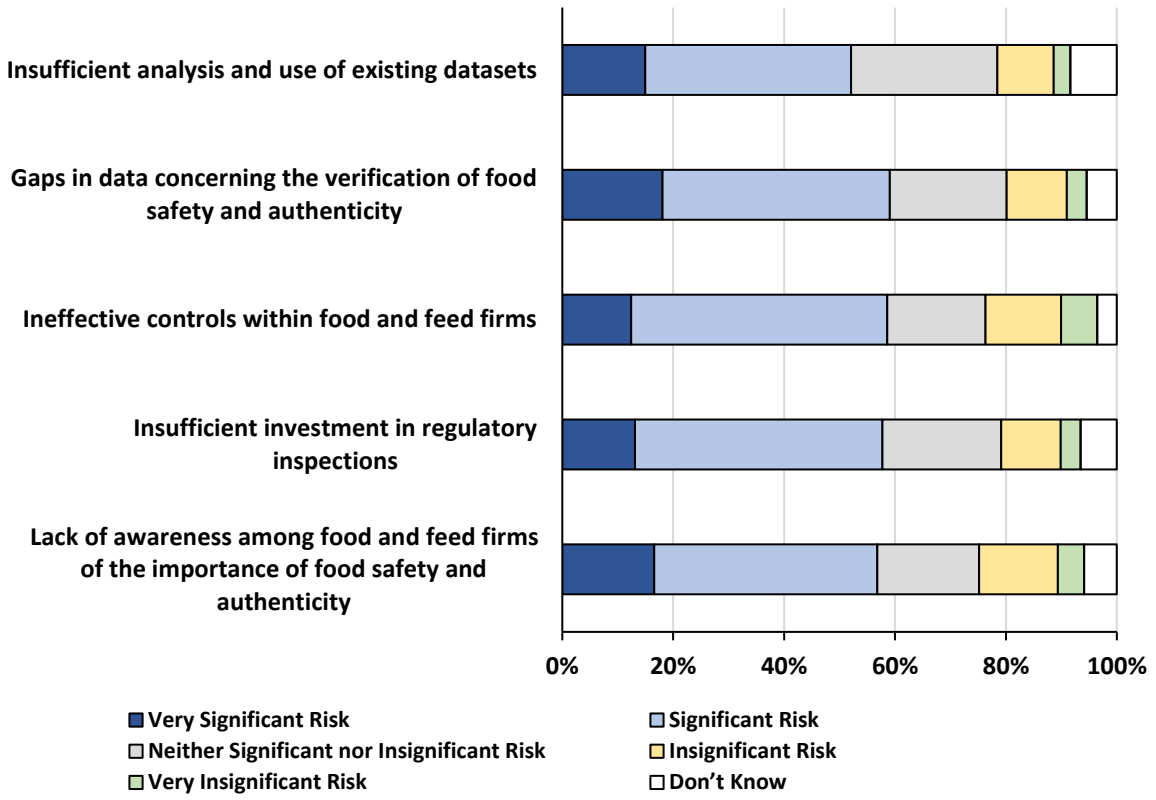
Views on the Extent to Which the FSFA Programme will Benefit the Agri-Food Sector, Customers and Consumers



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

Despite the positive views on the Programme, it is important to consider potential risks. The Broad Reach Survey sought the assessment of the food sector on potential risks to the implementation of the programme, with the responses shown in the next figure. A number of these risks were identified in the FSFA programme and in the Department strategy. Potential risks include: insufficient analysis and use of existing data; some gaps in data availability; ineffective controls; insufficient investment in regulatory inspections; and, a lack of awareness in the sector of the importance of food safety and authenticity.

Views on the Significance of Various Potential Risks to the Implementation of the Programme



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

The detailed findings on each of the areas investigated in this As-Is Report are documented in the detailed chapters of the main report.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Background, Objectives and Expected Outcomes of Project

This report is submitted to the European Commission DG Reform as part of a Request for Service on aspects of the Implementation and Embedding of a Reform Programme for the Better Regulation of Food in Ireland. This request was launched under the Multiple Framework Contract for the Support to Structural Reforms in EU Member States. The general objective is to contribute to institutional, administrative, and growth-sustaining reforms in Ireland, in line with Article 3 of the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) Regulation. The specific objective is to assist national authorities in improving their capacity to design, develop and implement reforms, in line with Article 4 of the TSI Regulation.

The primary function of the project is to support the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's ("the Department") implementation programme for enhancing its food safety and food authenticity (FSFA) systems. Consequently, the focus of this report is the Department, its internal structures and procedures, and its interactions with other organisations, entities, and agencies which also participate in Ireland's food safety and food authenticity system. In doing so, it will support the development of an implementation roadmap establishing a governance structure. It will include change and benefits management, gathering and presentation of data from actors in the Irish agri-food sector, and enhancement of IT capability through the provision of a business case for the FSFA divisions. The ultimate aim of the programme is to enhance the Irish agri-food sector as underpinned by robust and appropriate governance. This will ensure transparency and partnership across agencies involved in FSFA activities in Ireland. The outcome of the project should, over the longer term, contribute towards greater competitiveness and an enhanced reputation for Irish food.

1.2 Overview of Key Deliverables

There are six deliverables for this project as outlined below, with this report forming the basis of Deliverable 2. Deliverable 1 Inception Report was submitted to the European Commission in 2021. This current report represents Deliverable 2 and was prepared by AARC, Indecon Research Economists and Farrelly & Mitchell ("Consultancy Review Team").

Figure 1.1: Description of Key Project Deliverables

1. An **Inception Report** outlining the methodology, timeline and indicators to be adopted for the successful delivery of the project;
2. An analytical **As-Is Report**, including a gap analysis, describing the current policy and regulatory context and institutional framework;
3. A **Programme Governance Plan** setting out the requisite structures, norms and procedures for the successful delivery of the Programme;
4. A **Change Management Plan** comprising: a) a communications, coaching and resistance management plan; b) a benefits management plan and, c) a sponsor activity plan and roadmap;
5. An analytical **To-Be Report** describing the required 'ideal state' future framework of policy, regulations and institutions; and,
6. A **Digitalisation Plan** for an integrated IT system for food safety and food authenticity activities including indicative costs and timeframe for development.

Source: Request for Service

These deliverables are expected to support the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1: The better regulation of food in Ireland
- Outcome 2: The digitalisation of the food regulatory framework in Ireland

Over the longer term, the tasks and deliverables and their associated outcomes are expected to contribute towards greater competitiveness and an enhanced reputation of Irish food. Beneficiaries are due to include regulators, agri-food businesses, and consumers.

1.3 Scope of Assessment and Methodology

This As-Is Report represents Deliverable 2 and involved four specific tasks as shown in the chart below. The key tasks undertaken have informed the findings presented in the individual chapters. This As-Is Report includes a review of existing datasets, as well as wider resources and competencies, as presented in Chapter 5. The report presents new analysis of Programme benefits and risks in Chapter 6.

Figure 1.2: Key Tasks of Deliverable 2

Key Deliverables	Findings
Task 2.1: Review existing Programme documentation, reports (outputs and recommendations) and broader resources	See Chapter 2
Task 2.2: Conduct information gathering exchanges within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and externally	See Chapters 3-6
Task 2.3: Conduct a Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector	See Chapters 5, 6,
Task 2.4: Undertake validation workshop with the main stakeholders	- Food Safety and Food Authenticity Food Forum held in November 2021 - Additional Validation Workshop in Planning

Source: Tender Proposal

Review of Documentation and Information Gathering

As part of our analysis, we undertook a detailed review of the documentation reports and broader resources including, but not limited to, selected civil and public service reform strategies and national and EU legislation. This included an analysis of the existing policy and regulatory framework, institutional arrangements and administrative capacities in the context of official controls on food safety and food authenticity under Regulation (EU) 2017/625 in the Irish food sector. We also conducted detailed information gathering exchanges with the Department and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI). This involved stakeholder engagements with the relevant staff in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, which enabled us to gather insights on the current

system, including on the areas of strength, as well as the challenges. We extended the stakeholder engagement to other external organisations including the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE), and Bord Bia, with whom we held bilateral engagements. Agencies were invited to make written submissions.

As part of our review of documentation and information gathering, we examined in detail the seven projects, which were undertaken by the Department under Phase 1 of the implementation of the Food Safety and Food Authenticity (FSFA) Strategy 2018-2020. These projects were carried out across the following areas:

- Data Capture, Analysis, and Reporting
- Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation
- Enhancing and Harmonising Risk Systems
- Learning and Development Training for Fraud and Authenticity
- Harmonisation
- Contingency Planning
- Strategic Communications

A number of surveys with internal Departmental staff and external stakeholders had been completed relevant to these projects. A list of surveys undertaken as part of the Phase I projects is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Surveys Undertaken for Phase I Projects

Survey	Project
Compliance Methods Survey (External Stakeholders)	Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation
Compliance Methods Survey (Internal Stakeholders)	Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation
Food Safety and Authenticity Controls Questionnaire	Data Capture, Analysis, and Reporting
Internal Consultation Questionnaire	Learning and Development Training for Fraud and Authenticity
Questionnaire on Food Fraud Training	Learning and Development Training for Fraud and Authenticity
Interviews with Heads of Division	Strategic Communications
Staff Communications Survey	Strategic Communications
Survey of External Audiences at the National Ploughing Championships	Strategic Communications
Townhall of Internal Staff	Strategic Communications

Source: Consultancy Review Team

This work also involved a detailed review of the existing policy and regulatory framework, institutional arrangements and administrative capacities in the context of official controls on food safety and food authenticity under Regulation (EU) 2017/625 in the Irish food sector. Documents and strategies reviewed for this aspect of the report include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Statement of Strategy 2021-2024
- The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020
- The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Food Vision 2030 - A World Leader in Sustainable Food Systems
- Strategic Review of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Laboratory Service 2016
- Ireland's Multiannual National Control Plan (MANCP 2018-2022) and related reports.
- Report of the Scientific Committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2015: A Review of the Official Control System in Ireland and Opportunities for Improvement
- Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 ("OCR")
- Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998
- DG (SANTE) 2018-6810 on Evaluation of the Systems in Place to Implement Internal Audits.
- DG SANCO 2014-7019-MR in Order to Evaluate the National Procedures in Place to Verify the Effectives of the Import Control System
- DG SANCO 2013-6859-MR on Evaluation of Systems in place to Ensure Effectiveness of Official Controls
- DG(SANCO)/2013-6693-MR in order to Evaluate the Food Safety Control Systems in Place Governing the Production and Placing on the Market of Poultry Meat and Products

Food Safety and Food Authenticity Food Forum

As part of the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme, an annual Food Forum is held to update internal and external stakeholders on developments in relation to Food Safety and Food Authenticity. The most recent Food Forum was organised by the Department in November 2021. The European Commission and the Consultancy Review Team presented to this forum.

This forum focused on the implementation stage of the Food Safety and Food Authenticity (FSFA) Strategy and provided useful initial validation of aspects of the As-Is position in Ireland under the EU Commission's Technical Support Instrument (TSI). The forum outlined the role of the TSI in supporting Organisational Change across the Member States. The forum also reviewed the progress to date in terms of the implementation of the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme. One hundred and sixty-one individuals attended the Food Forum across a range of key stakeholders including all relevant divisions across the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Department of Health, FSAI, HSE, and Local Authorities.

Broad Reach Survey

Our approach to the assignment included a detailed Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector, which sought respondents' views on a range of FSFA-related matters. The Broad Reach Survey focused on the food production sector in order to detail the socio-economic and environmental indicators necessary to furnish a sufficient baseline and define KPIs. We have also used the opportunity of the Broad Reach Survey to obtain the assessment of the food sector on wider issues of relevance to the study. The survey obtained inputs on: Food Safety Policy and Regulatory and

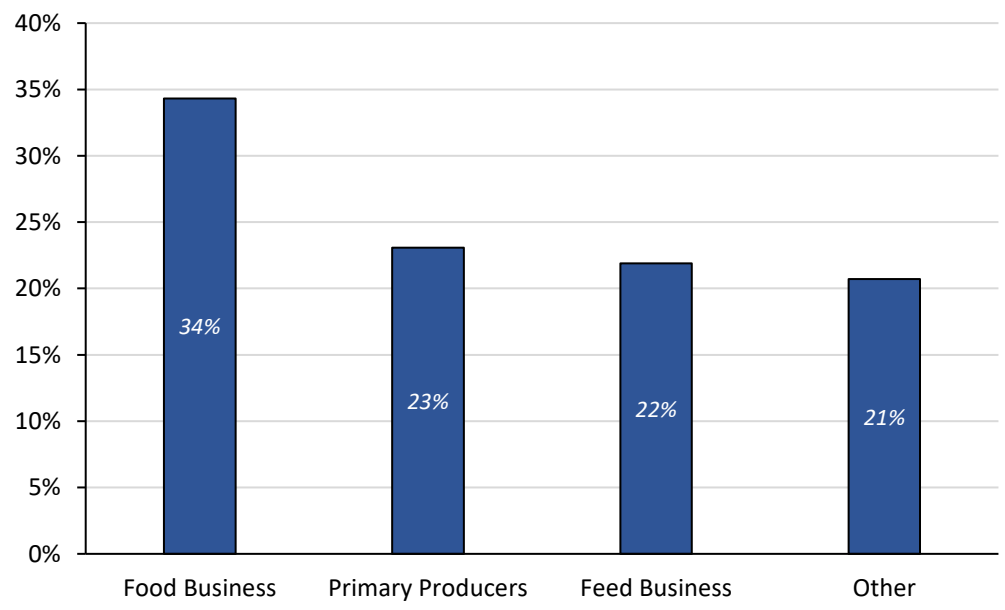
Institutional Context; the Department's Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme; Information and Data; Socio-Economic and Environmental Key Performance Indicators; and, the Future Vision for Food Safety and Authenticity in Ireland.

The Broad Reach Survey was distributed to a range of entities in the food production sector which represented food business operators registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Importantly, these covered food processing firms, feed businesses and also primary producers. The Consultancy Review Team had originally envisaged that it would be appropriate to attempt to target responses from around 100 respondents. We were not certain that this target could be achieved as the survey represented a very detailed information request. We are very pleased that 169 responses have been secured and we are very grateful to the sector for their level of engagement which reflects the importance of this issue. We are very appreciative to the Department for assisting in sending out reminders to the survey. All responses were sent directly to Indecon to ensure strict confidentiality and impartiality of the results. The organisations responding to the survey on aggregate account for 36,004 employees. These include major food production companies as well as numerous smaller organisations. The following figure provides a breakdown of respondents by their area of business. In line with the focus at the scope of the study, the Broad Reach Survey was distributed to entities in the food production sector which are registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. FSAI has oversight of a much larger group of FBOs through service contracts with other official control agencies such as the HSE.

Table 1.2: Respondents to the Broad Reach Survey	
Number of respondents	169
Employment in respondent organisations	36,004
Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector	

Figure 1.3 provides a breakdown of respondents by their area of business.

Figure 1.3: Respondents by Area of Business



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector
Other includes trade associations, veterinarians, agri retailers and hauliers.

The survey has also assisted us in establishing evidence on a whole-of-system view of FSFA processes and procedures and contributed to the analysis of the factors that influence risk and compliance in relation to food safety and authenticity. In interpreting the results of the Broad Reach Survey, it is important to recognise that its findings primarily represent the views and opinions of the sector rather than detailed factual data. These views are however important in the evaluation of the sector's perspectives and priorities. In our overall assessment we have supplemented the survey results with wider consultations and empirical evidence. A copy of the full survey is available in Annex 1. Some of the parts of the survey will feed into future deliverables.

1.4 Acknowledgements

The Consultancy Review Team would like to acknowledge the support provided by Edward Tersmette, Nathalie Berger, Egle Puosiunaite and Willem Noë of the European Commission DG Reform. We would also like to extend our thanks to officials in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, including Eilís O'Connell, Patricia Reilly, James Choiseul, Oliver Burke, Carmel Keane, Ursula McMahon and Paula Barry Walsh. Further thanks are due to the Department's heads of division Bernie Brennan, Paul Corkery, Tony Devlin, Anne-Marie Dillon, Jim Garvey, Montserrat Gutierrez, Avril Hobson, Sheila Nolan, Eilish O'Brien, Eoin O'Brien, Angela Robinson and Hazel Sheridan. The Consultancy Review Team would like to note that the level of co-operation and openness of the Department officials was exceptional and has facilitated our independent analysis.

We would also like to particularly acknowledge the helpful contributions made by Pamela Byrne, Donal Cousins, Peter Whelan and Bernard Hegarty at the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. We also wish to thank Georgekutty Sebastian, Louise Kissane, Siobhan McEvoy and Tommy Wilson at the Department of Health. Further thanks are due to Catherine Cosgrove, Catherine Dunne and Catherine Foye at the Health Service Executive and to Alice McGlynn at Bord Bia.

The Consultancy Review Team is particularly grateful for the insights provided by all respondents to the Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector in Ireland. The survey represents a unique evidence base into the industry's experience of the food safety and food authenticity system, and we are very appreciative of the time taken by all respondents to complete the survey.

The usual disclaimer applies, and the views and analyses contained in this document are the sole responsibility of the Consultancy Review Team.

2 Review of Programme Documentation

As part of this Deliverable, we have undertaken a review of existing FSFA programme documentation. In examining this documentation, it is useful to first discuss the attributes of an effective food safety regulatory system. We also provide an overview of the Irish food safety system before reviewing the FSFA Strategy 2018-2020 and other relevant documentation.

2.1 Attributes for Effective Food Safety Regulatory Systems

In meeting the objectives for this study of achieving the better regulation of food in Ireland and the digitalisation of the food regulatory framework, it is useful as background to consider best practice as follows:

- Attributes for effective food safety regulatory systems begin with the general attributes for such systems.
- These general attributes can then be further developed to provide detail on specific attributes of effective systems.
- Then, articulation of the steps involved in operating an effective system.

It is useful to think about these three levels separately because effective systems are multifaceted and complex.

Several entities have devoted effort to describing the general attributes of effective food safety regulatory systems. These attributes are to some extent timeless, but also evolve with the further development of regulatory science across multiple disciplines. Among the statements of general attributes are those made by the Codex Alimentarius, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and National Academies studies in the United States. It has been suggested[6] that it is useful to classify the attributes of effective regulatory systems as follows:

- **Responsive:** Includes the ability to respond in a crisis and to respond to new information and make policy changes when necessary.
- **Outcome-Oriented:** Describes the emphasis on product safety outcomes, avoiding prescriptions that would interfere with innovation.
- **Predictable:** Refers to clarity and openness regarding laws and fairness in their enforcement. Predictability allows for a level playing field among firms in regulated industry.
- **Proportional:** Allocates resources based on the threat to public health, making sure that products with similar risks are regulated in similar ways. Proportionality depends on risk assessment.
- **Independent:** Acknowledges that regulatory policy is the result of both scientific and societal factors, but consumer trust and industry's ability to function depend on the agency's ability to operate without political interference.[7]

[6] Institute of Medicine 2012. Ensuring Safe Foods and Medical Products Through Stronger Regulatory Systems Abroad. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/13296.
[7] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020. Stronger Food and Drug Regulatory Systems Abroad. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25651.

Specific attributes identified for effective food safety regulatory systems include the development of the three-part risk analysis framework of risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. Recent developments have focused on the broadening of the focus to develop a risk-based approach to food safety regulation. The 2020 study 'Stronger Food and Drug Regulatory Systems Abroad' (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine), included a recommendation that national regulatory authorities adopt a risk-based approach to regulation of food and medicine including:

- Developing effective data systems to systematically identify areas of greater risk.
- Participating in research, data sharing, technology adoption, and training activities with international partners.
- Growing capacity to assess the health and economic impacts of regulation and using this information to inform actions to protect public health.
- Communicating about risks, including the uncertainty around them, especially during a crisis.
- Communicating the ways regulation improves quality, safety, and access, using different strategies to convey this information to government leaders, regulated industry, and the public.[8]

These best practice attributes have been reflected in the Department's Food Safety and Food Authenticity (FSFA) Strategy.

2.2 Official Controls Regulation ('OCR')

The official controls delivered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy are subject to prescriptive EU legislation (Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls – the Official Controls Regulation or OCR). These outline how such controls must be delivered by Ireland's competent authorities. It is therefore essential to ensure the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme is in compliance with the OCR.

On 14 December 2019, the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 replaced Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 which has been repealed. The OCR impacts food business operators ('FBOs') and competent authorities. The OCR consolidates the legal basis for food control in the European Union to a more standardised control structure including food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products. In addition to the area of food safety and hygiene, the focus of the 2017/625 is on traceability, consumer information, transparency and anti-food fraud measures. The overall purpose of the regulation is to establish a harmonised framework for all Member States within the European Union for the organisation of official controls in the agri-food supply chain. These controls can be applied to the entire food chain. The main elements of EU Regulation 2017/625 are summarised in Table 2.1.

[8] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020. Stronger Food and Drug Regulatory Systems Abroad. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25651.

Table 2.1: Main Elements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625	
Main Element	**Key Changes/Features**
Scope	The scope of the new Regulation has been extended to cover official controls to verify compliance with food and feed law, animal health and welfare, plant health and animal-by products rules.
Risk Based Approach	A new provision clarifies that official controls must be performed in a manner that minimises the burden on businesses.
Official Controls on the Operator's Processes and Activities	Power to carry out official controls on all operators at all stages of production, processing, distribution and use of animals, goods, substances, materials or objects that are governed by agri-food chain rules.
Transparency of Official Controls	Increased transparency, possibility to publish results of controls and establish rating schemes.
Delegation of Control Tasks of the Competent Authorities	Competent Authorities must organise audits or inspections of the delegated body or natural person and, if the Competent Authority finds that the delegated body or natural person is not meeting the necessary conditions, the delegation must be withdrawn fully or partly.
Operator's Obligations	Operators, during official controls, are required to assist and cooperate with the staff of the Competent Authority.
Official Laboratories	The Regulation sets out rules for the designation of the laboratories carrying out analysis, tests or diagnoses for official controls and the conditions to be designated.
Sampling, Analysis, Test and Diagnosis	Regulation clarifies that rules on methods of sampling, analysis, tests and diagnosis apply to official controls as well as to other official activities in all the sectors covered by the Regulation.
Border Controls	Common framework for carrying out border controls on animals and goods entering the EU.
Official Certification	Regulation introduces a set of general rules in order to create a uniform and harmonised framework for official certification across Member States in all areas, covered by the scope of the regulation.
Administrative Assistance and Cooperation	Regulation clarifies and strengthens rules on Member States Cooperation and administrative assistance, to enable Competent Authorities to deal efficiently with cross-borders non-compliance.
Enforcement actions by Competent Authorities	Broader scope reflected by modified non-exhaustive list of enforcement actions.
Enforcement Measures	Commission is empowered to adopt a number of measures where there is evidence that the system of controls in a Member State faces serious disruption.
Penalties	Reinforced rules on financial penalties for fraudulent or deceptive practices. New provisions for the protection of whistle-blowers.
Sector specific control rules	Official Control Regulation repeals a number of sector specific official control provisions in different acts to incorporate corresponding requirements within its proper rules.
Commission Empowerments: Future-Proof Legislation	Regulation contains a number of Commission empowerments for delegated and implementing acts that will provide the necessary legal means to adjust controls to the needs of a constantly changing agri-food chain environment.
Note: https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/official-controls-and-enforcement/legislation-official-controls_en Source: European Commission	

It must be noted that 2017/625 has a wider remit than just a focus on official controls. It also places a new emphasis on food fraud and protects consumers against unfair trade. As noted in the 2020 EU Agri-Food Fraud Network Annual Report,[9] Reg 2017/625 requires Member States to perform official controls to "identify possible intentional violations of the rules (…) perpetrated through fraudulent or deceptive practices."

Regulation 2017/625 also highlights the importance of authenticity standards and the importance that these are monitored to verify compliance with quality and authenticity standards.[10] Other EU

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/food/system/files/2021-09/ff_ffn_annual-report_2020_1.pdf

[10] We note that OCR does not apply directly to Marketing Standards regulations (1308/2013 and 1306/2013), however there is a caveat to link controls which identify fraudulent or deceptive practices in respect of marketing standards

control regulations are still in force and remain unchanged regarding hygiene, HACCP and microbiological self-inspections.

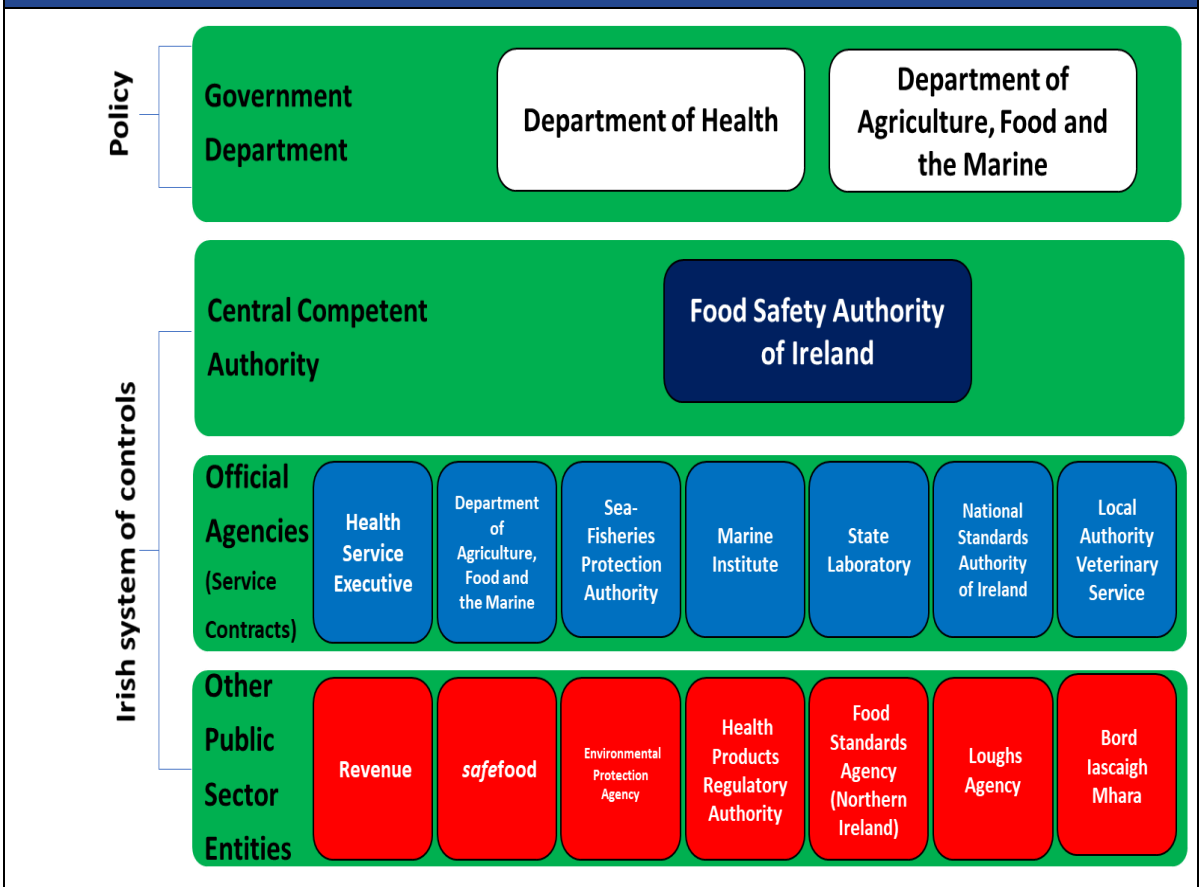
2.3 Overview of the Irish Food Safety System

The Irish food safety system operates on two levels related to policy and to the system of controls. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health (DOH) are the Government Departments responsible for policymaking. The central Competent Authority in the system of controls is the FSAI. The official agencies of the system are:

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- HSE
- Local Authority Veterinary Service
- Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority
- Marine Institute
- State Laboratory
- National Standards Authority of Ireland

In addition to these official agencies with service contracts, the other public sector entities are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Overview of the Irish Food Safety System



Source: FSAI

The role of the FSAI as a central authority for the enforcement of food legislation is outlined in a number of documents including: FSAI Act 1998; FSAI Strategy 2019 – 2023; FSAI Annual Report 2020; FSAI website; Multiannual National Control Plan 2018 – 2022; and, Annual Reports. In addition, the FSAI has secured funding for the establishment of a Central Intelligence Hub (CIH). This will ensure the necessary support is provided to the official agencies to adequately address the threat to consumer health posed by fraudulent and deceptive practices. It will further ensure the ability to capture and analyse intelligence to inform the risk-based decision-making required by Regulation EU 2017/625.

FSAI has indicted to the Consultancy Review Team that there is extensive collaboration between the Department and FSAI as outlined in the table below.

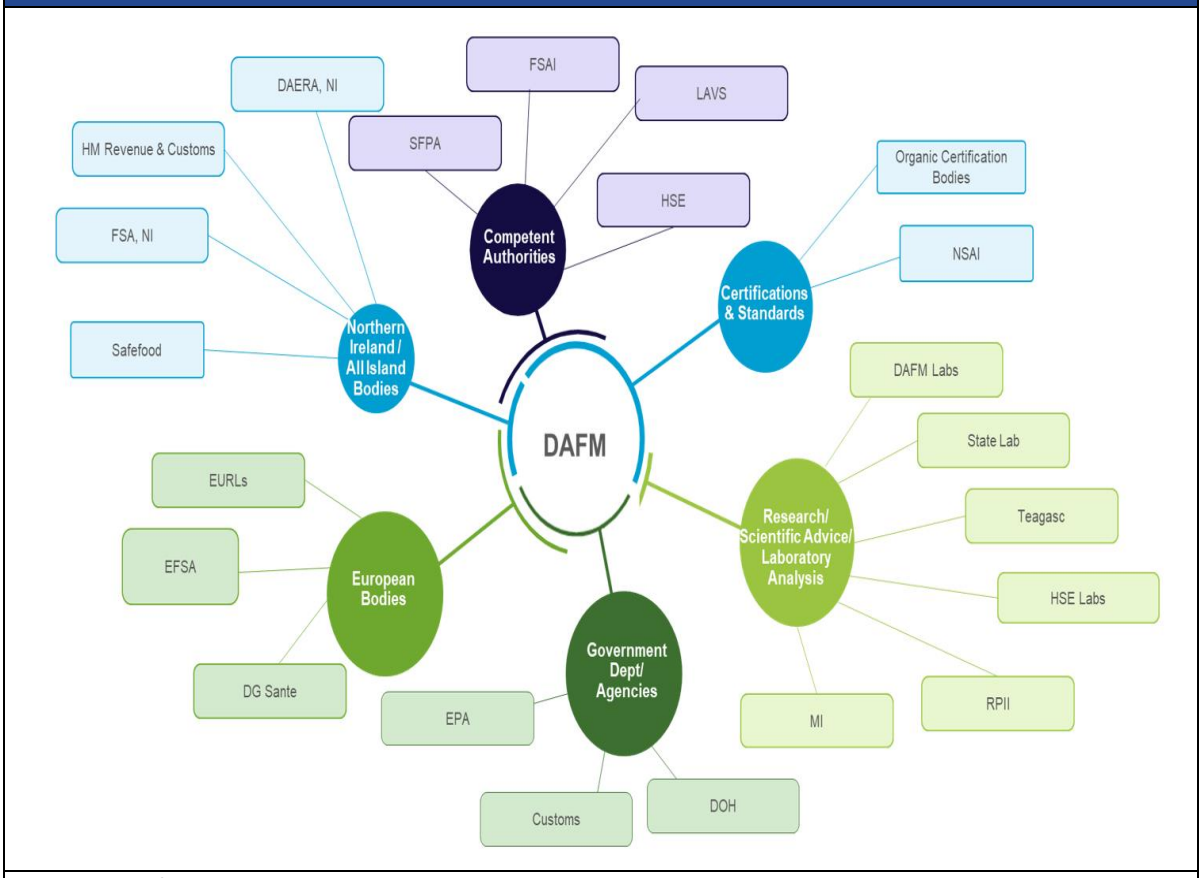
Table 2.2: Fora for collaboration between Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the FSAI

- Senior management of the FSAI and the Department have regular meetings, chaired at Secretary General/Chief Executive level to discuss issues of strategic importance. Meetings take place on average 2-3 times per year although there were no meetings of the senior management in 2020 due to the pandemic. However, there were many meetings between FSAI and the Department at an operational level.
- The enforcement of food legislation (within the meaning of the FSAI Act 1998) is done through the formal service contract agreed between the Department and FSAI. This mechanism has been in place with period renewal since 1999; the current service contract is in place for the period 2021 -2026.
- The drafting of relevant food safety and hygiene legislation where the Department has requested FSAI's inputs (e.g., S.I. No. 22/2020 - European Union (Food and Feed Hygiene) Regulations 2020).
- A data-sharing agreement between FSAI and the Department was signed in 2021 to formalise the extensive sharing of data between both bodies.
- The Department is a member of many FSAI cross-agency and industry forums that meet to progress specific strategic or operational issues including:
  - ✓ the Cross-Agency official controls steering committee,
  - ✓ Cross-Agency Food Fraud Working Group and Subgroups,
  - ✓ Food Fraud Task Force,
  - ✓ Cross-Agency Import Controls working group,
  - ✓ Developing guidance with Industry for Raw Milk Producers,
  - ✓ Cross-Agency Working Groups to develop guidance for example Approval of establishments, Cold Stores, etc.
  - ✓ Cross-Agency Working Groups to prepare for SANTE F and US FDA audits etc.
- Extensive Collaboration on training between FSAI and the Department, for example in relation to Brexit, Implementation of the OCR including Implementing and Delegated Acts, Food Fraud Training, training on the legislation on Food Information to Consumers (FIC) and on Nutrition and Health Claims in relation to the supervision of the dairy sector, developing specific e-learning modules, webinars, etc.
- Developing MOUs between FSAI, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the HSE and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners for Geographical Indicators for Spirit Drinks.
- FSAI collaboration with the Department and the other Official Agencies to produce the Multiannual National Control Plan (MANCP) and Annual Report.

Source: FSAI Material Supplied to the Review Team

Figure 2.2 illustrates the extent of the Department's co-operation and collaboration with all organisations involved in the food safety control system. This includes its interaction with European bodies such as DG SANTE, as well as with other Irish Government Departments and agencies.

Figure 2.2: Overview of the Collaboration with All Organisations in the Area of Food and Feed Controls

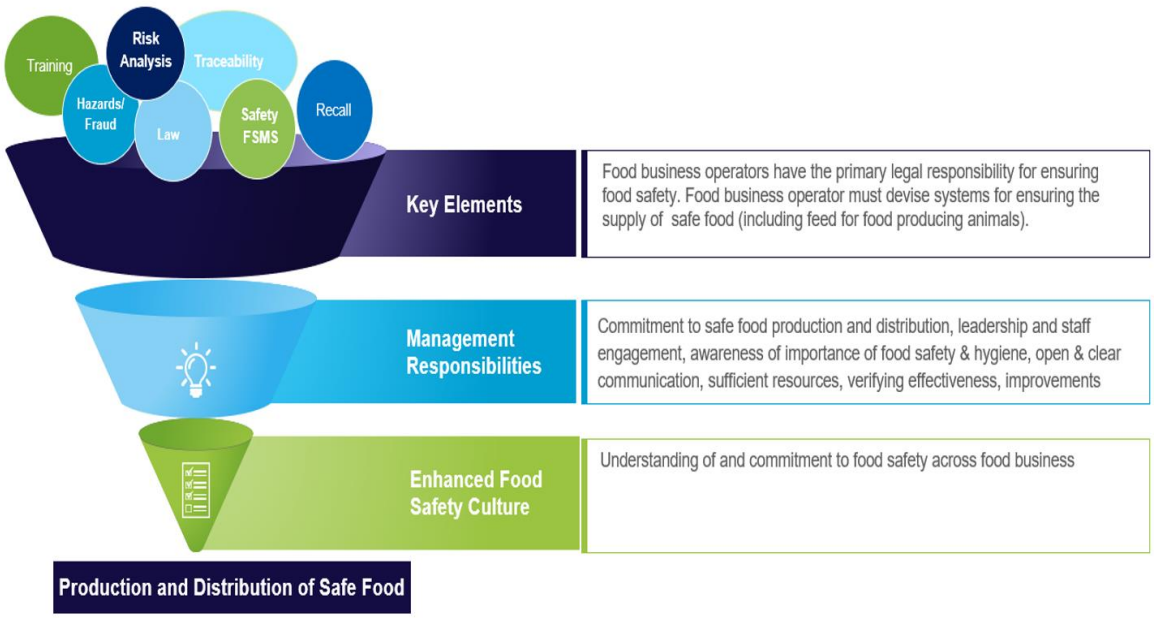


Source: Consultancy Review Team

Legislation in Ireland, based on EU legislation, specifies that the primary responsibility for food safety and food authenticity in Ireland rests with Food Business Operators (FBOs).[11] FBOs are obliged to establish, maintain, and provide evidence of an appropriate food safety culture within their business which involves key management commitments as presented in Figure 2.3. To promote compliance and culture, it is important that all food and feed safety requirements for businesses are implementable and understandable. It must be noted that the responsibility for ensuring that food is safe rests with the FBOs. The Department and other agencies verify this through official controls and inspections.

[11] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 'Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020', July 2018 - https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/608472-food-safety-food-authenticity-its-your-business-food-forum-2019/.

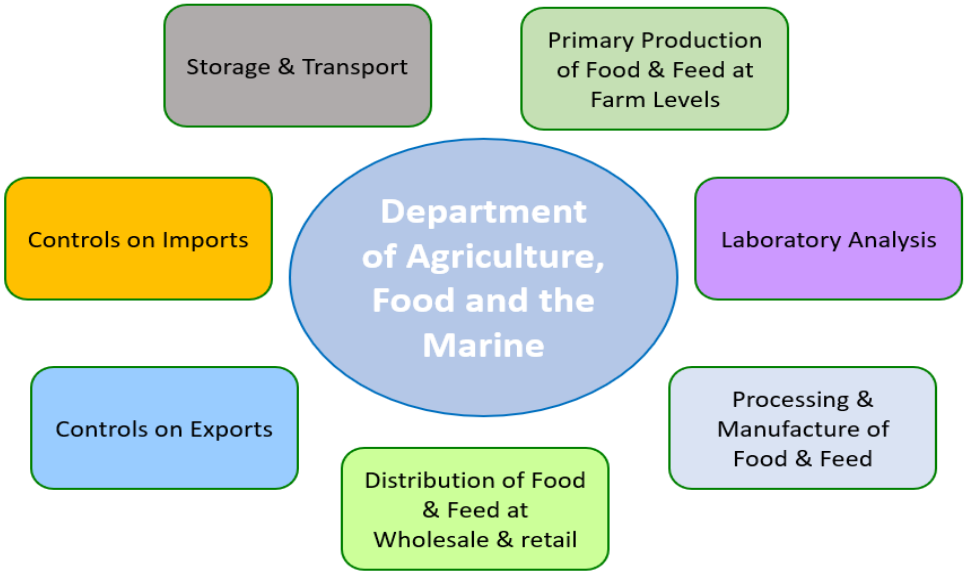
Figure 2.3: Key Management Commitments for an Appropriate Food Safety Culture



Source: Consultancy Review Team

Food safety standards are verified by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's system of inspection, analysis, and audit. The Department, alongside other agencies, plays a leading role in ensuring food safety and food authenticity from production to consumption. The Competent Authority is the FSAI, which has overarching responsibility for the enforcement of food safety in Ireland. Figure 2.4 describes the various oversight activities of the Department in relation to food safety and food authenticity.

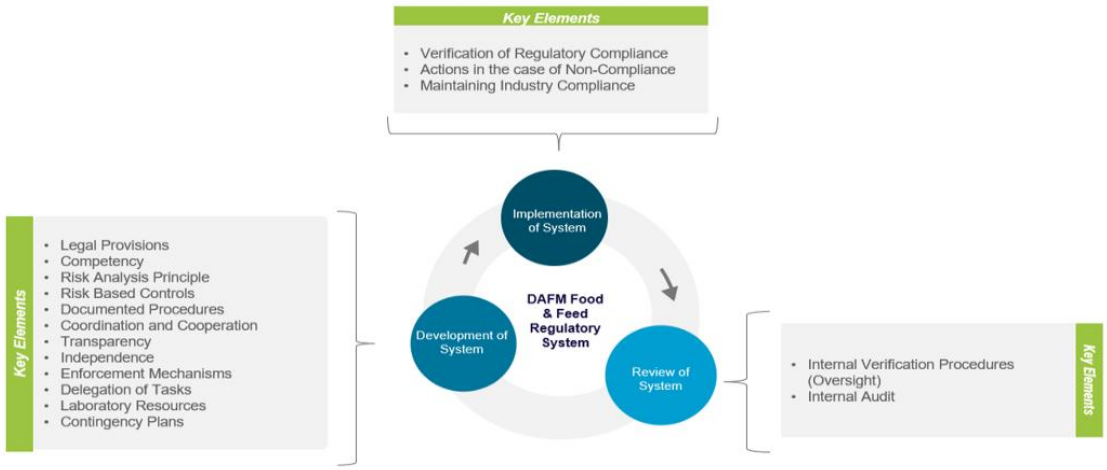
Figure 2.4: FSFA Oversight Activities of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



Note: We note that DAFM are not the only official agency/Competent authority involved in these activities
Source: FSFA Strategy 2018-2020

The Department is responsible for ensuring there are mechanisms in place for the review and adjustment of the Official Control system to ensure its effectiveness and suitability (Regulation (EU) 2017/625). A number of key requirements and procedures as outlined in Figure 2.5 are embedded within the Official Control system to ensure it operates in an effective and efficient manner. These requirements have been developed by the Consultancy Review Team following a detailed review of Regulation EU 2017/625 that requires the Department, as a competent authority, to have procedures/arrangements in place to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls and other official activities. These have also taken account of international best practice.

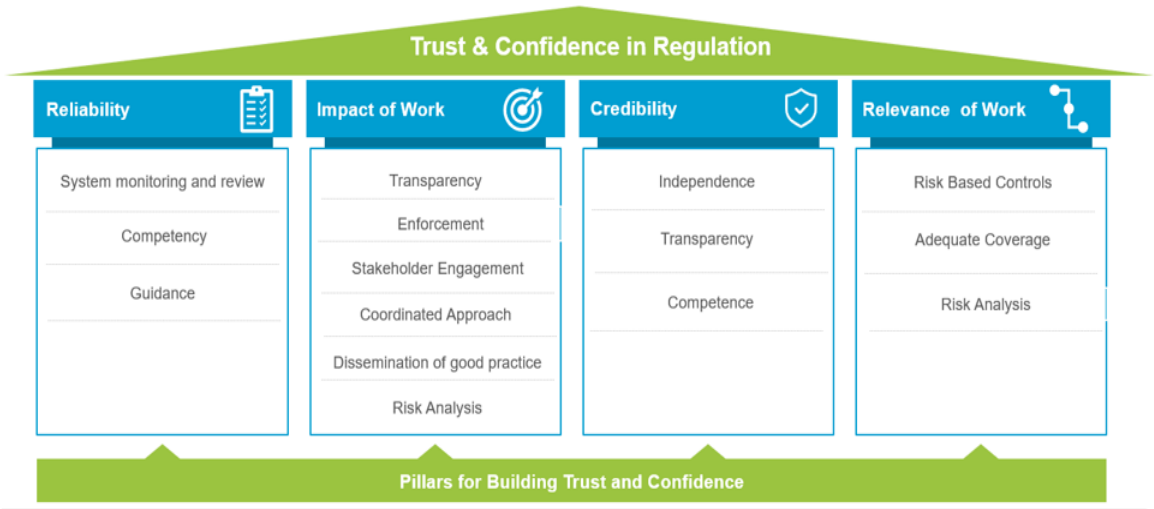
Figure 2.5: Key Requirements of an Official Control System



Source: Consultancy Review Team

Application of best practice requirements are important to demonstrate that the Department's control system is reliable, credible, focused on relevant work areas, and positively impacts the safety of food and feed. Together these requirements promote trust and confidence in the regulatory system.

Figure 2.6: Key Pillars and Their Associated Requirements for Building Trust and Confidence in the Regulatory System



Source: Consultancy Review Team

The Department is responsible for:

- Development of effective high-quality legislation which includes an appropriate authorisation and enforcement mechanism through legislation;
- Designation of competent authorities responsible for official controls; and,
- A Competent Authority responsible for the enforcement of food and feed law.

The Department also has a responsibility to ensure the legislation developed is robust and provides sufficient implementing (legal and administrative) powers to competent authorities to ensure they have:

- Legal powers to perform official controls and other official activities and to take the necessary action provided by law; and,
- Legal procedures in place to ensure that staff have access to the premises of, and documents kept by, operators so as to be able to accomplish their tasks properly (Article 5 Regulation (EU) 2017/625).

Collaboration and cooperation between the Department and the Department of Health as the two legislators is essential to ensure a harmonised approach to many areas such as designation, enforcement powers, appeal mechanisms, official control fees, etc., to promote consistency across the food safety regulatory sector at the national level.

Food and feed policy and legislation should be developed on the basis of written principles and procedures that enable comprehensive and participatory processes and ensure "fit for purpose" results.[12] In particular, when preparing legislation, the requirements in general food law need to be considered by the Department as follows:

- Food Law shall pursue one or more of the general objectives of a high level of protection of human life and health and the protection of consumers' interests, including fair practices in food trade, taking account of, where appropriate, the protection of animal health and welfare, plant health and the environment. (Article 5, Regulation (EC) 178/2002); and,
- Food Law shall be based on risk analysis except where this is not appropriate. Risk assessment shall be based on the available scientific evidence and undertaken in an independent, objective and transparent manner. Risk management shall take into account the results of risk assessment, and in particular, the opinions of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) (Article 6, Regulation (EC) 178/2002).

The Department at central level must review the effectiveness of the legislation, e.g., review of effectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms provided for under legislation by examining:

- The types of enforcement tools used by officials;
- The cases in which these are being used;
- If they are being used in a proportionate and suitable manner;
- If the enforcement mechanism is effective in the closure of non-compliance detected within the industry; and
- and in helping to maintain industry compliance.

[12] FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Dimension A – Inputs and resources. Food safety and quality series No. 7/2. Rome - https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA5336EN/.

When it comes to enforcement, the Department has a number of tools at its disposal. Depending on the type of activity, enforcement measures may include any of the following:

- Verbal instruction
- Written letter/Compliance notice
- Restriction notice
- Re-inspection

Sanctions of varying severity may be applied depending on the type of enterprise, the nature and extent of non-compliance and the legislative provisions as follows:

- Restriction of movement of animals or products (including seizure/destruction)
- Fixed penalty notice
- Forfeiture of compensation
- Application of a penalty to a range of EU funded schemes
- Withdrawal of operational approval
- Legal proceedings

The Department is authorised to use the enforcement powers in the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. It contains enforcement provisions which are in addition to the powers to prosecute and other provisions on specific pieces of food legislation. The provisions of the FSAI Act are designed to provide an improved means of reacting to and dealing with situations posing a risk to public health. The provisions[13] in the FSAI Act are as follows:

- **Improvement Notice** – issued if the Competent Authority is of the opinion that a premises or practice is of such a nature that if it persists, it will or is likely to pose a risk to public health. The notice outlines the breaches found and the remedial action required, and specifies the time period by when these breaches are to be remedied;
- **Improvement Order** – issued by the District Court if an Improvement Notice is not complied with. Improvement Orders are published on the enforcements section of the FSAI website and remain on the website for a period of three months from the date when the order is lifted by the Competent Authority;
- **Closure Order** – issued if it is the opinion of the Competent Authority that there is or there is likely to be a grave and immediate danger to public health at/or in the food premises. Closures Orders can refer to the immediate closure of all or part of the food premises, or all or some of its activities. The Orders may be lifted when the premises has improved to the satisfaction of the Competent Authority. Failure to comply with an Improvement Order may also result in the issuing of a Closure Order. Closure Orders are published on the enforcements section of the FSAI website and remain on the website for a period of three months from the date when the order is lifted by the Competent Authority; and,
- **Prohibition Order** – issued if the activities (handling, processing, disposal, manufacturing, storage, distribution or selling food) involve or are likely to involve a serious risk to public health from a particular product, class, batch or item of food. The effect is to prohibit the sale

[13] The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine more commonly use Compliance Notices/Restriction Notices

of the product, either temporarily or permanently. Prohibition Orders are published on the enforcement section of the FSAI website and remain on the website for a period of one month from the date when the Competent Authority lifts the order.

These enforcement tools assist in avoiding a strictly punitive response to non-compliance and form a combination of measures which facilitate minor through to major non-compliances being identified and rectified.

Competent authorities may delegate certain Official Control tasks to one or more delegated bodies or natural persons and must ensure they have the powers needed to effectively perform these tasks. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine delegates certain Official Control tasks pertaining to the inspection of organic food, feed and farming to Organic Certification Bodies (OCBs).

The OCBs provide an inspection and certification service for all Organic Production Units in Ireland and carry out controls to uphold the organic standards as defined by the EU. The OCBs carry out annual inspections of every organic enterprise. They have been designated and are regulated by the Organics Unit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department ensures this delegation complies with the conditions outlined in Articles 28-32 of Regulation (EU) 625/2017, including carrying out audits or inspections of these bodies.

As a Government Department, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is responsible for the designation of National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) and Official Laboratories. It also operates an approval system for private laboratories involved in FBOs' own checks as part of national monitoring programmes. The Department, in consultation with the Department of Health and the FSAI, has designated National Reference Laboratories and Official Laboratories for official controls (food, feed, animal health and welfare, plant health, and plant protection products), as required by Regulation (EU) 2017/625, Articles 37 and 100, respectively.

NRLs are relevant experts for specific parameter(s). The responsibilities and tasks of an NRL are defined in Regulation (EU) 2017/625, Article 101. Designation of NRLs is decided between the Department and the Department of Health, with input from the relevant official agencies and the FSAI. The designating Government Department advises the Commission of the designated NRLs for Ireland.

Table 2.3: List of National Reference Laboratories Designated by Ireland[14]
• The State Laboratory
• Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Laboratories
• The Marine Institute
• Public Analyst's Laboratory - Dublin
• Public Analyst's Laboratory - Cork
• Food Safety Department, Teagasc Food Research Centre
Source: Consultancy Review Team

The Department has a role in ensuring that the laboratories designated as NRLs for Ireland fulfil the criteria set out in Regulation (EU) 2017/625, in particular:

[14] A full list of national reference laboratories is maintained by the FSAI at the following link: https://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Enforcement_and_Audit/Monitoring/Laboratories/List%20NRLs.xlsx

- Laboratories designated as NRLs are accredited in accordance with the European standards, EN ISO/IEC 17025 as required in Regulation (EU) 2017/625, Article 37(4)(e).
- NRLs are suitably resourced as required by Regulation (EU) 2017/625, Article 37(4)(a) &(b).

The Department's laboratories in Backweston are NRLs for a number of parameters/matrices and are required to:

- Maintain linkages for collaboration with the corresponding EU Reference Laboratories (EURLs);
- Ensure good co-ordination with NRLs; and,
- Establish linkages with official laboratories from other competent authorities, especially for specific monitoring programmes, e.g., the National Residues Monitoring Programmes.[15]

The FSAI Service Contract specifies that the Department (referred to as an "Official Agency" in the Service Contract) shall ensure arrangements are in place for the oversight and coordination of the official laboratories designated for official food controls. The Department, as a provider of laboratory services, must ensure the laboratory:

- Maintains accreditation to EN ISO/IEC 17025;
- Uses methods that comply with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625;
- Ensures that turnaround times for samples taken as part of official controls and other official activities allow for efficient follow up of non-compliant samples, and are in line with the legislative requirements;
- Has suitable reporting mechanisms in place, in particular regarding non-compliant samples to allow swift follow up (Article 38,1);
- Where testing is subcontracted to another laboratory, there is a written agreement with the subcontracted laboratory detailing the services and standards to be provided;
- Where private laboratories are used by industry for their own checks, the Department operates a laboratory approval process; and,
- Subject to available resources, assists in the development of new analytical capabilities for compliance with new legislation requirements and emerging risks.

In terms of the requirements for laboratory resources, the Department has agreed to provide for the official control of foodstuffs listed in the service contract with the FSAI. The Department also provides the FSAI with details of any external laboratories used for official controls. Similarly, the Department is required to ensure official laboratories designated for feed comply with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

2.4 FSFA Strategy

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine developed a Food Safety and Authenticity (FSFA) Strategy following consultations with various stakeholders. This is essential to support a food and beverages industry worth almost €26 billion. The industry exports to 180 countries, with this trade

[15] FSAI has a role in co-ordinating these interactions for food through the Cross Agency laboratory working group.

amounting to €14.2 billion in 2020.[16] *Food Vision 2030* aims for increased value-addition and an increase in the value of agri-food exports to €21bn by 2030 built on sustainable steady value growth.[17]

The Food Safety and Food Authenticity (FSFA) Strategy 2018-2020, launched in July 2018, aims to ensure that the Department has an effective and efficient harmonised and co-ordinated framework for the organisation of all activities including official controls on food safety and authenticity that supports its objective of excellence of policy, strategy and operations. The Strategy recognises the imperative for the Department to examine and improve its performance to meet the challenges of the new rules and requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625. This covers official controls, and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health, and plant production products.[18] In response, the Department recognises the necessity to build on the skills, expertise, and knowledge of its own personnel, and to do so in partnership with other agencies and the agri-food industry.

The FSFA Strategy sets out a pathway for providing assurances on the safety, provenance, and integrity of food produced in Ireland. A major aim is to grow the culture of compliance across the agri-food sector in a way that maximises the potential for collaboration across Government and industry to work together to ensure the safety of consumers both domestically and internationally. Among its objectives is the identification of best practice in relation to compliance, as well as the identification of the triggers for compliant behaviour and the enablers of that behaviour.

The Strategy arose out of the establishment of a Food Safety and Authenticity Working Group by the Department's Management Board in 2016. To ensure the Department has an effective, efficient, harmonised and co-ordinated framework for the organisation of all activities related to food safety and food authenticity, the Group put together a forum for all the Department's staff involved in this area. The Group undertook a wide-ranging consultation with staff and stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities that could lead to an enhanced, harmonised, and efficient control system. These engagements included:

- Targeted surveys in which internal and external stakeholders were invited to submit their views on food safety and food authenticity issues; and
- Internal and external stakeholder focus groups which assisted in the development of key recommendations to support the main areas of activity identified for the Strategy.

The results of these consultations led to the development of five high-level goals, which reflect the key areas underpinning the objective of the Working Group, to support and enhance the safety and authenticity of food as follows:

1. Governance
2. Communication
3. Risk
4. Data, Information and Knowledge
5. Policy and Regulatory Framework

These goals are explored in more detail overleaf.

[16] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 'Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2021' - https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/91e7e-annual-review-and-outlook-for-agriculture-food-and-the-marine-2020/

[17] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 'Food Vision 2030' - https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c73a3-food-vision-2030-a-world-leader-in-sustainable-food-systems/

[18] Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017R0625&from=EN.

Under Goal 1 (Governance), the objective was for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to have an open, transparent and robust framework for the organisation of all activities including official controls on food safety and food authenticity. This is expected to build public confidence in the Department as the guardian of the safety and authenticity of food. It is also expected to help clarify the responsibilities and obligations of the various stakeholders who have a role in this area.

Table 2.4: FSFA Strategy Goal 1 - Governance
Objectives
• The Department to actively strengthen its leadership role in safeguarding food safety and food authenticity. • To deliver a high level of governance in relation to consumer expectations of food authenticity.
Outcomes
• Building on existing practice, the Department will have structures, systems and procedures that are harmonised and coordinated in relation to horizontal aspects of food safety and food authenticity. • The Department's programme of activity to be reflective of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing food safety and food authenticity. • Enhanced capability and capacity of the organisation and personnel to have robust controls in relation to food authenticity.
Recommendations
• Design and implement a programme of actions for the organisation of all activities that will provide consistency of approach in relation to the delivery of official controls. • The Department to have open and transparent processes of engagement with all stakeholders, allowing for their views to be taken into account.
Source: FSFA Strategy 2018-2020

Goal 2 (Communication) was expected to enhance communication to promote greater awareness and collaboration on food safety and food authenticity within the Department, as well as with stakeholders and the wider public. Under this goal, there is recognition that the Department must engage, inform, educate, and listen at all stages of the food chain, from producer to consumer. In doing so, it needs to ensure effective communication through innovative mechanisms that leverage the expert knowledge, experience, and ideas of Departmental staff.

Table 2.5: FSFA Strategy Goal 2 - Communication
Objectives
• To promote clear and consistent communication on food safety and food authenticity across the Department's staff, stakeholders and the wider public. • Foster and promote linkages and collaboration with other agencies, stakeholders and research bodies to inform the development and implementation of the Department's work on food safety and food authenticity.
Outcomes
• Consumer, industry and market trust in the Department's effectiveness and professionalism in safeguarding food safety and food authenticity. • More effective and harmonised implementation of regulatory controls across the food sector. • The Department and industry working in partnership towards achieving the goals of food safety and food authenticity.
Recommendations
• Review communication within the Department and externally with a view to encouraging a positive and structured engagement with staff, stakeholders and the wider public. • Align and coordinate the Department's food safety and food authenticity activities with relevant cross-agency expert groups. • Examine means by which the Department's website and a digital footprint may support its objectives in relation to food safety and food authenticity. • Identify means of promoting the tangible benefits of compliance across the spectrum of stakeholders. • Deliver additional relevant and appropriate training to personnel to ensure that they have enhanced knowledge and expertise to deal with food authenticity issues.
Source: FSFA Strategy 2018-2020

Goal 3 (Risk) was aimed at enhancing and harmonising risk systems based on the best and most recent methodologies and scientific evidence available, with the identification and mitigation of risk essential to protecting public health. The process must be dynamic, utilising the most up-to-date information and findings. Given that it demands significant resources to use the data effectively, an improved system should also enable the Department to deploy staff and resources more efficiently.

Table 2.6: FSFA Strategy Goal 3 – Risk
Objectives
• To have an enhanced proactive capacity to identify risk in the food chain with a view to its mitigation. • Foster and promote linkages and communication on risk within the Department and with stakeholders and other official agencies involved in the area of food regulation. • Recognising the risks to the food chain and the threat to the authenticity of food, to ensure that the activities of the Department are to the forefront in ensuring food authenticity.
Outcomes
• An integrated risk analysis system that utilises the most up-to-date data, expertise, science and technology to detect new and emerging risks and control known risks. • Evidence-based policy, strategy and decision making to support safe and authentic food. • Enhanced preparedness for food safety and food authenticity issues that might arise. • Increased focus on the identification, reduction or mitigation of risk in relation to food authenticity.
Recommendations
• Undertake an assessment of current approaches to the identification, reduction or mitigation of risk with a view to developing an integrated and harmonised risk analysis system. • Review the best international practice in the area of risk analysis to oversee the development of an early warning system. • Establish and simulate procedures and contingency planning for responding to major risk incidents. • Assess the means by which vulnerability assessments can be undertaken across the main food sectors with a view to risk identification and mitigation.
Source: FSFA Strategy 2018-2020

Goal 4 (Data, Information, and Knowledge) recognises the potential for the large level of data that is now captured to play a role in improving the activities of the Department including in relation to food safety and food authenticity. It aims to maximise the quality, accessibility, and application of data, information, and knowledge both internally and externally. This is expected to ensure the benefits that accrue from the data is used in the most efficient way to benefit consumers and the wider agri-food sector.

Table 2.7: FSFA Strategy Goal 4 – Data, Information and Knowledge
Objectives
• To enhance data capture, storage, extraction and transmission using the most appropriate IT systems and solutions. • Generate relevant and accurate data, including latest research and technologies such as genomic data and other novel data sources having regard to data protection legislation. • Maximise linkages between data repositories to facilitate the access and sharing of data in keeping with the Open Data Initiative. • Better exploitation of available data using new analytic approaches and models to support the Department and industry in their respective roles.
Outcomes
• Comprehensive and harmonised work programmes, reports and metrics across business areas. • Evidence-based policy, strategy and decision making, based on outcomes of data collation and analysis. • Enablement of horizon scanning and trends identification. • Demonstration of work outputs to stakeholders. • Greater ability to contribute fact-based findings to other national and international priorities and discussions.
Recommendations
• Review the current data capture and analysis systems used across the divisions involved in food safety and food authenticity activities and identify gaps and needs. • Leverage and enhance existing IT systems in conjunction with the Department's Information Management and Technology Division (IMT). • In consultation with IMT, engage in data analysis with a focus on enhancing the Department's capability to mitigate risk and identify opportunities for the protection of public health and consumer interest. • Ensure availability of relevant data for the Government Open Data Initiative.
Source: FSFA Strategy 2018-2020

Research funding and fostering a culture of compliance are among the tools the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has at its disposal for ensuring food safety and food authenticity. Also of critical importance is an effective policy and regulatory framework, which encompasses compliance. Goal 5 (Policy and Regulatory Framework) seeks to ensure the Department develops and implements a cohesive policy and regulatory framework that safeguards the consumer and promotes compliance within the food sector.

The analysis of Programme Documentation combined with our stakeholder consultations and new research represents our independent input to our identification of current gaps.

Table 2.8: FSFA Strategy Goal 5 – Policy and Regulatory Framework
Objectives
• The provision of a robust and harmonised policy and regulatory framework that is informed by, and serves, the consumers' interests. • The various stakeholders in the food chain understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding the food chain.
Outcomes
• A regulatory and policy framework which fosters a culture of compliance within the agri-food sector. • Robust and adequate/appropriate legislation to provide an optimum regulatory framework to underpin the Department's controls. • Enforcement, which is proportionate, effective and dissuasive.
Recommendations
• Review the tools used to develop policy and legislation in the area of food safety and food authenticity. • Establish appropriate indices that measure food safety and food authenticity compliance with a view to communicating this to industry and consumers. • Harmonise the Department's activities in horizontal areas, e.g., training for regulatory duties and enforcement. • Evaluate the benefit of developing a mechanism for centrally based coordination of policy analysis.
Source: FSFA Strategy 2018-2020

The FSFA Strategy is complemented by *Food Vision 2030* which set out a Vision for Ireland's Agri-Food Sector to become a world leader in sustainable Food Systems over the next decade. This will deliver significant benefits for the Irish agri-food sector and for Irish Society and the environment. It will also provide the basis for the future competitive advantage of the sector.

To realise this Vision the Strategy has adopted four high level Missions. One of these is 'Food which is Safe, Nutritious and Appealing, Trusted and Valued at Home and Abroad'.

The Vision notes that "consumers expect that the food and drink they purchase is safe, traceable and authentic, produced, processed and sold in a transparent, ethical manner. Ireland's agri-food sector has a duty to meet these standards and expectations and while working off a strong base, has to evolve to keep up with rising demands in these areas. The Mission contains actions to ensure the continued supply of food and drink that meets these rising expectations both at home and in international markets."

Food Vision 2030 represents a continuation of the previous national agri-food strategies. *Food Wise 2025* noted that risk-based processes will need to be dynamic to cater for ever-evolving new technologies, using current information and findings to improve food safety and food authenticity as consistent with Goal 3 of the FSFA Strategy. A recommendation of *Food Wise 2025* was the implementation and development of a comprehensive approach to data capture, modelling and sustainability assessment of Irish farming. Better data management and storage is reliant on a joined-up end-to-end digital service and has the potential to deliver better analytics and the secure and efficient use of data, which is strongly aligned with Goal 4 of the FSFA Strategy. Complementary to this is Mission 4 of *Food Vision 2030*, which recognises that the enhanced use of technology and data will improve transparency along the food chain.

2.5 Review of Civil and Public Sector Reform Strategies

The goals of the FSFA Strategy are underpinned by the wider Irish Government objectives embodied in the Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy, which is built on three core themes as follows:

1. Delivering evidence-informed policy and services;
2. Harnessing digital technology and innovation; and,
3. Building the civil service workforce, workplace and organisation of the future.

It is anticipated that a variety of objectives based on these themes will lead to a more coordinated response to national and international challenges and better leveraging of digital technology to enhance service delivery. The Civil Service Renewal Strategy aims to develop more effective responses to emerging risks and opportunities, including through the strengthening of evidence-based policymaking. The initiative of the European Commission in supporting the current project is aligned with this Civil Service Renewal Strategy as it will support end-to-end digital solutions and online services. A mapping of the high-level goals of the FSFA Strategy with the themes of the Civil Service Renewal Strategy can be graphically integrated as shown in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7: Mapping of FSFA Strategy Goals to Civil Service Renewal Strategy Themes

Theme	Delivering evidence-informed policy and services	Harnessing digital technology and innovation	Building the civil service workforce, workplace and organisation of the future
Goals	➢ To enhance and harmonise risk systems based on the best and most up-to-date methodologies and scientific evidence available, enabling the Department to achieve its strategic objective to safeguard public health, food safety and food authenticity. ➢ To ensure that the Department develops and implements a cohesive policy and regulatory framework that safeguards the consumer and promotes compliance within the food industry.	➢ Maximise the quality, accessibility and applicability of food safety and food authenticity data, information and knowledge by both internal and external users.	➢ Enhance communication leading to greater awareness and collaboration on food safety and food authenticity within the Department, with stakeholders and the wider public. ➢ Ensure that the Department has an open, transparent and robust framework for the organisation of all activities including official controls on food safety and food authenticity.

Source: Consultancy Review Team

The Irish Government's Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023 sets out an approach to dealing with data in a unified and harmonised manner. It notes that Public Service body (PSB) data should provide ease of access to and consistency of information. A move to standardised data management practices is required across the public service through data reuse, and promotion of data sharing between agencies, in compliance with the Data Sharing and Governance Act 2019, to provide better efficiencies for citizens and businesses to share information in a way to protect commercial sensitivity.

The Strategy envisages the operation of an all-encompassing data ecosystem rather than data being collected and managed in isolation. This is relevant for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the

Marine where data is collected in an independent manner. Other Government strategies highlighting the need for an integrated approach to the use of data include the Public Service ICT Strategy, the eGovernment Strategy 2017-2020, the National Statistics Board's Strategy 2015-2020, and Our Public Service 2020. It is anticipated that an integrated approach will result in benefits for both the strategic and operational use of data. These benefits are expected to include more joined-up end-to-end digital services; better analytics-driven data insights; and, improved agility by securely and efficiently reusing data,[19] which is consistent with both the FSFA Strategy and *Food Vision 2030*.

It is envisaged that PSBs such as the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will form a target state data ecosystem for the public service. This reflects best practice recommendations from the EU, OECD, and the World Bank, where the whole-of-government approach will see PSBs cooperate on and reuse data in an effective, secure and consistent way using API-led technologies. A key outcome of the target state approach is that it will reduce the number of independent copies of data being collected and maintained by PSBs, helping to reduce duplication of effort across the public service. The benefits of the Public Service Data Strategy for citizens/businesses and for PSBs, are presented in Figure 2.8. It must be noted there are risks associated with increased data sharing in terms of data privacy which may have societal impacts.

Figure 2.8: Benefits of Target State Data Ecosystem for the Public Service

Citizens and Businesses	Public Service Bodies
Increased transparency and trust	Secure reuse of data and services across PSBs
Integrated digital service delivery	Reduced PSB data holdings
Reduced administrative burden	Less costly, more timely delivery of services
Better data-driven outcomes	Improved data management practices
Improved privacy and security	Support for evidence-based decision making
Engaged and empowered citizens	Ability to link data across data holdings
Foster innovation	Better data governance/oversight across holdings
More efficient service delivery	Consistent approach to data management

Source: Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023

The review of the existing programme documentation included a review of selected civil and public service reform strategies. These, combined with the examination of FSFA strategy goals presented in this chapter, represent insights into the As-Is position. It is, however, important to supplement this material with a more detailed review of Phase 1 projects as presented in Chapter 3.

[19] Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 'Public Service Data Strategy 2019-2023', December 2018 - https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1d6bc7-public-service-data-strategy-2019-2023/.

3 Review of Phase I Projects

Seven projects were undertaken under Phase 1 of the implementation of the FSFA Strategy 2018-2020. This section presents a review of each of those studies. The recommendations that were developed for each project are listed in the order in which they appeared in the reports and does not indicate priority. These projects were completed by seven project teams drawn from across the Department and bringing into focus their expertise and experience. These insights represent an essential building block for the FSFA Programme. Since their completion at the end of 2020, other initiatives within the Department have taken place which impact on some of these recommendations; however, the main conclusions and the milestones to achieving them remain fully relevant. These projects represented the first phase of implementation of the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy. It is useful to review the key Phase I projects as they are important for the regulatory framework for food safety and food authenticity.

3.1 Data Capture, Analysis, and Reporting

One of the important Phase 1 projects of direct relevance to this assignment concerns data capture, analysis and reporting. This is related to Goal 4 of the FSFA Strategy 2018-2020, which identified that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has large amounts of data, particularly in the area of food safety and authenticity, which should be used to create a more effective IT system within the Department. In turn, this should help drive efficiencies of delivery which would benefit both the consumer and the agri-food sector.

Aligned with the Department's Information Management and Technology (IMT) Strategy 2017-2020[20], the scope of the project was set out as follows:

- To explore innovative ways of capturing and using the vast quantities of data that the Department collects on an ongoing basis;
- To provide a documented evaluation of how best to provide the necessary IT supports across all the divisions involved in FSFA activities;
- To provide a framework to ensure that the outputs from other FSFA project teams are considered and integrated as appropriate into future IT systems developments; and,
- To provide a roadmap for a more effective, efficient, harmonised and coordinated IT system within the Department.

The project sought to identify the data and IT systems of all the Department's divisions involved in FSFA activities. The key objectives of the project were as follows:

- To review the current data capture and analysis systems used across the divisions involved in FSFA activities and identify gaps and needs;
- To leverage and enhance existing IT systems in conjunction with the Department's IMT Division;
- To engage, in consultation with IMT, in data analysis with a focus on enhancing the Department's capability to mitigate risk and identify opportunities for the protection of public health and consumer interest; and,

[20] Since the completion of this Phase I project, an updated IMT strategy 2021-2024 has been published

— To establish appropriate indices that measure food safety and authenticity compliance with a view to communicating this to industry and consumer.

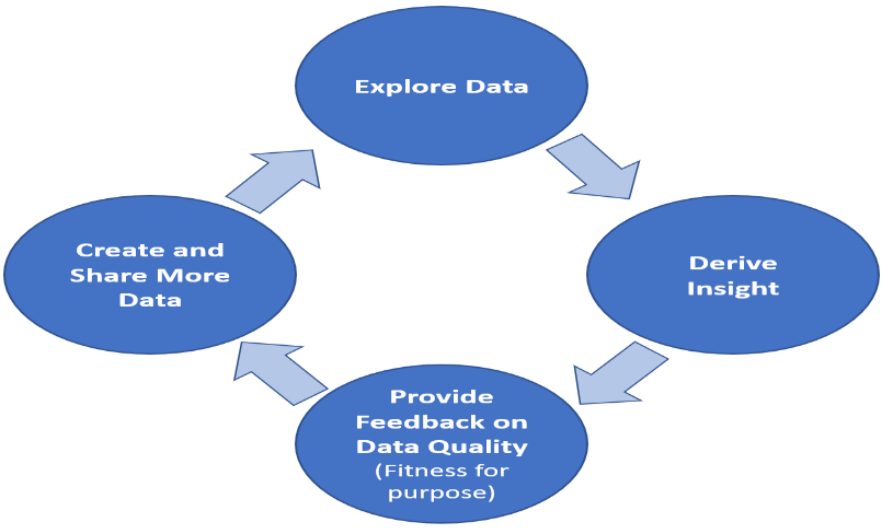
There were five core deliverables associated with this project as outlined in the next box.

Box 3.1: Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting: Key Deliverables
1. Conduct a survey to establish the current state of IT systems development and support within all the divisions involved in FSFA activities. 2. Review survey results and engage with individual divisions to establish how best to develop IT systems to meet their business needs within the framework of the Department's IMT Strategy. 3. A prioritisation exercise will then be undertaken depending on what needs are shown to exist and the level of resource availability. 4. A framework to ensure that the outputs from the risk analysis project and data analysis needs are considered and integrated as appropriate into future IT systems developments. 5. Develop appropriate indices that measure food safety and food authenticity compliance so that they can be incorporated within future IT systems development. Outputs from the compliance project will be used to feed into the indices' development process.
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

It is informative to highlight the wider European context relevant to this project. In 2020, the EFSA published a report on data collection and data modelling in which it envisaged shifting the paradigm from data collection to data connection.[21] The report recognised that a multitude of systems had evolved for data creation, storage, analysis, and sharing, which consume national resources. It was conceivable that by 2027, however, the EU food safety system could become a highly digitalised, securely connected, and interoperable network which opens up access to real-time data.

Figure 3.1 describes the feedback loop running through data creation, collection and analysis. Essentially, where insights are derived from the analysis of existing data, there is an opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of the data. This can be used to improve the data collection process into the future in what becomes an iterative cycle or virtuous spiral.[22]

Figure 3.1: Virtuous Spiral of Iterative Data Analysis



Source: EFSA

[21] European Food Safety Authority, 'Report of the Advisory Forum Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling', September 2020 - https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1901.

[22] EFSA report

In reviewing the Phase I project, we note that a key recommendation arising was the proposal to adopt existing modules on the Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing (AFIT) System (described below) to service new areas of inspection. This was considered the most efficient use of resources.

Box 3.2: Description of the Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing (AFIT) System
• AFIT is the Department's inspection application which supports more than 90 different inspections. • In 2020, a decision was taken to redevelop AFIT as it was becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain and enhance. • The aim is to build reusable IT services, such as assigning, scheduling and reporting, which can be used across many inspections. • This is expected to simplify workflows to facilitate a more efficient and harmonised inspection architecture.
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The findings of the project highlight that there are common FSFA inspections carried out across the Department, some of which have good systems for recording and reporting. As a result, existing AFIT infrastructure may be modified for use in divisions seeking similar systems. One example concerns the Horticulture and Plant Health, and the Poultry and Eggs Section of FFGP, both of which have a relatively high number of inspection types and cover a similar range of inspection activities. Neither has an AFIT system for recording inspections nor a centralised client registration system, but both have similar reporting requirements to other FSFA areas. There is therefore scope for existing AFIT systems to be adapted for these divisions.

Another key recommendation was the proposal to develop a centralised client registration system. This was expected to ensure the capturing of accurate data and the production of accurate reports and to facilitate the smooth integration of new modules into AFIT.

In reviewing the Phase I projects, there is a need to take account of Ireland's legal obligations in respect of the production of statistics for the European and national competent authorities. Ireland faces reputational risk in cases where these requirements are not met, with examples of various relevant reports including those provided to the EU Commission, EFSA, MANCP, and the FSAI.

In the next table, we present the ten recommendations arising from the Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting Project.

Table 3.1: Recommendations of the Data Capture, Analysis and Reporting Project	
	Recommendation
1.	The recording and reporting needs of divisions are often quite similar. Adapting existing modules on AFIT (Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing System) to service new areas will be the most efficient use of resources.
2.	Development of a centralised client registration system will help ensure the capturing of accurate data, the production of accurate reports and facilitate the smooth integration of new modules into AFIT.
3.	FSFA Divisions should follow a structured, project-oriented approach when making a proposal to IMT (Information Management and Technology Division) and commit adequate subject matter experts in order to develop IT systems to meet their business needs
4.	A project implementation plan should be carefully designed to take account of the various risk factors that might impact the success of the project in consultation with the IMT team (e.g., setting realistic targets and timelines, resources required, costs, etc.).
5.	A template for assessing proposed projects should be developed. The assessment should be based on set criteria, as set out in a proposed template. This would provide an objective system for prioritising IT resources. Factors to include could be risk, volume of inspections and amount of time compiling reports.
6.	The Department requires a more coordinated approach to data capture, storage, analysis and dissemination to allow control divisions to inform implementation of control programmes.
7.	Replace paper-based inspections with inspections where the data is captured electronically and stored centrally.
8.	As much as feasible, ensure data is captured using similar scales and metrics across all sectors to allow for easier modelling, analysis and comparison.
9.	Prior to development by IT, proposed projects should be assessed to ensure their MANCP reporting requirements will be satisfied at project completion. Duplication of existing reports or the need for further information at the time of report generation should be avoided.
10.	Data analysis techniques should be used to identify patterns in FBO non-compliance and help highlight fraudulent and deceptive practices. The Department can subsequently target these areas for enhanced official controls.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation	

3.2 Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation

This Phase I project examined practices that foster compliance among FBOs. Best practices identified by the team were then set to form the basis of a compliance toolkit that could be used by stakeholders to ensure they have a framework that is fully comprehensible. This is expected to produce better compliance in the area of FSFA. The aim was to provide the Department with a regulatory and policy framework that:

- Improves compliance with food safety and authenticity requirements through appropriate policies and regulations that have proportionate, effective and persuasive enforcement tools;
- Delivers behavioural change and a culture of compliance; and,
- Maintains trust and confidence in the food chain.

The project involved a literature review that identified factors that influence compliance. Internal and external surveys based on the findings from the literature review were then circulated to the Department and external stakeholders. A stewardship guide was devised, with the findings of these activities forming the basis for the Compliance Toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit itself was to guide users on the behavioural factors that influence compliance. The project also considered the advantages and disadvantages of developing centralised co-ordination of policy and regulatory analysis in the area of FSFA.

In terms of potential gaps in the current system, the external survey found that around a third of respondents felt there was insufficient information available to assist compliance. When asked what more could be done to assist compliance, suggestions including increasing awareness and providing more training and guidance. This suggests more could be done to promote the uptake and application of information that is already available.

The recommendations arising from the Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation Project are presented in Table 3.2. The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Food Forum held in November 2021 is one example of the Department's commitment to consultation with the sector. The detailed Broad Reach Survey supported under this current project represents a continuation of the consultation process with the industry.

Table 3.2. Recommendations of the Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation Project	
Recommendation	
1.	Ensure all stakeholders are included in the design of new regulations, ideally through a collaborative process, in order to increase compliance with regulations.
2.	A list of principles, including behavioural influences, identifying barriers and challenges, evaluating the level of risk and transparency, should be considered when developing a compliance toolkit on which to base future strategies and to encourage compliance with FSFA regulations. The Department should encourage divisions to use the 'Compliance Toolkit' as a tool when developing policies and regulation.
3.	The data from the internal and external surveys should be further analysed; in particular, some of the free text responses should be examined in more detail.
4.	Consultation with the industry should continue in the area of FSFA and more should be done to promote further engagement between industry and the Department.
5.	The use of stewardship as a tool in building compliance should be encouraged.
6.	A new unit or division, combined with a project management/matrix approach, should be established to ensure that the Department has an effective, efficient and coordinated framework for the organisation of all FSFA activities guided by an overarching policy.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation	

3.3 Enhancing and Harmonising Risk Systems

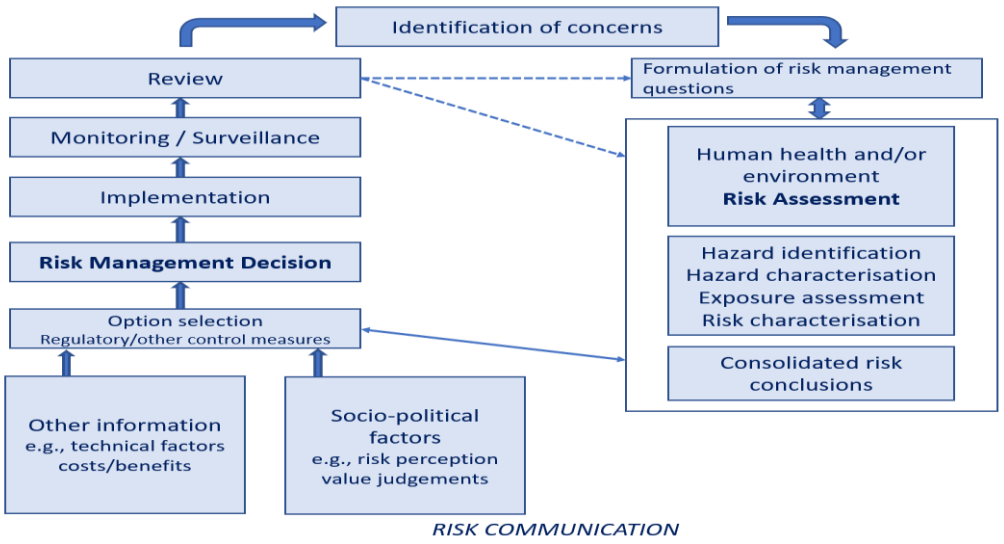
The purpose of this project was to make progress towards an integrated and harmonised risk analysis system to identify known and unknown risks, as well as to minimise the occurrence of crises. The project was divided into two phases: the first evaluated current risk analysis practices across the Department, while the second examined international best practice in this field. A set of recommendations, and the benefits accruing from each, was subsequently developed. This was designed to assist the Department in better assessing and mitigating risk across the agri-food sector.

There are three components to risk analysis as follows: risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. This risk-based approach is targeted at providing a global standard for interpreting the acceptability of food-related risks to which consumers might be exposed. This in turn facilitates the efficient allocation of resources in planning and carrying out official controls. According to the European Commission, the unambiguous and transparent specification of problems is essential for the appropriate use of resources, and for effective risk management.[23] This involves identifying

[23] European Commission (2000). 'First report on the harmonisation of risk assessment procedures', Part 1. The report of the scientific steering committee's working group on harmonisation of risk assessment procedures in the scientific committees advising the European Commission in the area of human and environmental health 26-27 October 2000. Available at: https://mobil.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/first_report_on_the_harmonisation_of_risk_assessment_procedures.pdf (accessed 19 October 2021).

scientific information on the problem in its broad outlines, as well as clearly articulating the problem in a public health and societal context. In illustrating the interplay of the activities between the three components outlined above, the Commission produced a 'risk cycle'. An example of the structure of this is presented in Figure 3.2.

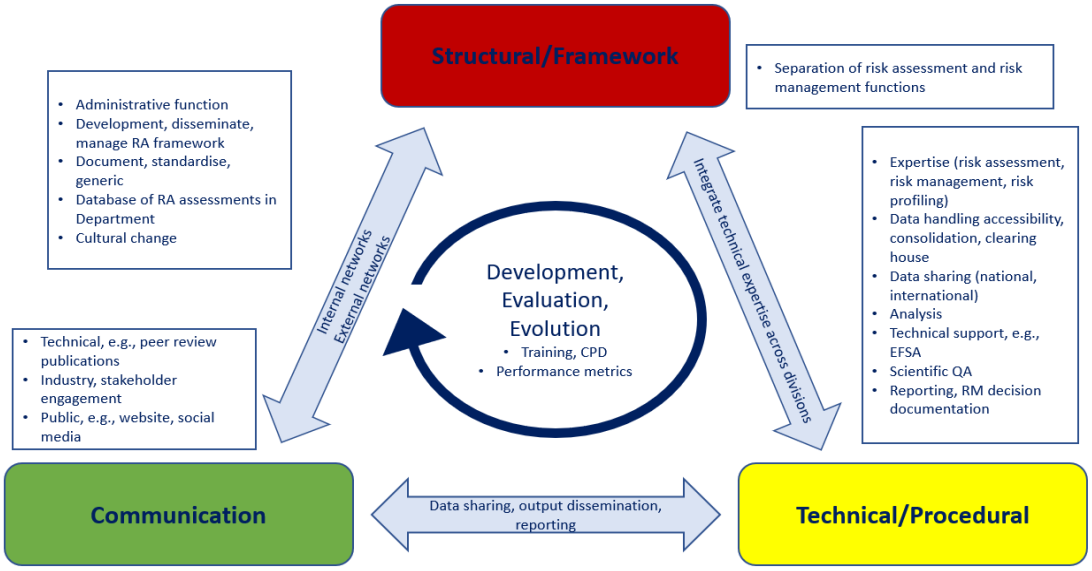
Figure 3.2: The 'Risk Cycle' (components of risk analysis)



Source: European Commission

As part of the first phase of the project, the team undertook a review in the form of a questionnaire of each of the main divisions involved in food safety and risk analysis. For the second part of the project, the team undertook a review of risk analysis best practices across ten national and international organisations. Figure 3.3 describes the themes identified from the review that are important contributors to best practice in FSFA risk analysis.

Figure 3.3: Important Contributors to Best Practice in FSFA Risk Analysis



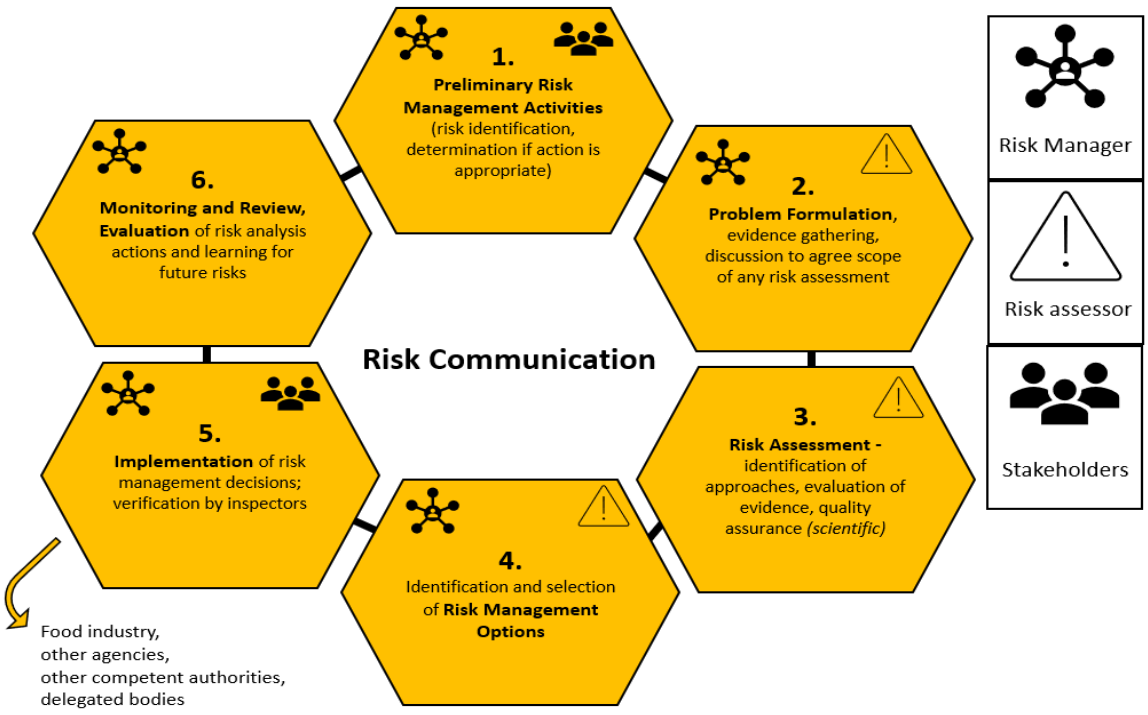
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

In Table 3.3, we present the recommendations arising from the risk systems project.

Table 3.3: Recommendations of the Enhancing and Harmonising Risk Systems Project	
	Recommendation
1.	Set up a centralised FSFA risk analysis organisational structure involving risk managers from all divisions dealing with FSFA risk.
2.	Embed the principles of risk analysis in the organisation by training a network of key FSFA risk managers on roles and responsibilities within the risk analysis structure.
3.	Develop a simple accessible IT system that registers specific FSFA risks and tracks their risk management status.
4.	Network of risk managers to evaluate learning from prior FSFA incidents and incorporate formally into framework.
5.	Allow sufficient flexibility in the centralised risk analysis structure to allow for agility of divisions' responses to the highly variable FSFA risk landscape.
6.	Integrate official controls into the risk analysis cycle under a specific FSFA risk analysis policy.
7.	Establish functional separation between the role of risk assessors and risk managers.
8.	Establish a centralised database to facilitate collection, storage and utilisation of all data relevant to risk assessment.
9.	Invest in training and support to build capacity in technical and scientific expertise, required for risk assessment.
10.	Develop a risk assessment policy for the Department such that FSFA risk assessment is a structured systematic process, based on high quality scientific evidence.
11.	Develop an applied risk ranking system that considers the combined exposure to multiple hazards.
12.	Implement a FSFA risk communication strategy promoting cross-divisional and external risk communication.
13.	Ensure that key risk management decisions are documented, tracked and transparent, that risk communication is initiated early, and that uncertainty is dealt with explicitly.
14.	Organise training to risk assessors and risk managers in the specialised skills of risk communication.
15.	Provide communication tools and networking opportunities so that internal and external stakeholders are empowered to report risks; identify stakeholders accurately.
16.	Create a risk profile for each business, available across divisions, including vulnerability assessments for food authenticity risk where appropriate.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation	

Because of the importance of risk management, the Consultancy Review Team notes that the Department's risk project concluded with a proposed 'risk analysis cycle' that could be applied by the Department to integrate its existing FSFA control activities into a rational risk analysis framework. This would be driven and tracked by a cross-divisional risk analysis organisational structure. Some of the findings from Indecon's Broad Reach Survey presented later highlights industry views on potential risks which could be considered in the context of the assessment in this risk cycle analysis.

Figure 3.4: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's FSFA Risk Analysis Cycle



Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

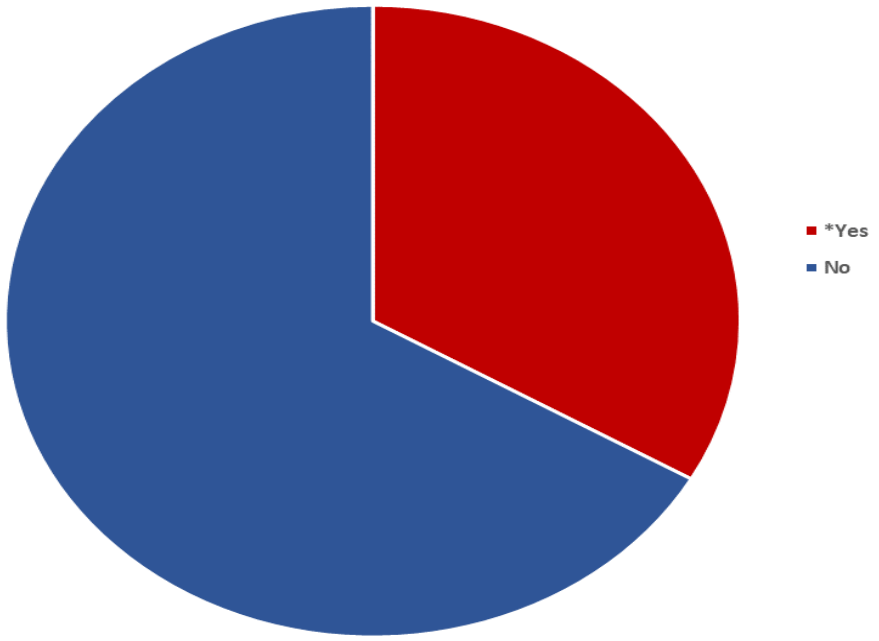
3.4 Learning and Development Training for Fraud and Authenticity

The aim of this project was to ensure Department staff have access to appropriate training to develop the skills required for the implementation of official controls under Regulation 2017/625 in relation to food fraud and authenticity. The box below illustrates Article 9(2) of Regulation 2017/625 pertaining to the issue of fraudulent or deceptive practices. As such, the first output of the project was to identify and set out the legislative requirements with respect to fraud. The second output was a paper setting out the training and development needs of staff with respect to fraud. This task involved active engagement with divisions operating under the remit of Regulation 2017/625 and the identification and assessment of current availability of training both domestically and internationally. The third output was a set of recommendations on how training needs could be met, including course content.

Box 3.3: Article 9(2) of the Official Controls Regulation 2017/625
'Competent authorities shall perform official controls regularly, with appropriate frequencies determined on a risk basis, to identify possible intentional violations of the rules referred to in Article 1(2), perpetrated through fraudulent or deceptive practices, and taking into account information regarding such violations shared through the mechanisms of administrative assistance provided for in Articles 102 to 108 and any other information pointing to the possibility of such violations.'[24]
Source: Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council

The team surveyed 14 divisions operating under the remit of regulation 2017/625 and identified and assessed the current training offerings both domestically and internationally. Responses were received from 12 teams, with the majority saying they had not provided training on food fraud-specific checks as part of their official controls (OC) training.

Figure 3.5: Have you provided training in relation to food fraud-specific checks as part of OC training?



Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
**FFGP & HPHD Divisions - Annual feed and food labelling training that covered mislabelling and misleading claims*

[24]https://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Legislation/Food_Legisation_Links/Official_Control_Of_Foodstuffs/Consol_Reg2017_625.pdf

Table 3.4 outlines examples of training needs identified by the divisional survey.

Table 3.4: Training Needs to be Identified by Divisional Survey	
1.	Specifics on activities within the work area to comply with Article 9(2)
2.	Food fraud related to imported foods from third countries
3.	More specialised training given in relation to the new official control regulations
4.	Skills required to recognise and identify food fraud
5.	Training on how to ask the right questions, gather evidence and issue seizure notices
6.	Animal identification
7.	Speciation
8.	Labelling and traceability misrepresentation (animal origin)
9.	Misrepresentation of laboratory results
10.	How to identify risk areas for fraudulent activity; how to determine if fraudulent activities are taking place
11.	Specific topics related to food fraud practices; examples of food fraud; detailed investigations cases; and examples of good practices (documented procedures, checklists, guidance, access to media related to this topic, etc.)
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	

An in-depth review of current training courses with a focus on fraud was undertaken to accurately quantify the training needs of staff and to support the findings of the divisional survey. The Department's HR Learning and Development Unit provided information on the training available, and any training previously delivered in this area, to the project team. It was found that, with the exception of food fraud training courses provided under the EU's Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) initiative, specific food fraud training has been limited. Examples of recent non-BTSF training on food fraud which has been delivered are provided in Table 3.5 overleaf.

Table 3.5: Examples of Recent Training on Food Fraud	
Training	**Description**
FSAI – Food fraud and investigation training: Principles of Intelligence-led food fraud training September 2020	A series of three by three-hour online training sessions on 'Principles of Intelligence-led food fraud training' as part of an overall programme of training on food fraud and investigation training which is intended to be run on a modular basis over a three-year period. Training included intelligence management principles, including the gathering, management and recording of intelligence, intelligence cycle principles, and legal compliance. It also covered general food fraud principles, definitions, identification, and challenges and limitations of the traditional supervisory/official control arrangements. The presentations that followed from the training workshops are available for Department staff to access on the FSAI SafetyNet portal.
Internal Prosecutorial Compliance Training Programme May 2019	Two two-day seminars were delivered to ERAD (disease eradication) veterinary and technical staff on enforcing legislation and pursuing cases of non-compliance in relation to the eradication of Bovine Tuberculosis and Brucellosis monitoring. Specific focus on how to conduct an investigation, statement taking and cautioned interviews, taking possession of relevant official documentation, case file preparation and contemporaneous notes, familiarity with the powers and role of an Authorised Officer, and ability to produce robust enforcement notices, awareness of fair procedures, due process and principles of natural justice and the fundamentals of District Court procedure including pre/post court preparation, role as witnesses, and overview of the Rules of Evidence.
FSAI SAFETYNET – Regulation 2017/625 Introductory Training June 2018	Two half-day workshops for the Department's official control and laboratories staff to provide an overview of the requirements of regulation 2017/625 with a view to rolling out more specific, tailored workshops in future, as necessary. The presentations and subsequent reports that followed from the training workshops are available for Department staff to access on the FSAI SafetyNet portal.
FSAI and SafeFood – Safeguarding the Food Chain: Protecting Authenticity and Integrity October 2017	Staff from across a broad range of official control divisions attended this two-day conference to share information and explore challenges facing the safety, integrity and the authenticity of the global food supply chain. Key stakeholders discussed how regulators, inspectors, industry, scientists, and academics can work in collaboration and partnership to protect consumers when violations of food law are detected in relation to food crime.
La Touche: Conducting Effective Regulatory Investigations Conference October 2017	Staff from across a range of official control divisions attended the one-day conference which brought together leading regulatory and enforcement agencies to address the common challenges that regulators face in conducting investigations that may lead to a criminal prosecution.
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	

The following table provides the nine recommendations arising from the Learning and Development Training for Food Fraud and Authenticity Project.

Table 3.6: Recommendations of the Learning and Development Training for Food Fraud and Authenticity Project
Recommendation
1. To ensure full compliance with the legislative requirements and its obligations under the Official Control Regulation 2017/615 (OCR), the Department needs to adopt a cohesive approach to training for fraud and authenticity to prevent disaggregated and siloed training.
2. Key divisional staff should be identified to attend a pilot a training course in advance of the formulation of a Departmental Working Group to assess the training course, identify the key elements required to satisfy Article 9(2) in respect to fraud/deceptive practices and work with L&D to refine future training programmes for the identification of fraudulent/deceptive practices. This training should also provide participants with the necessary skills to support the work of the Investigations Division.
3. A number of key staff from OCR divisions should attend the FSAI Central Intelligence Training in conjunction with attending the pilot training programme and any subsequent iterations thereof.
4. The review and update of divisional Official Control processes and procedures in respect of the detection of fraudulent/deceptive practices to be completed by those key divisional staff who have participated in the pilot training programme.
5. The establishment of an inter-divisional OCR fraud network in order to strengthen and advance the skills of staff in the area of identifying fraudulent/deceptive practices and to facilitate knowledge transfer.
6. The establishment of an internal repository (a portal or on eZone) for the purpose of sharing of information/ experiences pertaining to the identification of fraudulent/deceptive practices.
7. A centralised portal for SOP/Procedure template would assist in harmonising the Department's response to fraudulent/deceptive practices; this would align with Deliverable 3 of the Harmonisation Project to develop a template for procedures hosted on an electronic system. This system would have capacity for a 'chat bot' to disseminate knowledge. There may be scope to use this facility to host an internal fraud network.
8. Establishment of a partnership/collaboration between the Department and the FSAI with respect to training for fraud/deceptive practices. There may be scope to align this partnership under the Terms of Reference which are being developed by the cross agency Working Group for Fraud/Deceptive Practices.
9. Findings from the Fraud Fact Finding Mission should inform future training with respect to fraud.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation

3.5 Harmonisation Project

The team was tasked with identifying commonalities across the area of official controls which could be harmonised to deliver a more efficient, effective, transparent and consistent system of food safety controls. The three deliverables of the project were set out as follows:

- Standardise the interaction of Department officials with FBOs;
- Develop an online application system for the approval and/or registration of food and feed businesses; and,
- Standardise procedures through the creation of a procedures manual template for use in all food safety divisions.

In addressing the first output, the team held discussions with the Learning and Development Division about induction training and proposed some courses for new staff involved in food safety controls. A steering group has also been established to review induction training across the Department which the harmonisation team may feed into. The team also suggested creating a buddy system or other form of network that might enhance consistency across the system. This may help address silos and encourage staff to engage and share information with one another. The team's internal engagements identified an appetite for change and a willingness to work together, which it advised should be built on and strengthened.

In addition, the project team has finalised a high-level guidance document for FBOs which makes clear the Department's commitment "to ensure that controls are carried out in a fair, professional and impartial manner and in line with relevant legislation." This is aimed at addressing FBO concerns

that during official controls, they are: treated fairly and in compliance with the legislation; treated with respect; and, informed of inspection outcomes in a timely manner. A sample of 30 food and feed FBOs were asked to provide feedback on the document. It was subsequently recommended that the Department re-engage with FBOs and review the guide once feedback was received. As part of this, the Department was also tasked with considering if there is scope to produce additional guidelines.

At the time of the project, there was no central register of food and feed business operators in the Department. As such, this aspect of the project aimed to deliver the research and analysis required to highlight to management that such a system is a critical resource for the organisation. As well as facilitating the capturing of all approved businesses in one place, it was expected to produce a number of advantages as described in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Anticipated Benefits of a Centralised Online System
1. Progressing the delivery of the Export Certification System for meat and dairy products by IT
2. Facilitating swift and accurate data analysis
3. Improving the speed, effectiveness and consistency of Departmental communications with applicant FBOs
4. Facilitating inbuilt validations, resulting in more accurate, consistent and complete data capture
5. Automated record-keeping, meaning more robust and orderly systems that better withstand scrutiny under audit
6. Scheduled, automated reporting at the click of a button
7. Reduced capacity for, and consequences of, human error
8. Providing a more robust platform to discharge the Department's data protection responsibilities
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Following engagements internally and externally with the HSE, FSAI, and SFPA, the project team developed a procedures template. A description of the procedures template headings is provided in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6: Headings of the Proposed Procedures Template

1. Introduction
Text should include brief introduction and/or description of process.

2. EU and National Legislation
Reference relevant EU and National legislation (include hyperlink)

3. Glossary (Examples)
DAFM – Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
FBO – Food Business Operator
CN – Compliance Notice

4. Purpose
Briefly outline why the procedure is required, what problems it will solve and what is hoped to be achieved.

5. Scope
The scope should outline where the procedure is to be used, who it is for and aimed at and highlight any limitations or exceptions.

6. Roles and Responsibilities
Insert grade | Principal purpose of position:
Essential job functions:
Authority:

(Insert organisation chart if possible)

7. Procedures
Outline procedures (step by step)

8. Enforcement
Link to divisions' enforcement SOPs

9. Effectiveness Criteria
'Control verification procedures' means the arrangements put in place and actions performed by the competent authorities for the purpose of ensuring that official controls and other official activities are consistent and effective.

Effectiveness is the extent to which controls produce an intended effect/achieve an objective. These controls should have measurable objectives and indicators that relate to intended outcomes. As this is a legislative requirement and a key focus of the Commission/FVO, divisions should include a short paragraph/narrative on what control verification procedures and mechanisms are in place to continuously verify that the controls are effective and consistent.

10. Related Documents
Insert links

11. Appendices

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The recommendations of the Harmonisation Project are described in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Recommendations of the Harmonisation Project
Recommendation
1. The importance of building effective working relationships should be factored into induction training for new staff.
2. Re-engage with FBOs and review the (Official Control) guide on receipt of some further feedback.
3. Examine if there is scope to produce additional guides for FBOs.
4. Allocation of a sufficient IT resource that has the scope for further development to interact with existing food safety official control IT systems.
5. Alternatively, identify an existing platform or system architecture that is suitable for redevelopment rather than building an online platform from scratch.
6. Capitalise on the momentum created through internal stakeholder engagement.
7. Allocation of a sufficient IT resource.
8. Further consideration should be given to the use of a system like eCabinet or to the Electronic Quality Management System currently used in the labs.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation

3.6 Contingency Planning

The aim of this project was to create a framework for a harmonised approach to contingency planning (CP) across the FSFA divisions to assist managers in responding more effectively to crises. As part of its outputs, the project established a basis for testing and evaluating existing preparations using simulation exercises. Recommendations were subsequently made on how to continue the cross-divisional approach in pursuit of the larger strategic objectives within the framework of the ongoing food safety and food authenticity programme. The seven core deliverables of this project are outlined in the next box.

Box 3.4: Key Deliverables of Contingency Planning Project
1. Report on the current CP structure in the Department with respect to FSFA, including consideration of a single horizontal Department-wide food safety and authenticity CP. 2. Provision of a guidance document outlining common themes and contents for CPs. 3. Provision of a CP framework. 4. Provision of a guidance document to set out a framework for running crisis simulations and smaller scale drills. 5. To run and report on crisis simulation exercises within the Department (post the national crisis simulation exercise). 6. Creation of a central electronic repository to house all Departmental CPs. 7. Project report.
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

As a first step, the project team set out to identify which divisions were either directly or indirectly involved in FSFA activities and, consequently, who might be involved in responding to a crisis. This exercise showed that 28 divisions potentially had a role to play, with each of these divisions asked to submit any available FSFA-related CPs from their respective work areas. Some six CPs were returned as follows:

1. Food safety management crisis plan (FSMCP)
2. Apiculture procedures manual Section 3: contingency plan (Apiculture)
3. Contingency plan for incidents concerning safety of animal feedingstuffs (Feedingstuffs)
4. Contingency plan for horticulture produce (Horticulture)
5. Contingency plan for pesticides area (Pesticides)

6. NDCC Avian Influenza contingency plan (Avian influenza)

The team undertook a review of these CPs to identify any commonalities that may exist between the plans. Although there were some similarities, there was no common overall approach. This exercise found that CPs tended to be division specific rather than hazard specific and that many divisions were part of a larger, overarching contingency plan. The mapping exercise highlighted the need for improved engagement and a harmonised approach to CP preparation by FSFA-related divisions.

The results of the mapping and simulation exercises were used to inform the development of the CP template and guidance document.

In putting together a CP template, the team undertook a review of other national and international contingency plans and guides. Reflecting this work, the team highlighted the importance of incorporating a risk analysis template into any contingency plan. This focused on the four components of risk analysis as set out by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in its guide to preparing for animal health emergencies.[25]

Figure 3.7: The Four Components of Risk Analysis

Hazard Identification	The process of identifying agents that could potentially produce adverse consequences associated with the import of a commodity
Risk Assessment	The evaluation of the likelihood and the biological and economic consequences of entry, establishment or spread of a pathogenic organism
Risk Management	The process of identifying, selecting and implementing measures that can be applied to reduce the level of risk
Risk Communication	The interactive exchange of information on risk among risk assessors, risk managers and other interested parties

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine/FAO

The template was also informed by the 'Scalability of responses to food safety events' from the FAO/WHO *Framework for Developing National Food Safety Emergency Response Plans*.[26] This serves as a useful guide when establishing the appropriate level of response, which will determine the level of resources required to address the event.

The project team set out an extensive list of proposed headings and a description of each in its draft CP template. Beyond this, they also proposed an event response checklist to be prepared upon completion of a contingency plan. This can serve as a useful approach for assessing whether all of the needs of the CP have been addressed and can be presented to managers as a brief overview. This

[25] FAO, 'Good Emergency Management Practice: The Essentials', 2011- https://www.fao.org/3/ba0137e/ba0137e.pdf.
[26] FAO and WHO, 'FAO/WHO framework for developing national food safety emergency response plans', 2010 - https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/8f6e46af-7e8b-554a-8f9f-95f87084439c/.

output focussed on the creation of a guidance document for running crisis simulations and smaller scale drills, which can help in the development, assessment and testing of the functional capabilities of emergency systems, procedures and mechanisms. A number of international manuals were reviewed as part of this deliverable, including the World Health Organization's (WHO) *Simulation Exercise Manual* and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's (ECDC) *Handbook on Simulation Exercises in EU Public Health Settings*.

A list of recommendations arising from the findings of the simulation exercise are described in Table 3.9. Planning for contingency will be informed in part by the evidence assembled by this current European Commission project.

Table 3.9: Recommendations of the Contingency Planning Project

Recommendation	
1.	Responsibility for improving cross-divisional coordination of contingency planning to be assigned to one division.
2.	A flow chart showing the high-level procedures for responding to a food incident should be designed and circulated to staff in the relevant divisions and made easily available, including putting it on the wall of rooms used to coordinate responses.
3.	An overarching crisis communication and management plan should be put in place.
4.	Awareness of the machinery of how the Department responds to such incidents should be raised among staff in relevant divisions through training.
5.	Such training should include staff from several different divisions and business areas in the same sessions in order to build awareness of how issues can affect multiple parts of the Department and require a coordinated response.
6.	The recommendations of the simulation exercise should be implemented.
7.	A follow-up simulation exercise should be held in 12-18 months to evaluate whether the ability of the Department to respond to such an incident has improved.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation	

3.7 Strategic Communications

The aim of this project was to provide an overarching strategic framework to guide Departmental communications in the FSFA area. Rather than providing direction on the specific content of these communications, the project focused on how communications content may be created, shared, and leveraged more effectively to address areas of weakness. Recognising that communication is a two-way process, the project team advised that innovative mechanisms would need to be put in place to allow the Department to benefit from the vast store of knowledge, experience, and ideas of its own staff.

The Department has a broad audience with a stake in FSFA activities, including over 137,000 farms and 50,000 food businesses employing 173,000 people. Internal communications also present a challenge. The scope of communications also ranges across multiple areas such as advertising, marketing, media relations, social media, consultation and corporate identity, and includes communications in crises and emergencies.

Staff surveys, interviews with key decision-makers within the Department and analysis of staff feedback from 'town hall' and other events were undertaken as part of the research involved in this project. In addition, a review of the communications practices of Bord Bia, FSAI, the Defence Forces, the UK's Food Standards Agency and New Zealand's Food Safety Authority was carried out to identify how other national and international public sector organisations communicate effectively in the digital age. There were four key project deliverables as follows:

- An analysis of the Department's stakeholders in this area;
- A review of national and international best practice;
- A review of current communication practices within the Department; and
- The project report.

It is worth highlighting that the Department's Communications Division was established in 2018 and offers a suite of communications options. These include press releases, event management, social media, website, advice on presentations and literature, and the delivery of bespoke information campaigns for various divisions within the Department. The Division is dependent on other divisions to supply it with relevant materials, meaning a lack of clear and coherent messaging and other content from these divisions can hinder the success of communications campaigns and activities.

The stakeholder analysis, as well as the reviews of current Departmental practices and communications practices in external organisations, helped the project team to identify challenges associated with the Department's current FSFA communications and the opportunities for improvement. In particular, it was observed that the Department could do more to leverage the Communications Division's own resources and expertise, and to enable staff from outside of the division to contribute to external FSFA communications. The team also found the Department could build trust in the organisation by taking a more proactive approach to highlighting some of the hidden or unknown work undertaken in the area of FSFA to external audiences.

The analysis further identified a need to improve the consistency of messaging across both internal and external audiences, reflecting the siloed nature of many of the communications activities and a lack of information sharing between divisions. Engagements with staff in rural offices also found that the physical distance from head office impeded effective communication with the head office. Consideration would also need to be given to the resource implications of making any changes, with a move towards more use of social media, for example, requiring a consistent and regular effort that would demand a significant human resource input.

There were ten recommendations arising from the Strategic Communications Project, which are set out in Table 3.10. Effective communication is essential to promote compliance and an appropriate food safety culture.

Table 3.10: Recommendations of the Strategic Communications Project	
	Recommendation
1.	The use of subordinate Departmental FSFA social media accounts should be considered to allow divisions to extend FSFA social media communications.
2.	Two-way communications should be enhanced by the greater use of feedback mechanisms such as townhall meetings, staff surveys and feedback from the general public, including from events such as at the National Ploughing Championships.
3.	The use of webinars and other means of socially distanced group communication should be enhanced so as to improve the understanding of the FSFA programme among staff and promote cross-divisional collaboration.
4.	Government guidance on the use of accessible English and on the use of the Irish language should be implemented across the FSFA area.
5.	The lessons learned re: use of digital communications tools during COVID-19 should be captured in a structured way with a view to optimising the use of tools to facilitate communication and remote collaboration for the long term. Suitable digital collaboration channels should be identified, piloted and evaluated to provide valuable direction of travel for the most useful digital communications channels.
6.	Given that a recurrent theme from the research of the project team was the issue of 'email fatigue' and 'email overload', consideration should be given to developing an email code of practice to improve the effectiveness of email communication.
7.	Consideration should be given to the development of a strategic employee advocacy programme that encourages and inspires Department staff to advocate positively for the organisation on social media.
8.	The public visibility of the Department's role in protecting food safety and authenticity should be heightened by highlighting the controls carried out by staff, in particular at the level of primary production.
9.	The use of a communications planning template should be adopted by all of the relevant FSFA divisions and incorporated into their annual Business Plans.[27]
10.	Members of staff drawn from the FSFA divisions should be temporarily assigned to the Communications Division on a regular basis, with this role rotating between divisions at an agreed frequency.
Source: Consultancy Review Team's analysis of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Information/Documentation	

The detailed review of the Phase 1 projects provides valuable insights into the As-Is position in Ireland. This shows that analysis of areas which need to be enhanced have been identified and specific recommendations made for implementation. Some of these have been implemented or partially implemented, but significant work has yet to be undertaken.

3.8 Summary of Key Themes and Trends from Phase I Projects

The overarching FSFA Programme Report was completed in November 2020 and outlined a number of key themes and trends that emerged from the Phase I FSFA projects. These themes and trends were aligned with the five strategic goals set out in the Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy. The Consultancy Review Team believes the themes remain important for Food Safety and Food Authenticity.

[27] This will be done for the 2022 business planning exercise.

Table 3.11: Key Deliverables from 2020 FSFA Programme Report	
Strategic Goal	**Key Outputs from Phase I Projects**
Governance	- Draft 'Charter of Rights' developed with FBOs. - IT business case for development of a nationwide document control system.
Communications	- A Communications Planning Template. - An analysis of Communications approaches, including international best practice.
Risk	- A documented review of best practice drawing on 10 leaders in risk analysis from across the globe - An analysis of the risk management approaches taken by 17 Departmental Divisions, with a gap analysis - Extensive literature review of approaches to risk analysis - A Simulation Exercise Planning Guide - A guidance document and template for contingency plans.
Data, Information and Knowledge	- A business case for the development of a single integrated online registration/approval system for Food Business Operators - Detailed survey of data capture approaches in six frontline Control Divisions - A set of prioritisation criteria for new IT systems
Policy and Regulatory Frameworks	- An attitude survey on compliance among Departmental staff (n=1100) and external stakeholders (n=250) - An analysis of policy coordination approaches - Basic guide to developing a stewardship programme - A template Standing Operating Procedure agreed across FSFA Divisions - An FBO guide on what to expect from the Department's inspections - An analysis of Food Authenticity training needs and a blueprint for their dissemination and evaluation.
Source: 2020 FSFA Programme Report	

As part of the Phase I projects, specific recommendations were compiled across the seven different projects. These recommendations spanned across a number of themes which are included in the FSFA Programme Report and summarised in the table below.

Table 3.12: Key Themes from 2020 FSFA Programme Report	
Strategic Goal	**Key Themes from Phase I Projects**
Governance	- Focusing on harmonisation of activities through supports for staff and FBOs, incl. training - Focusing on structural changes leading to better decision making - Focusing on targeted networks
Communications	- Focusing on enhanced use of digital platforms - Focusing on direct engagement with stakeholders
Risk	- Focusing on establishing a formal risk analysis framework - Focusing on ensuring the independence of risk analysis - Focusing on risk Management - Focusing on risk Communication
Data, Information and Knowledge	- Focusing on system development for data capture - Focusing on approaches to data analysis
Policy and Regulatory Frameworks	- Focusing on policy coordination across FSFA Divisions
Source: 2020 FSFA Programme Report	

The detailed recommendations from the Phase I projects and the key themes involved are important in informing future deliverables in this current project.

4 Mapping of National and EU Legislative Framework

Regulation of the food sector falls under the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health (DOH), as well as for the development of policy and legislation, and under multiple official agencies responsible for food law enforcement. Regulation of the feed sector is less complex, with responsibility for policy, legislation development and enforcement all within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

4.1 Development of Policy and Legislation

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health (DOH) are responsible for formulating food policy and the implementation of legislation and are supported in their role by the FSAI of which the DOH is the parent Department. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine is responsible for the development of policy; the negotiation of rules at European Community level; and, implementation in national law of those rules, for:

- Feed;
- Primary production of food;
- Slaughter, cutting, preparation and processing of foods of animal origin, including fish, up to but not including, retail level;
- Import of food of animal origin and certain foods of non-animal origin control and pesticide residues controls on imported foods of plant origin;
- Controls on foods certified as having protected geographical indication (PGI), protected designation of origin (PDO) and/or traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG);
- Pesticide residues;
- Organic foods; and
- Food contact materials.

The Government Departments work in partnership in developing legislation where there is a cross-over.[28] Official controls are carried out by the competent authorities to verify business compliance with the requirements set out in food and feed legislation. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health[29] designate Irish official agencies as 'competent authorities'[30] in national legislation or through administrative procedures. The mechanism for how official controls are carried out in Ireland is outlined in the National Control Plan (NCP) for Ireland.[31] The NCP is prepared jointly by the FSAI and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This fulfils the requirement of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, that each Member State shall prepare a single integrated Multiannual National Control Plan (MANCP). The organisation and execution of official controls are undertaken by a number of competent authorities as presented in Table 4.1.

[28] Multiannual National Control Plan (2018-2022)
[29] The Minister for Health also has a significant policy development remit under the area of food safety
[30] Irish official agencies are equivalent to Irish competent authorities.
[31] Ireland's current Multiannual Control Plan (2018-2022) can be found on the FSAI website. https://www.fsai.ie/about_us/service_contracts/national_control_plan.html

Table 4.1: Competent Authorities Involved in the Official Controls of Food and Feed		
Sector	**Government Department(s) Responsible for Policy and Legislation**	**Competent Authorities Responsible for Official Controls**
Food	• Department of Health, including the Food Safety Authority of Ireland • Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	• Food Safety Authority of Ireland • Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine • Health Service Executive • Local Authorities • Sea Fisheries Protection Authority • Marine Institute • National Standards Authority of Ireland
Feed	• Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	• Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Source: Multiannual National Control Plan (2018-2022)		

4.2 Enforcement of Food Legislation

Food Safety Authority of Ireland ('FSAI')

The FSAI is responsible for the enforcement of all 'food legislation' in Ireland. The Authority carries out this enforcement function through service contracts with official agencies. Section 48 of the FSAI Act 1998, gives the legislative basis for this. These official agencies have been deemed competent authorities by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Department of Health. These contracts outline an agreed level and standard of food safety activity that the agencies perform as agents of the Authority.

The FSAI is responsible for co-ordination of food control activities within and between competent authorities, determining inter-agency supervisory arrangements and ensuring consistency of enforcement. This is achieved through:

— Management of the official control activities through the service contract arrangements;

— Carrying out risk assessment to underpin risk management decisions/actions;

— The provision of scientific and technical support to competent authorities through publications and training programmes; and

— The FSAI is directly responsible for the enforcement of some food legislation.

The official agencies with whom the FSAI has service contracts are:[32]

- Local Authorities
- HSE
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- The State Laboratory
- The Marine Institute
- The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)
- The Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)

[32] FSAI Service Contracts https://www.fsai.ie/about_us/service_contract_agencies.html

The list of the Food Legislation contained in the First Schedule to the Act for which the Official Agency has responsibility is listed in Schedule 1 of each of the service contracts. These statutory instruments (SIs) are prepared by either the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine or the Department of Health. The following tables compare the legislation listed in Schedule 1 of each of the service contracts, showing which Department transposed the legislation enforced by each of the competent authorities.

Table 4.2: Categories of EU Food Legislation Transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health and Official Agencies with Remit for Enforcement

Legislation Category	Sub-category	Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by Department of Health	Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
General Food Law	Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE Local Authorities Marine Institute NSAI SFPA	
Hygiene Package	General Principles of Food Law	HSE NSAI	
	Hygiene Foodstuffs	HSE	
	Official Controls	HSE	
	General Principles of Food Law, Food and Feed Hygiene, Official Controls of Food and Feed	HSE	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Local Authorities Marine Institute SFPA
	Marginalised, Localised and Restricted	HSE (2 SIs) Local Authorities (1 SI)	
Control of Imports	Import Controls		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
	Emergency Measures and Import Control	HSE (2 SIs) Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (1 SI)	

Source: Consultancy Review Team

Table 4.3 overleaf continues to compare the legislation listed in Schedule 1 of each of the service contracts in terms of which Department transposed the legislation enforced by each of the competent authorities.

Table 4.3: Categories of EU Food Legislation Transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health and Official Agencies with Remit for Enforcement			
Legislation Category	**Sub-category**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by Department of Health**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**
Labelling	General Labelling	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE Local Authorities SFPA	
	Allergens Labelling	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE Local Authorities	
	Health Claims	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE Local Authorities	
	Meat Labelling Agricultural Products/ Fishery & Aquaculture Products	HSE (1 SI)	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE (Multiple SIs) Local Authorities SFPA
	Alcohol Labelling		HSE
	Marketing Standards (Poultry, Eggs, fruit & veg)		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
	Misc Product Labelling (Marketing Standards)		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE
Food Contact Materials	Food Contact Materials		Food Safety Authority of Ireland HSE Local Authorities NSAI
Source: Consultancy Review Team			

Table 4.4 continues to compare the legislation listed in Schedule 1 of each of the service contracts in terms of which Department transposed the legislation enforced by each of the competent authorities.

Table 4.4: Categories of EU Food Legislation Transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health and Official Agencies with Remit for Enforcement			
Legislation Category	**Sub-category**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by Department of Health**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**
Foods for Specific Groups	Food Intended for Infants and Young Children, Food for Special Medical Purposes, and Total Diet Replacement for Weight Control	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE Local Authorities	
	Infant Formula	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE	
	Baby Food	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE	
	Energy Restricted Diets	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE	
Manufacturing and Processing Methods	Ionising Radiation	Local Authorities HSE	
	Quick Frozen		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Local Authorities HSE
	Dehydrated Preserved Milk		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Bottled Water	Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers	NSAI HSE	
Biological Contaminants	Microbiological criteria	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE Local Authorities Marine Institute SFPA	
Source: Consultancy Review Team			

Table 4.5 continues to compare the legislation listed in Schedule 1 of each of the service contracts in terms of which Department transposed the legislation enforced by each of the competent authorities.

Table 4.5: Categories of EU Food Legislation Transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health and Official Agencies with Remit for Enforcement			
Legislation Category	**Sub-category**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by Department of Health**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**
Biological Contaminants	Specified Risk Material		Local Authorities HSE Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
	Zoonoses		Local Authorities Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE
Chemical Contaminants	Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs	Local Authorities HSE Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	
	Extraction Solvents	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE	
	Poisons	HSE	
	Animal Remedies and their residues		Local Authorities Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
	Pesticide Residues		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Additives, Flavourings	Food Additives	Local Authorities HSE	
	Flavourings	Local Authorities HSE Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	
	Food Fortification	Local Authorities HSE	
Foods for Specific Groups	Food for Specific Groups	HSE	
	PARNUTS	Local Authorities HSE	
Source: Consultancy Review Team			

Table 4.6 continues to compare the legislation listed in Schedule 1 of each of the service contracts in terms of which Department transposed the legislation enforced by each of the competent authorities.

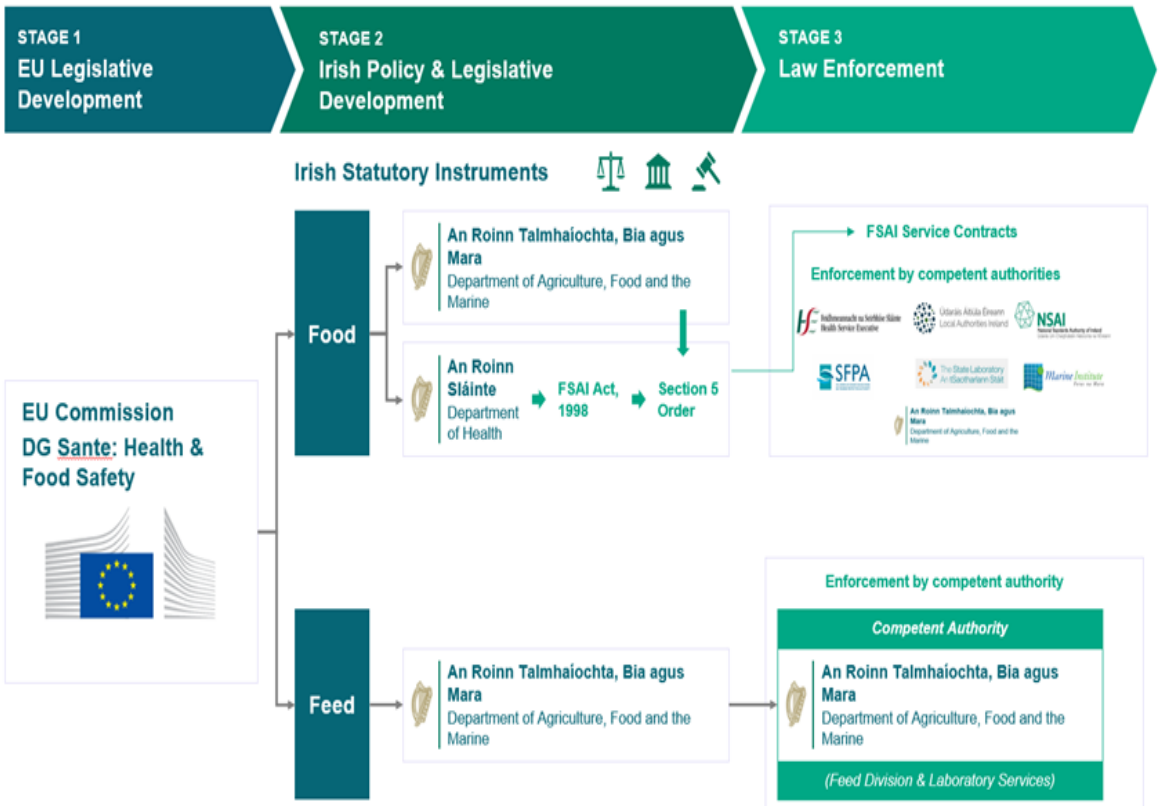
Table 4.6: Categories of EU Food Legislation Transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health and Official Agencies with Remit for Enforcement			
Legislation Category	**Sub-category**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by Department of Health**	**Competent Authorities enforcing specific legislation transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine**
Organic Farming			Local Authorities Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Genetically Modified Foodstuffs		Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine HSE	
Source: Consultancy Review Team			

The observations from these tables are as follows:

- Both Government Departments have transposed legislation to give effect to the European Regulations under the EU Hygiene Package. Each Department focussed their SI on the areas under their regulatory remit.
- The import controls legislation listed in the FSAI service contracts is primarily transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, although the Department of Health has responsibility for transposing some pieces relating to emergency measures and specific import controls, which pertain to controls undertaken by the HSE.
- Horizontal labelling legislation is transposed by the Department of Health. Generally, vertical meat labelling and commodity specific marketing standards legislation are transposed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

As regards biological and chemical contaminants, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine transposes legislation where contamination is likely to occur at primary production and analysed at the start of the food chain, whereas the Department of Health is responsible for legislation for products analysed further along the food chain, at the end of production or at retail level. There are mechanisms in place to consult between Departments and with the FSAI when new legislation is being prepared. The processes involved in the transposition and enforcement of European food and feed legislation in Ireland are outlined in Figure 4.1. The transposition and enforcement of feed legislation involves only the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The transposition and enforcement of food legislation is more complex; the transposition of legislation involves both the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Enforcement of the legislation is through the FSAI and the other competent authorities listed in Table 4.1.

Figure 4.1: The Key Stages of the EU Legislative Transposition and Enforcement in Ireland for Food and Feed Safety



Source: Consultancy Review Team

The list below indicates the official agencies with whom the FSAI has contracts and provides a brief description of their responsibilities.

Local Authorities

Local authorities as multi-purpose bodies are responsible for an extensive range of services, including veterinary services.[33] The FSAI currently has service contracts with 25 individual local authorities. Official controls in slaughterhouses, meat processing, wholesale and distribution establishments are dependent on throughput as defined in legislation implementing Regulation (EC) No 853/2004. In general, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is responsible for controls in establishments with a high throughput and the local authorities are responsible for controls in establishments with a low throughput.

Health Service Executive (HSE)-Environmental Health Service

The HSE is responsible for official controls in certain manufacturing/processing establishments, certain wholesale/distribution operations, imports of foods of non-animal origin, and all retail sector (retail and catering) establishments. The legislation enforced by this Competent Authority includes: general food law, official controls, food hygiene, import controls, labelling, presentation and

[33] We note that the governance structures underpinning the local authority veterinary service are currently under review

advertising of foodstuffs, additives and flavourings, contaminants, microbiological criteria, specified risk material, zoonoses, food contact materials, foods for particular nutritional uses (including infant formula), food supplements, bottled water, nutrition and health claims, genetically modified foods, novel foods, and foodstuffs treated with ionising radiation.

The HSE food control services include environmental health services, food safety laboratory services, and public health medical services.

In addition, the HSE administers a Food Safety Laboratory Service (FSLS) which comprises three Public Analyst Laboratories (PALs) and seven Official Food Microbiology Laboratories. The statutory role of the PALs is to test food for compliance with the relevant legislation and guidelines.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The Department deploys a range of professional, technical and administrative skills as part of a multi-disciplinary team to conduct food controls. It is also responsible for official controls on imports from third countries of products of animal origin at border control posts (BCPs[34]).[35] The Department implements the residues monitoring programme to monitor primary animal products to detect residues of unauthorised or banned substances, e.g., hormones, steroids, and residues of permitted veterinary drugs in excess of the maximum permitted limits, e.g., antibiotics, anticoccidiostats. It also implements the pesticide residues control plan for the monitoring of food of animal origin and food of plant origin for pesticide residues. The Organics Unit of the Department is charged with the approval and supervision of organic certification bodies. The Department's Laboratories provide accredited biological and veterinary testing and chemical testing.

The State Laboratory

The State Laboratory carries out analysis in relation to chemicals in food and feed, including the national residues control plan.

The Marine Institute

The Marine Institute carries out analyses to ensure compliance with legislative requirements with respect to general food law, official controls, food hygiene, contaminants, residues of veterinary medicines, microbiological criteria and marine biotoxins. It acts as a National Reference Laboratory for certain parameters (i.e., marine biotoxins in bivalve molluscs, bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs, monitoring of certain substances and residues thereof as far as they apply to finfish aquaculture).

National Standards Authority of Ireland

The NSAI is the Competent Authority for:

- The recognition and exploitation of natural mineral waters bottled in Ireland.
- Official controls on the production, distribution and import of food contact materials.

[34] These were previously known as Border Inspection Posts (BIPs)

[35] The impact of Brexit should be noted in this context.

Sea Fisheries Protection Agency

The SFPA is responsible for enforcement of national and EU regulations on sea-fisheries conservation and health conditions for the production and placing on the market of fish, shellfish, and fisheries products. The SFPA carries out official controls of seafood at all stages of production, processing and distribution with the exclusion of retail establishments.

The SFPA is responsible for official controls on fish and shellfish from primary production, through harvesting, processing, wholesale and distribution. The SFPA provides assistance to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for official controls on imports from third countries of fish and shellfish.

Bord Bia

In addition to the official agencies which the FSAI has contracts with, it is useful to note the role of Bord Bia in Ireland's agri-food sector. Bord Bia is a state agency with the remit of promoting Irish food and horticulture sales both domestically and internationally. Its functions include the development of markets for food and horticulture, promotional campaigns to encourage the consumption of food and horticulture and, the operation of quality assurance schemes which serve to maintain or improve the quality of Ireland's food and horticulture. These schemes exist for the following product sectors: beef, lamb, dairy, pigmeat, poultry, eggs, feed, fresh produce, mushroom compost and casing manufacturers and ornamental plant producers. In addition, Bord Bia runs a sustainability programme known as Origin Green which operates at a national level. As part of this, sustainability criteria have been incorporated into new quality standards and will be integrated into existing standards in the future

4.3 Development and Enforcement of Feed Legislation

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is also the central Competent Authority for animal feed. At central level, the Department negotiates EU policy, transposes legislation, and establishes a risk-based inspection programme for animal feed as well as administering, co-ordinating and implementing that programme.

The Department works with other competent authorities and agencies in relation to some areas of feedingstuffs controls, such as:

- The FSAI, in relation to operational arrangements for contingency plans covering the feed and food chain where there is a risk for the food chain. In addition, the Feed Division (FD) samples some bulk food materials that might end up in the food or feed chain, e.g., wheat, barley or oats, for mycotoxin analysis.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Health, in relation to genetically modified organisms.
- Revenue's Customs Service, in relation to import controls of feed of non-animal origin.
- The SFPA, in relation to fish meal manufacturing operations.

The Department's role in enforcing legislation on feedingstuffs involves carrying out official controls, including inspection of premises and sampling activities in relation to all levels of the feed chain, including importation, storage, manufacture, trade, and use at farm level.

The Department administers, co-ordinates, and implements the Feedingstuffs Annual Inspection Programme (FAIP) for Ireland.

It covers the following areas:

- General food law
- Feed hygiene
- The circulation and use of feed materials
- The marketing of compound feed
- Additives used in animal nutrition
- Undesirable substances in animal feed
- Feedingstuffs for particular nutritional purposes
- Certain protein products used in animal nutrition
- GMO in feed
- Medicated feedingstuffs
- Controls on TSE, Animal-By-Products and other surplus food of non-animal origin
- Animal health (as it relates to animal feed)

Primary responsibility for feeding stuff controls resides with the FFGP Division. However, there are also significant shared responsibilities with other Divisions within the veterinary inspectorate and Pesticide Control Division amongst others. Furthermore, the SFPA is responsible for official controls in fish meal manufacturing operations (fish meal produced from animal by-products). However, all other aspects of enforcement of the derogations for feeding protein of animal origin foreseen in the provisions laid down in Annex IV to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 are the responsibility of the Department.

The mapping of national and EU legislative framework in this chapter, combined with the findings from previous chapters, has informed the analysis of the As-Is position.

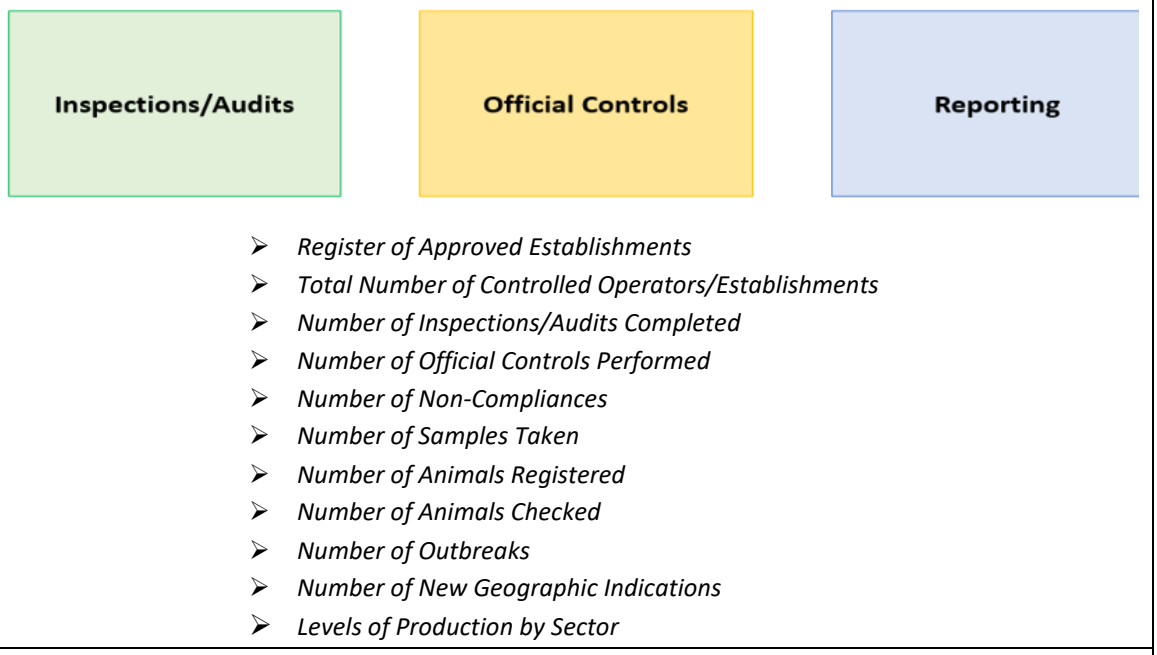
5 Datasets, Resources and Capabilities

This section examines existing databases, datasets, and technological capacity, and identifies any potential gaps and deficiencies which may need to be addressed to enhance the regulation of food and feed in Ireland. It also assesses the existing resources, competencies, and capabilities within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine which is the organisation responsible for the implementation of the programme under review.

5.1 Datasets in FSFA Divisions

The Department's FSFA divisions maintain the key datasets relevant to the programme and to meeting their reporting and legislative requirements in respect of the FSAI, MANCP and the EU Commission, as well as for internal use. Aspects of these data are also used to inform the various divisions' risk assessments when determining which premises to inspect in a single year, which is in line with the attributes for an effective food safety regulatory system (see Section 2.1). In general, these data are held in respect of three core areas: inspections/audits, official controls, and reporting. Although a register of approved establishments is publicly available on the Department's website, as required, the majority of data (including registrations) are held internally. Figure 5.1 provides a high-level list of datasets maintained by the relevant divisions, although the precise nature of these data will vary by division.

Figure 5.1: High-level List of Datasets Maintained by FSFA Divisions



Source: Consultancy Review Team

It is useful to consider the databases and IT systems used to support the maintenance of the datasets. The Consultancy Review Team understand that a number of divisions have locally built systems for managing their data and information. Often these have been organically developed by staff members within the division rather than IT. This can leave the wider team vulnerable if/when those staff members leave if there is not full documentation available on the datasets. We note, however, that there has been a recent welcome initiative by the IT division to plan to replace some of these systems. The type of databases and IT systems in use across the Department's FSFA divisions is presented in Table 5.1.

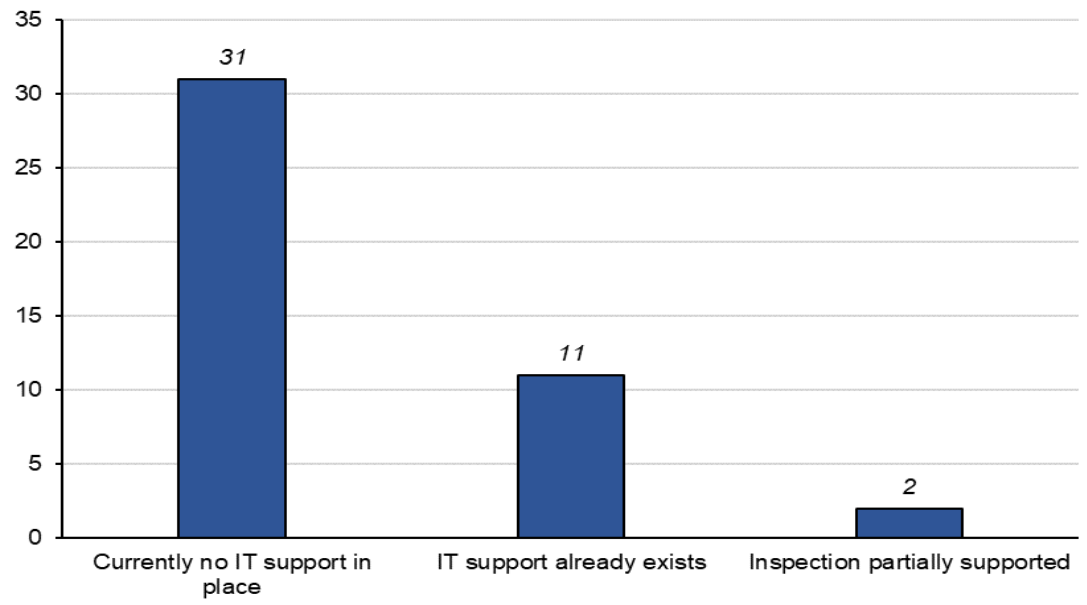
Table 5.1: IT Systems and Databases Used by FSFA Divisions

IT System	Description
AFIT	Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing System used for recording inspections
AHCS	Animal Health Computer System
AIMS	Animal Identification and Movement System
CCS	Corporate Customer System used for customer registration
eDocs	Document management software
INIS Import Portal	Imports Notification and Inspection System
LIMS	Laboratory Information Management System
MS Access	Database management system
MS Excel	Spreadsheet programme
SUDS	Sustainable Use Directive System for customer registration

Source: Consultancy Review Team

In evaluating the existing datasets and the use of IT in Department, of relevance are the results of the Food Safety and Authenticity Controls Questionnaire carried out under the Data, Capture, Analysis and Reporting Phase I project. While this survey relates to 2018 and had responses from only six divisions, it is useful to summarise some of the findings. The results suggest there were 44 types of inspections carried out across these divisions. Of these, only 11 had full IT support already in place. Some 31 had none, with the other two having partial IT support. According to the results of the questionnaire, client registration systems were at that time self-owned and maintained locally using Microsoft software for all six divisions that responded. Our later engagements with the heads of division suggests this continues to be the case for a number of the Department's FSFA divisions, although additional divisions have since progressed to using IT-supported systems. We further note that the proposed Digitisation Project will undertake a detailed analysis of the IT systems used by the FSFA divisions.

Figure 5.2: No. of Areas of Inspection by Level of IT Support 2018



Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Phase I Data project)

It is also informative to consider the number of AFIT Systems in use. This shows that only ten AFIT Systems are in place across the 44 areas of inspection covered by the six divisions that responded to the questionnaire. The divisions with AFIT Systems are Dairy Controls and Certification and Pesticide Controls. The AFIT inspection modules developed for these divisions may be adopted to fulfil the requirement for supported IT Systems in the Horticulture and Plant Health and Poultry and Eggs section of FFGP, which have relatively large numbers of inspection areas.

Table 5.2: Division by AFIT System Status 2018

Division	No. *with* AFIT System	No. *without* AFIT System
Organic Controls	0	1
Veterinary Medicines and Residues	0	3
Pesticide Controls	4	2
Horticulture and Plant Health	0	11
Dairy Controls and Certification	6	4
Poultry and Egg Section of FFGP	0	13
TOTAL	***10***	***34***
% Share	***23%***	***77%***

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Phase I Data project)

Most divisions are managing their client databases on Excel or Access in combination with CCS, even though the latter has the capacity to record client activity all in one place. A centralised registration system would enhance the Department's ability to capture accurate data, which would facilitate further analysis. One division, FFGP, has an IT system in place (ISPAF) for the registration of Animal Feed Business operators which is directly linked to CCS by means of unique identifier numbers, covering both commercial feed operators and primary producers. The ISPAF system also records the inspections details for this sector using these unique identifier numbers.

It is useful to highlight the different reporting requirements and frequencies for each division that responded to the questionnaire. Outlined in Table 5.3, these show that most requirements relate to quarterly/annual returns to the FSAI and annual returns to the Commission/MANCP.

Table 5.3: Reporting Requirements of Each Division

Division	Food Safety Authority of Ireland	Multi-Annual National Control Plan	EU Commission	European Food Safety Agency	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Dairy Controls and Certification	Quarterly	Annually	Annually		
Horticulture and Plant Health	Quarterly	Annually	Annually		
Pesticides Controls	Annually		Annually	Annually	
Poultry and Egg Section of FFGP	Quarterly	Annually	Annually		Internally on an ongoing basis
Veterinary Medicines and Residues					When inspections are complete
Organic Controls of AES	Quarterly		Annually		
Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service	Quarterly	Annually	Annually		

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

In addition to the above findings, it is worth noting that separate engagement with the Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service and the Veterinary Area Management teams established that they are actively engaged with AFIT database developments.

VPHIS implements effective robust controls on primary production and food processing and protects animal welfare with the use of various initiatives and controls. Data on the different types of inspections undertaken by VPHIS are outlined in Table 5.4. The Consultancy Review Team understands that these inspections are largely paper-based.

Table 5.4: Animal and Meat Products Inspections Performed by VPHIS		
Animal Inspections	**2020**	**2019**
	Total no. of Animals Inspected	**Total no. of Animals Inspected**
Cattle	1,785,224	1,745,399
Sheep	2,894,642	2,781,661
Pigs	3,511,610	3,384,285
Equines	2,267	5,269
Poultry	111,664,583	106,144,933
Goats	0	0
Farmed Game	0	0
Wild Game	69	2,144
Total Animal Inspections	**119,858,395**	**114,063,691**
Meat Products/Preparations Inspected	**2020**	**2019**
	Total Volume Produced in Inspected Premises (Kg)	**Total Volume Produced in Inspected Premises (Kg)**
Beef	101,378,010	102,238,944
Pig meat	205,079,985	209,100,057
Sheep meat	6,366,122	5,128,355
Poultry	132,699,270	118,340,933
Goat meat	0	0
Farmed Game	0	0
Wild Game	0	0
Equine	0	0
Game	0	7,986
Total Meat Products/Preparations Inspected	**445,523,387**	**434,816,275**
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine		

5.2 Datasets in the FSAI and in Other Agencies

In addition to the key datasets held by the Department, there are complementary datasets held by FSAI , Bord Bia, the HSE, and other agencies. The FSAI gathers a wide range of data from official agencies with whom it has service contracts including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the HSE, the State Laboratory and local authorities. Many of the FSAI's IT systems have been developed in-house and it hosts a data warehouse to support risk assessment and risk management. It is also currently in the process of building a centralised intelligence hub, which will assist in the detection of deceptive and fraudulent activities. Given that the FSAI is the central authority for the enforcement of food legislation it is useful to document the detailed databases used by FSAI in relation to food safety as presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Overview of Databases Used by FSAI in Relation to Food Safety
• DORA – A central database that contains all information relating to Rapid Alerts, food incidents, product recalls and withdrawals, etc. DORA contains live information on food incident case management and facilitates a co-ordinated approach to incident management. • CIH – The Central Intelligence Hub (CLUE) is an investigations case management and intelligence development platform. All Official Agencies have been provided with licences and training in the use of CLUE and it will serve as a central repository of intelligence to inform food fraud and protected disclosure investigations. • RASFF/AAC/IMSOC – The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed is an EU hosted platform that provides the facility for all Member States (FSAI in Ireland) to notify the Commission and other Member States of a direct or indirect serious risk to human health deriving from food or feed which has been placed on the market. FSAI acts as the central point for all Official Agency inputs • TRACES – EU hosted platform for sanitary and phytosanitary certification required for the importation of animals, animal products, food and of non-animal origin into the European Union. FSAI have read access to TRACES for monitoring purposes. • ARMS – contains all information in relation to queries, requests and food complaints received through the FSAI Advice Line • Food consumption databases from IUNA extensively used in riskassessment • Agency Returns – contains data collected from the official agencies on official control activities under section 48(8) of the FSAI and Schedule 4 of the applicable service contract. • National Food Sample Surveillance (NFSS2) – contains details of samples taken by the official agencies and the analytical results provided by the laboratories. This is a HSE database available for official controls. • Audit Tracker – Contains information in relation to FSAI audits of all Official Agencies and Targeted Audits of the Food Industry. It also contains information on all food related EU SANTE F Audits to Ireland • Enforcements Database – captures information on enforcement measures served by all Official Agencies for non-compliances with food legislation. Not used to the same extend by the Department as other Agencies • Notifications Database – contains details of food supplement and food for special medical purposes products that have been places on the market • Investigation Tracker – Food Fraud and Protected Disclosures – Contains details of all Food Fraud and Protected Disclosure Investigations undertaken (which have been notified to the FSAI) • Approved Premises Register – Through the FSAI website links are provided to all Approved Food Establishments in Ireland across all Official Agencies and to all EU Member State Approved Food Establishments • OAPI – Official Agencies Premises and Inspections database contains information on the identity, activities, approval status and official controls on food businesses. Currently it contains information on premises supervised by SFPA and Local Authorities
Source: FSAI material supplied to the review team

The HSE undertakes inspections across approximately 47,500 premises each year. It takes a risk-based approach, categorising premises on a scale of 1-6 to determine the regularity of routine inspections. In 2013, the agency launched the Environmental Health Information System (EHIS), which facilitates the recording of all data relative to environmental health service activities including food safety. Every premises subject to inspection has a file on the system, which can also automate letters based on

templates embedded in the system. Work is currently underway to enable inspectors to upload information directly to the EHIS via tablet device. The following is a list of datasets held by the HSE:

- Number of food samples taken per year
- Number of food complaints per year
- Number of food poisoning incidents (sporadic and outbreaks) per year
- Training and development undertaken by staff per year
- Hygiene education activities undertaken per year
- Complaints relating to the implementation of its Service Contract with the FSAI
- Outdoor events monitored per year

Bord Bia undertakes approximately 37,000 audits every year across primary production to processing. There are about 120 auditors across the organisation who are equipped with smart devices that enable them to automatically upload their findings to a centralised database. The organisation takes a risk-based approach to inspections, with the frequency of audits based on risks identified through the data and on sight at the premises, as well as the history of members. The following is a list of datasets held by Bord Bia:

- Value of Irish food and drink exports by sector and year
- Market distribution of Irish food and drink exports by year
- Number of participants in Origin Green
- Total number of audits by sector and year
- Number of beef carbon footprint assessments completed
- Number of dairy carbon footprint assessments completed
- Number of individual companies approved for use of the Quality Mark
- Value of marketing assistance grant payments by recipient

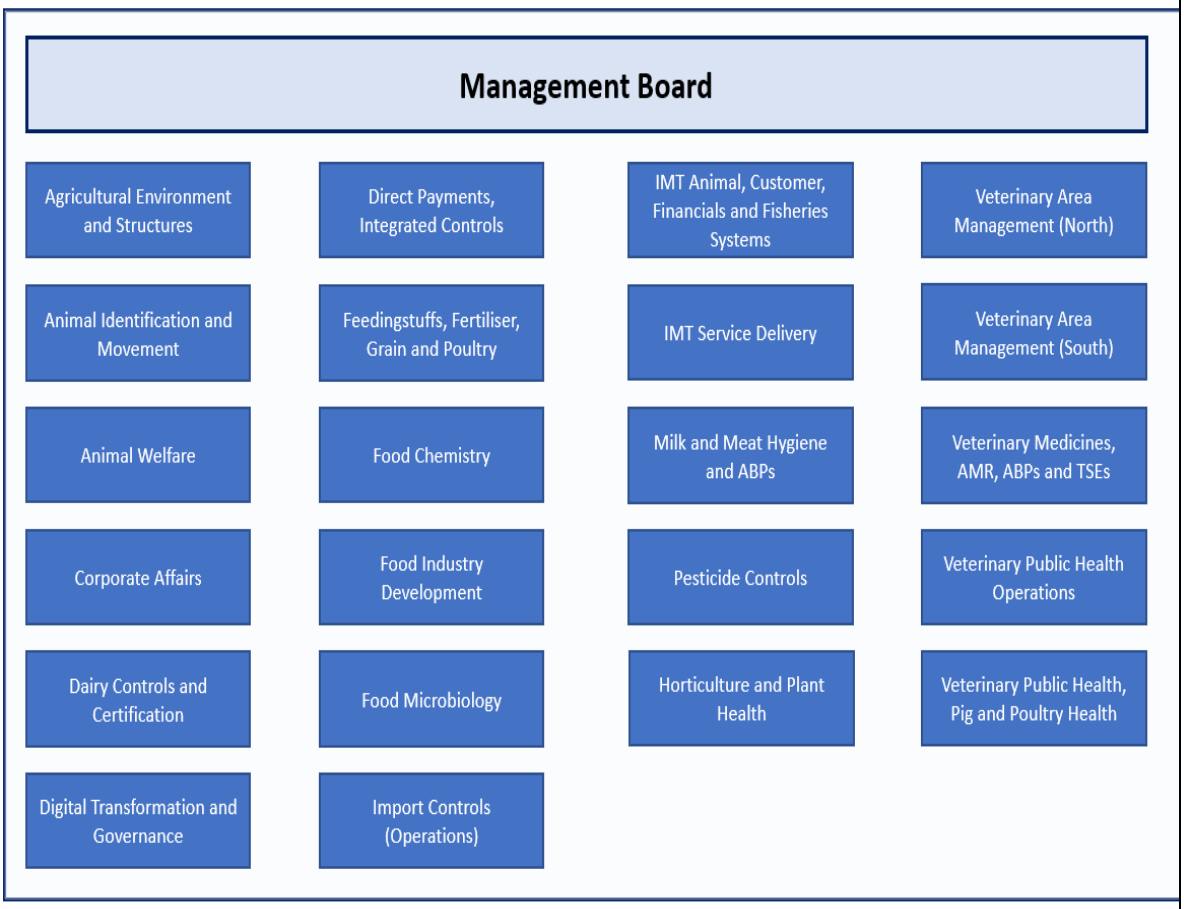
5.3 Competencies and Capabilities within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

There are 22 out of 70 divisions involved in FSFA activities, each of which is headed by the equivalent of a principal officer on the civil service grade structure. They are overseen by the Management Board whose remit includes FSFA. Of the 70 divisions in the Department, approximately 22 are involved in FSFA activities at varied levels which accounts for approximately 1,400 staff. Of the 1,400 staff, 600 are involved in food safety and food authenticity controls as a core part of their duties, and 800 more tangentially. In a number of divisions, the number of staff involved in FSFA activities is a small proportion of their work. These numbers refer to staff members and may not equate to full-time equivalent. The Consultancy Review Team notes the high level of commitment of the Management Board to the FSFA programme. It is important to highlight that not all of these staff work either directly or indirectly in FSFA activities and there may be some limited crossover between divisions. The level of staff involved in FSFA activities raises a number of issues, particularly in relation to internal communications and potential duplication of work.

The Food Safety Liaison Unit (FSLU) falls under the remit of the Meat and Milk Policy Division and acts as the single point of contact between the FSAI and the various divisions performing official controls as part of the service contract with the FSAI. This represents a coordinated approach whereby all

communication between the FSAI and any relevant division is channelled through the FSLU. However, the FSLU is not involved in setting or shaping policy.

Figure 5.3: Senior Management with an FSFA Remit



Source: Consultancy Review Team

The following tables provide a brief description of each of the FSFA divisions' remit and mission.

Table 5.6: FSFA Division by Remit and Mission	
Division (Role in brackets)	**FSFA Remit and Mission**
Animal Identification and Movement (Support)	Manage the identification systems of the large animal species including development of the related business processes based on optimum use of outsourcing and the animal identification and movement system (AIM) in a manner that underpins public health, confidence in the food supply and the ability to trade internationally in meat, animal and meat products and live animals.
Animal Welfare (Support)	To promote and safeguard animal welfare for the benefit of consumers, producers, the economy and wider society.
Dairy Controls and Certification (Core)	Safeguard public health and food safety and authenticity. Negotiate and agree robust inspection procedures and certification for increased international market access. Design, develop and implement effective, targeted schemes and services while ensuring the highest standards of financial management controls and customer service (market support schemes). Facilitate and promote continued and increased access to international markets.
Direct Payments, Integrated Controls (Support)	Design, plan, organise, implement and complete the on-the-spot (OTS) inspections in respect of farmer schemes and services.
Feedingstuffs, Fertiliser, Grain and Poultry (Core)	To negotiate policy and implement relevant legislation in relation to feedingstuffs, fertilisers, poultry and eggs; to ensure that these commodities do not present a risk to the food chain and are authentic and to facilitate the trade in animal feed and eggs.
IMT Animal, Customer, Financials and Fisheries Systems (Support)	To develop and maintain IT systems to support the Department's business activities.
Food Chemistry (Support)	To provide high quality comprehensive laboratory testing, expertise and associated research and development for the current and future needs of its customers and the State.
Food Industry Development (Support)	The strategic development and promotion of a competitive, sustainable, market and consumer orientated prepared consumer food and spirit drinks sector and EU Quality scheme products through the formulation of EU and national polices, including international trade, the management of regulatory, financial and corporate governance responsibilities for Bord Bia and the delivery of an effective control plan.
Food Microbiology (Core)	The provision of a high-quality food microbiology and whole genome sequencing laboratory and advisory service to support the Department in the achievement of its strategic objectives with respect to safeguarding public health, food safety and authenticity and animal health in both domestic and international markets, sustaining farm families and agri-industries and protecting consumers at home and abroad.
IMT Service Delivery (Support)	To supply IT support in the delivery of Department schemes and services. Provision of quality software systems and controls.
Agricultural Environment and Structures (AES) (Support)	Contribute to the development of policy and strategies to promote environmentally friendly and sustainable systems of agriculture, to assist structural change, process applications, approve payments and implement controls. Provide income and market supports to farmers and the agri-food sector to underpin the rural economy and the environment.
Digital Transformation and Governance (Support)	To provide strategic direction, delivery and governance to the Department in terms of digital transformation, IMT staffing, enterprise and application architecture, data analytics, finance, project management and information security.
Milk and Meat Hygiene and ABP (Core)	Efficient administration of milk and meat hygiene/fees/ABP/TSE regulation.
Pesticide Controls (Core)	Implement the regulatory system for authorisation and use of pesticides to facilitate sustainable production of safe and authentic food and to safeguard public health.
Plant Health and Horticulture (Core)	To achieve the highest possible standards of plant health, food safety and to promote the development of an efficient primary horticultural sector.
Veterinary Area Management (North) (Core)	To promote and safeguard public and animal health and animal welfare for the benefit of consumers, producers and wider society.

Veterinary Area Management (South) (Core)	To promote and safeguard public and animal health and animal welfare for the benefit of consumers, producers and wider society.
Corporate Affairs (Support)	* To ensure best practice in corporate governance of the Department and, in conjunction with the relevant line divisions, to maintain effective and robust corporate governance structures and processes in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies for the state bodies under the aegis of the Department. * Ensuring that the Department meets its obligations and responsibilities under all corporate policies/legislation including but not limited to: FOI Act, 2014; Access to information on the Environment Regulations; Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015; Protected Disclosures Act, 2014; Data Protection Legislation including GDPR and the Law Enforcement Directive; Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, (Public Sector Duty); Children First Act, 2015; Official Languages Act, 2003, etc. * To support the work of the Department, co-ordinate various inter-Departmental and inter-divisional functions, including those relating to North/South relations, and to provide a quality service to the Minister and Ministers of State. Oversight of Department's Business Continuity Planning and participation on Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.
Veterinary Medicines, AMR, ABPs, TSEs (Core)	To regulate the supply and use of veterinary medicinal products and implement measures to address the risk posed by antimicrobial resistance, antiparasitic resistance and to check for the presence of illegal residues in food and to protect animal and human health by ensuring proper utilisation and disposal of animal by-products and through the monitoring, diagnosis, control and eradication of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.
Veterinary Public Health Operations (Core)	To ensure that VPHIS safeguards public health, food safety and authenticity as well as animal welfare to the highest audit and inspection standards.
Veterinary Public Health, Pig and Poultry Health (Core)	To contribute to the development of robust, evidence-based policy, resources and regulation in support of veterinary public health and the health of pigs and poultry. To promote the interests of the consumer, industry, and other sectors of society within these policy areas. To contribute to the development of systems which facilitate the communication and implementation of the Department's and other stakeholders' responsibilities in these policy areas.
Import Controls (Operations) (Core)	To work with all stakeholders to facilitate trade in a way that protects public health, the animal and plant health status of the Irish agricultural sector, as well as the European Single Market, and to contribute to the whole of Government effort to ensure smooth, compliant trade between Ireland and third countries, including the United Kingdom.
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	

In considering the requirements for competencies and capabilities in implementing the programme, it is useful to consider the overall scale of businesses under supervision. The following table illustrates the number food businesses under supervision by an official agency between 2016 and 2020. The number of premises coming under inspection increased by 1% over the five-year period, with the biggest increase of 16% at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. By comparison, the number of premises under supervision by local authorities fell by 5%.

Table 5.7: Number of Food Businesses under Supervision by Official Agency, 2016-2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	822	894	1,014	900	957
HSE	45,532	45,803	45,190	45,382	45,898
Local Authorities	511	526	521	494	487
SFPA	2,538	2,650	2,543	2,725	2,702
Total	***49,403***	***49,873***	***49,268***	***49,501***	***50,044***

Note: The focus of this report is the Food Businesses under Supervision by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Source: FSAI

The number of planned annual food inspections undertaken by the official agencies ranged from around 49,000 to 58,000 over the period 2015-2019. There was a decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, of note is that even in 2020 there were over 33,000 planned inspections.

Table 5.8: Number of Planned Food Inspections by Official Agency, 2015-2020

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
HSE (Environmental Health Service)	36,353	35,786	33,193	32,254	31,189	20,269
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Inspectorate)	15,011	11,985	11,569	10,826	12,214	7,408
Local authorities	5,033	4,870	4,891	4,582	4,320	3,790
SFPA	2,015	2,228	2,245	2,122	2,121	1,911
National Standards Authority of Ireland	61	72	84	62	88	37
Total	***58,473***	***54,941***	***51,982***	***49,846***	***49,932***	***33,415***

Note: The focus of this report is the Food Businesses under Supervision by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Source: FSAI

Official agencies report annually on the number of staff resources they have dedicated to official controls under their service contracts as presented in the next table. The increase in the number of staff at the Department reflects factors associated with additional Brexit-related activities.

Table 5.9: Number of WTEs by Official Agency, 2016-2020

Official Agency	Unit	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Inspection Service	319	338	345	407	495
	Laboratory Service	79	82	82	90	88
HSE	Environmental Health Service	336	339	339	377	425
	Laboratory Service	104	130	124	125	132
FSAI		70	73	79	79	87
Local authorities		116	104	101	106	88
Marine Institute		41	41	41	41	39
National Standards Authority of Ireland		1	1	1	1	1
SFPA		42	36	40	45	47
Total		***1,108***	***1,144***	***1,152***	***1,271***	***1,402***

Note: The focus of this report are the staff employed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to implement a system of controls
Source: FSAI

The inspectorates of the official agencies take samples and test food for compliance with all aspects of food legislation at their official and national reference laboratories. Over the period 2016-2020, the number of samples taken by the official agencies ranged from around 50,000 to over 63,000 as shown in the table below.

Table 5.10: Number of Samples Taken by the Official Agencies, 2016-2020

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	31,456	32,947	35,983	32,035	28,100
HSE (Environmental Health Service)	13,220	11,699	11,678	11,217	5,844
SFPA	9,004	8,353	8,386	8,463	9,726
Local authorities	2,388	3,306	3,195	2,524	2,354
Other agencies	520	1,335	4,597	2,516	4,237
Total	***56,588***	***57,640***	***63,839***	***56,755***	***50,261***

Source: FSAI

The Import Controls Division has 193 staff distributed across Dublin Airport, Dublin Port, Rosslare Port, and Shannon Airport. The Division was created in 2019 in response to the anticipated end of the UK transition period for exiting the EU on 31 December 2020, and what this would mean for the volume of import controls required at Dublin Port and Rosslare Port, in particular. In the years leading up to the UK departure, the Department annually carried out just under 5,000 import controls across the three multi-commodity border control posts in place at that time (Dublin Port, Dublin Airport and Shannon Airport). In 2021, the Department carried out 100,000 import controls across the four locations, with over 90,000 carried out at Dublin Port. The majority of these controls related to food safety, in particular ensuring food being imported into Ireland for retail trade complied with EU legislative requirements.

Table 5.11: Import Controls Activity by Location, 2021

Dublin Port	
Import checks	92,113
Pet inspections	N/A*
Live animal export inspections	310
Other exports	819
Rosslare Port	
Import checks	3,182
Pet inspections	784
Dublin Airport	
Import checks	2,503
Pet inspections	1,492
Shannon Airport	
Import checks	1,799
Pet inspections	18
Total Import checks	*99,597*
Total Inspections	*103,020*

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
**Data was not available for the full year*

Only a small number of consignments were rejected (less than 0.5%). This was largely as a result of the alignment of UK food safety rules with those of the EU and efforts made by businesses to comply with the new import control requirements.

Table 5.12: Compliance Measures, 2021	
Consignment rejected	
Products of animal origin	212
Plants and plant products	126
Pesticides	39
Total	*377*
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	

5.4 Possible Gaps and Deficiencies in Datasets, Resources and Capabilities

In reviewing the Official Control System in Ireland and the opportunities for improvement we have focussed on any potential gaps and deficiencies in datasets, resources and capabilities. In this context it is useful to recap on the previous 2015 FSAI Scientific Committee published a Review of the Official Control System in Ireland focusing on food businesses only.[36] On foot of these guidelines, a set of 13 recommendations to address gaps in the system were set out. These recommendations included operational, structural and strategic issues across the whole food system. This analysis was used by the Department to inform the development of the FSFA programme. We note that progress has been made on a number of these areas since the report was published. Some of the recommendations concerning performance indicators may also be enhanced by this current project. The Consultancy Review Team acknowledges that this report was undertaken over six years ago and was also compiled prior to the introduction of EU Regulation 2017/625 which has set out a number of changes in relation to the food safety regulatory system.

Our review also notes that:

- Progress on the harmonisation of the Department's electronic systems is underway, but significant milestones need to be reached before this can be considered complete. For example, although the Department has adopted an eRisk system, further work is required to ensure that this is consistently utilised across its FSFA divisions.
- The Department uses the number of non-compliances as a metric for measuring risk, but other quantitative and/or qualitative methods should also be considered for this purpose.
- The Department assesses risk at the producer level using historical information on the client.

As part of our evaluation of the As-Is Position we also note that the European Commission undertakes detailed audits of different aspects of the food safety and food authenticity regulatory regime in all Member States, including Ireland. A summary of some of the selected findings of these audits concerning Ireland is presented in the next table. The findings of these audits indicate a positive overall assessment of the system of controls that are undertaken in Ireland and highlight the overall effectiveness of the systems in terms of maintaining high levels of food safety. This is aligned with the initial findings from the Consultancy Team's review. The EU Audits also identified a number of areas where possible improvements can be made.

[36] A Review of the Official Control System in Ireland and Opportunities for Improvement https://www.fsai.ie/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=14953

Table 5.13: EU Audits of Ireland's Food Safety and Food Authenticity Regulatory System – Selected Findings	
Name of Audit	**Selected Findings**
Evaluate the use of quality controls and indicators for animal welfare(2020)[37]	*"The competent authority's approach to setting objectives, planning and reporting of official controls is strategic"* *"The competent authority has a systematic, focussed, evidence and risk-based approach in organising and delivering the official controls on animal welfare at the farm level"*
To discuss policies relating to anti-microbial resistance(2019) [38]	*"The commitment of actors, in all sectors and at all levels, to the control of AMR in Ireland is a positive example for other countries"* *"The environmental and veterinary sectors have undertaken multiple actions on AMR surveillance, awareness raising and research"* *"There has been progress in AMR control on many levels"*
Evaluate the control systems related to Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG) (2019)[39]	*"The report concludes that there is a legal framework and competent authorities are designated for the implementation of official controls of PDO/PGI/TSG and GI spirit drinks with a good communication and cooperation between the competent authorities responsible for official controls"* *"All operators using the registered names are subject to regular controls, which are planned based on risk analysis and take place following documented procedures"* *"Enforcement measures are in place for operators who are found to make an illegal use of the registered name"*
Evaluate the control system in place governing the production of horse meat including traceability (2019)[40]	*"The control system also includes official sampling for species identification and specific residues analyses, with overall satisfactory results"* *"It has put in place several measures to investigate suspected irregularities and to enhance awareness and has made efforts to strengthen cooperation between the various actors"* *"The identity checks by the passport issuing bodies prior to their issue are accurate"*
Evaluate official controls on feed additives, their ingredients and traceability (2019)[41]	*"The planning of official feed controls – inspections and sampling – is risk-based with inspections being generally well performed and capable of adequately verifying operators' fulfilment of relevant legislative requirements"* *"The competent authority's actions following identification and follow-up of non-compliances are comprehensive and sufficient to verify that deficiencies have been remedied by the operator"*
Evaluate the implementation of measures to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides (2019)[42]	*"A certification system has been developed for training professional users, distributors and advisors of plant protection products"* *"The competent authorities have effectively introduced or extended specific official controls to verify the compliance of professional users, including both agricultural and non-agricultural operators with many of the requirements of the Directive"*
Source: Various EU Audits	

[37] https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=15128
[38] https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=14842
[39] https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=14784
[40] https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=14754
41 https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=14378
42 https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=14594

Table 5.14: EU Audits of Ireland's Food Safety and Food Authenticity Regulatory System – Selected Findings	
Name of Audit	**Selected Findings**
Assess the official controls on the production of ready-to-eat food (2018)[43]	*"The report concludes that the official controls over production of ready-to-eat food are well established, risk-based, organised and in general implemented based on comprehensive documented procedures and guidance covering relevant aspects."* *"The actions taken by the competent authorities when non-compliances are identified during their official controls are largely satisfactory."*
Evaluate the implementation of hygiene, traceability and trade requirements of processed animal proteins, including exports, imports and intra-union trade (2018)[44]	*"The structure and functioning of the official control system, notably, the relatively high number of risk-based inspections and the number of official samples taken, which have not identified any particular problem with the compliance of processed animal protein with microbiological criteria, provides a good basis for assuring that processed animal protein is produced, transported and traded in line with relevant requirements on hygiene and traceability."*
Evaluate the system of documentary checks at the union borders (2017)[45]	*"In general, the documentary checks are performed correctly and provide assurances that animal health and welfare, and public health requirements for imported goods are observed."* *"Corrective measures are undertaken when non-compliant consignments are detected at the borders and a confirmation of their destruction and/or re-dispatch is always sought."* *"The staff are qualified and knowledgeable about the legislative requirements for imports."*
Evaluate the control systems for organic production and labelling of organic products (2016)[46]	*"Ireland has a control system in place with clear division of tasks between the competent authority (CA) and the control bodies (CBs) to which official controls are delegated."* *"Regular coordination and communication between all bodies involved supports the harmonisation of organic controls."*
Evaluate the Suitability and Effective Implementation of National Arrangement to Fight Fraud along the Agri-food chain in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 – Draft Audit Report	*"DAFM and FSAI, the two CAs entrusted with the majority of official controls referred to in Article 1(2) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, have appropriate arrangements in place for receiving reports on investigating suspicion of fraudulent and deceptive practices in the agri-food chain"*
Source: Various EU Audits	

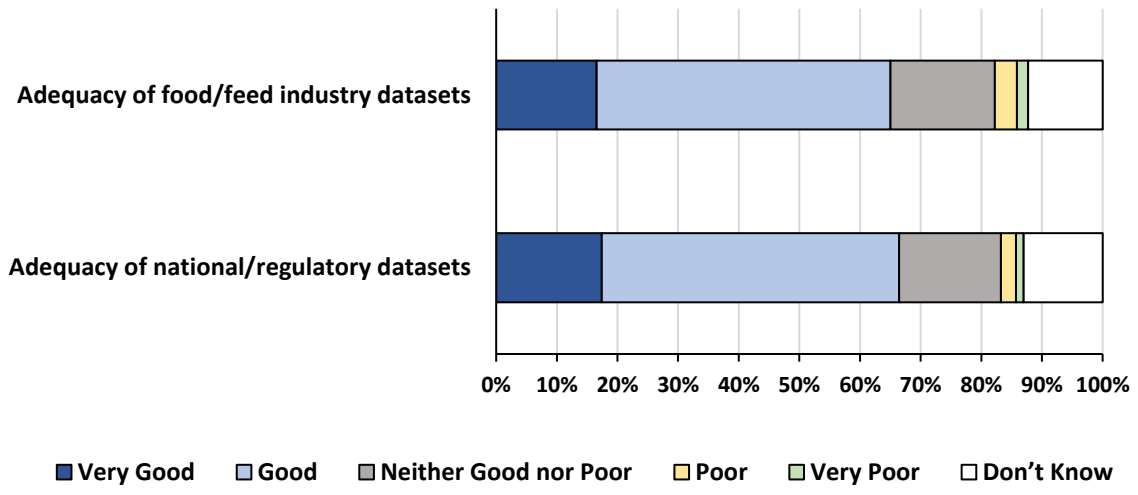
In assessing possible gaps and deficiencies in datasets, it is useful to review the new evidence from Indecon's Broad Reach Survey. In interpreting the results of the Broad Reach Survey, it is important to recognise that its findings primarily represent the views and opinions of the sector rather than detailed factual data. These views are however important in the evaluation of the sector's perspectives and priorities. The collection, analysis, and communication of information is a key aspect of the FSFA programme. As such, the Broad Reach Survey asked respondents for their assessment of the adequacy of existing information and datasets held by the Department of Agriculture, Food and

43 https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=14182
44 https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=13726
45 https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=13262
46 https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=12952

the Marine, other regulators and the wider food sector for measuring food safety and food authenticity.

The evidence indicates that most of the food sector respondents believed that the existing information and datasets were good or very good. However, of note is that only a small percentage rated them as very good, suggesting the potential for improvement. The fact that this current EU Reform project includes the preparation of a digitalisation plan for an integrated IT system for Food Safety and Food Authenticity activities will assist in achieving improvements in datasets and their accessibility.

Figure 5.4: Views on the Adequacy of Existing Information and Datasets for Measuring Food Safety and Food Authenticity

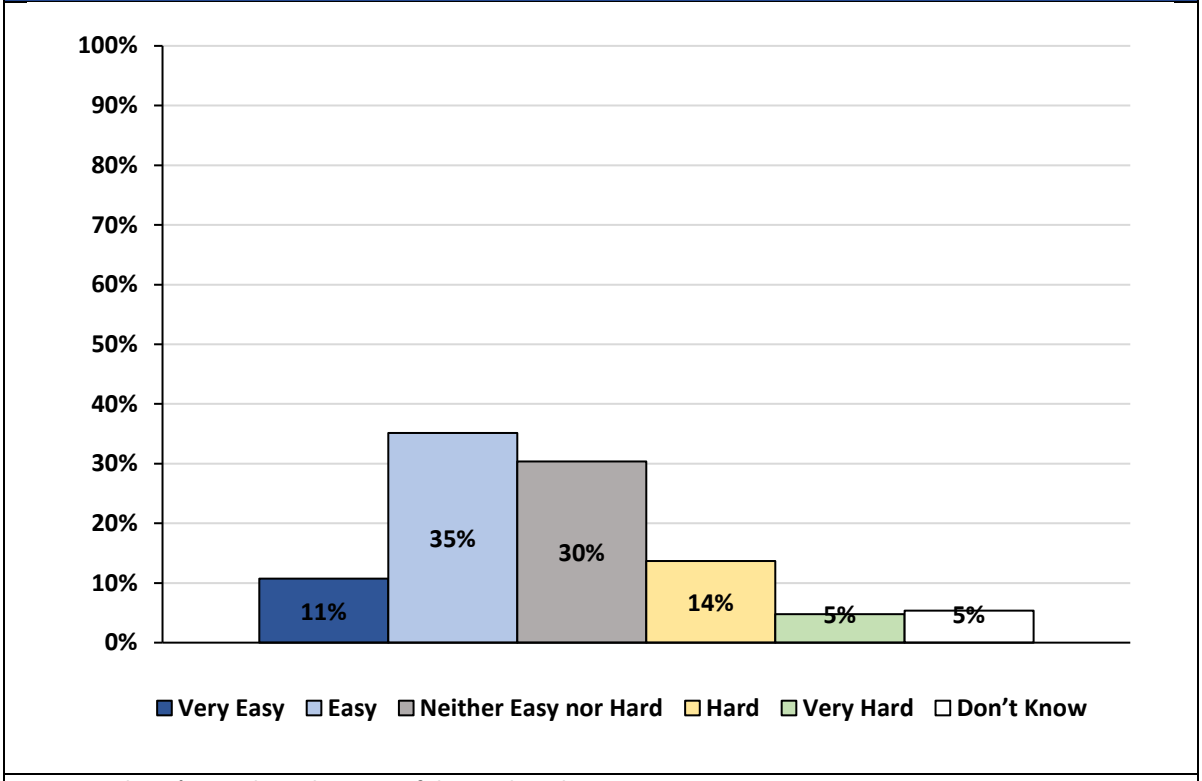


Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

Respondents were also asked to indicate which information or databases they used to verify the safety and authenticity of the Irish food chain. The results suggest that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was the most frequently cited source. One caveat here is that some respondents were more specific about their source than others, with the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) ranking separately to the European Commission as a source itself.

The Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector sought respondents' opinions on the level of accessibility to legislation, and guidance related to food safety and food authenticity. While fewer than half found it easy or very easy to access, only 19% indicated it was hard or very hard to find the relevant legislation/guidance. The evidence presented in Figure 5.5 suggests the merit of additional ongoing measures to promote updates and guidance.

Figure 5.5: Views on How Easy it is to Find Legislation/Guidance or Updates on Food Safety and Food Authenticity



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

We also provided an opportunity for industry players to offer their views on any gaps in national government or regulatory datasets that might impact the standard of food safety and authenticity in Ireland. A selection of these views is presented in the next box.

Box 5.1: Views on Gaps in National Government or Regulatory Datasets

"More detailed information on the type of monitoring work that the Department carries out. Maximising knowledge access and the sharing of data."

"Further need for guidance standards to help aid the industry to comply (should be located on the regulator's website). E.g., in our case what to do in the event of a food/feed safety issue such as salmonella in grain. Need for a list of authentication services to be listed that FBOs can use."

"Surveillance sampling and analysis testing is carried out by the Department and EHOs regularly across Ireland. These results should be readily available to industry to inform/adjust site risk management procedures/level and frequency of sampling required."

"Full list of current legislation relating to food industry would be beneficial."

"I think all regulatory and datasets are not transparent, and the Department can improve this by making them easier to access."

"No Irish information on concerns around authenticity; no insight on how it is measured by regulators."

"Feed sampling and analysis databases are not available to businesses. This data would be most useful in managing risk if made available."

"The Department undertakes a vast amount of risk-based sampling, analysis and auditing. These datasets are not readily available to industry to help inform/adjust our risk management procedures."

"Our biggest issue at this moment is the Department's website is not user friendly and very hard to navigate." [(i)]

"Language in the Irish Statute Book/governmental resources can be overly complex/litigious and difficult to interpret in terms of what it means for your specific business which requires small businesses to seek help at a cost from third-party consultants."

"It would be helpful to be able to filter for the legislation relevant to our particular business based on the search criteria we enter."

"As a business we may be required to import and export from outside the EU, and it is particularly difficult to find the exact rules/regulations to which we must comply. Therefore, it would be preferable if there was one data source from which one can download the required information."

Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector [(i)] The Consultancy Review Team notes that *Departments have moved onto the gov.ie platform. This requires that instead of navigating the Department website, the user can type the question into google and is brought directly to the relevant information. This however needs to be communicated to stakeholders.*

An important observation from our review is that data is often contained in IT systems, but is not readily accessible for analysis. Lack of a coordinated and centralised list of datasets also poses an issue that hinders divisions from accessing potentially helpful information from other teams. In this context, it is of note that The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy Data Capture, Analysis and Report Project 2020 recommended a more co-ordinated approach to data capture, storage, analysis, and dissemination to allow control divisions to inform implementation of control. We note that data analysis requires specialist skills in relation to the processing and analysing of the data concerning food safety and food authenticity. The Consultancy Review Team notes that a small Data Analytics Unit (DAU) of six staff has been established. The DAU remit is corporate but does include FSFA on request. A summary of the main gaps and deficiencies in datasets is presented in Table 5.15. It must be noted that despite the gaps, the various divisions involved in FSFA comply with the current reporting requirements set out by FSAI and DG SANTE.

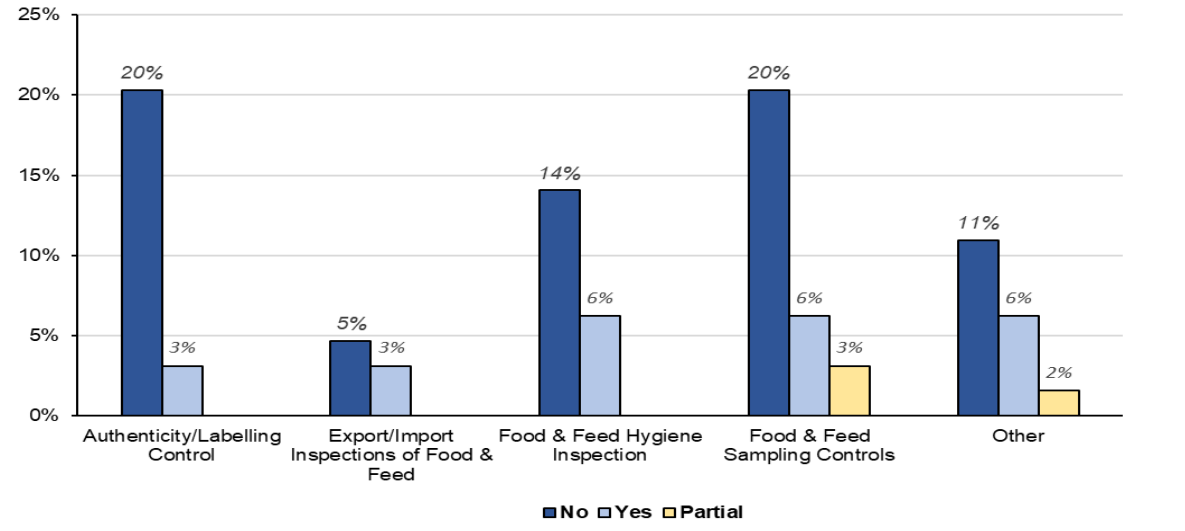
Table 5.15: Summary of Data Gaps and Deficiencies	
1.	Variation in data management systems between divisions prevents the sharing and analysis of data
2.	Lack of timely and robust datasets can make data unreliable for use in reports
3.	Poor streaming of information between central and regional offices
4.	Many data management systems are outdated (e.g., email attachments, Excel spreadsheets)
5.	Lack of a centralised data management system prohibits visibility of the lifecycle of FBOs
6.	Inspections are paper-based and must be reproduced electronically, creating duplication of effort
7.	Paper-based inspections make analyses of non-compliances difficult, and audits are relied on instead
8.	Lack of a dedicated data analyst/system manager hinders data from being used for policymaking
Source: Consultancy Review Team	

In considering relevant gaps in data, it is useful as context to note that the 2018 survey of six divisions suggested that the categories of inspection with the highest levels of inspection were Food and Feed Sampling Controls, followed by Authenticity/Labelling Controls and Food and Feed Hygiene.

The categories of inspection with the highest levels of 'no IT support in place' were Authenticity/ Labelling Control and Food and Feed Sampling Controls as shown in Figure 5.6. This suggests that in 2018 inspections were concentrated in areas where IT is most limited.[47]

[47] Note that this is based on the small sample of FSFA divisions that participated in the Data, Capture, Analysis and Reporting Phase I project.

Figure 5.6: Categories of Inspection by Level of IT Support - %



Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The Data Capture, Analysis, and Reporting Project[48] recommended a more coordinated approach to data capture, storage, analysis, and dissemination to allow control divisions to inform implementation of control programmes. Improved food safety and authenticity data capture and analysis could be used to inform evidence-based policy, strategy, and decision making.

The Policy Project evaluated the benefits of developing a mechanism for centrally based co-ordination of policy analysis to address the fact that coordination between the 22 FSFA divisions currently occurs on an ad hoc basis. In order to ensure that the appropriate mechanism was in place, it was suggested that a new unit or policy division would be of benefit. This would result in a more effective, efficient and coordinated regulatory and policy framework for the Department in the area of FSFA. One of the key gaps that the previous analysis highlights is the lack of a centralised IT system for food safety and food authenticity. A large number of databases are used across the various FSFA divisions. These databases do not easily link to other databases used across the system. These creates a number of potential issues including:

- Potentially limits the ability to identify system wide risks to the system
- Does not facilitate predictive analysis of the overall system

It must be noted that despite this gap, the various divisions involved in FSFA comply with the current reporting requirements set out by FSAI and DG SANTE. However, this quarterly and annual process could be streamlined with an improved system.

In addition to these areas the consultations which FSAI suggests a number of potential other areas for development which could strengthen food safety and risk assessment. These comprise the following:

- Absence of a national data repository for data generated through research or the food chain.

[48] FSFA Data Project Final Report 2020.

- Merits of a national whole genome sequencing database.
- Scope for improvement of the system of data collection and reporting of official controls by the Department to FSAI.

In considering improvements on datasets and their use, it is also important to consider how datasets can be used to measure effectiveness including by the adoption of behavioural science methods and also how to reduce the burden on operations.

5.5 Comparison of As-Is Regulatory System to Best Practice

In reviewing any potential gaps in existing datasets, or in wider aspects of the policy, regulatory and international context, it is informative to consider how the current regulatory system aligns with a number of key principles for best practice in the food safety and food authenticity system. These requirements have been developed by the Consultancy Review Team following a detailed review of Regulation EU 2017/625 that requires the Department, as a competent authority, to have procedures/arrangements in place to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls and other official activities. These have also taken account of international best practice. Analysis of the current gaps and areas for improvement of the current system against these best practice principles is outlined in Table 5.16. Addressing these gaps will be facilitated by the proposed Governance Plan which will be developed as Deliverable 3 as well as the work in Deliverables 4 and 5 of this project.

Table 5.16: Gap Analysis and Areas for Ongoing Monitoring (Current Regulatory Framework)	
Best Practice Principle of Regulatory System	**Potential Gaps and Areas for Ongoing Monitoring**
Legal Provision	- Improvements in the way information and data on enforcement activity are captured will enable the Department to evaluate the effectiveness of current legislative provisions and also inform the direction of new legislation and policy.
Transparency	- In order to promote compliance, FBOs must have easy access to the legislation, guidance, and trader notices for their sector. The evidence from the Broad Reach Survey suggests that regulatory information sources are good or very good, but a small percentage of the sector finds it hard to access relevant information. - The Department could consider enhanced access to information on its official control and enforcement activities, to give a better understanding of the control activities It carries out and the compliance status of the sector being controlled.
Competency	- The approach used in the Learning & Development Training for Authenticity Project would be useful for addressing training requirements in other areas. - The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy Risk Project 2020 identified training needs in the area of risk analysis and mentions strengthening scientific capacity in the Department.
Independence	- The issue regarding the Department acting as policy maker and enforcement agency as well its role in relation to promotion of trade requires careful management. The Consultancy Review Team notes that there are rules in Regulation 2017/625 which ensure independence.
Risk Analysis	- Limitations in the way data is currently capable of easy analysis was identified in the Report of Food Safety and Food Authenticity Data Capture and Analysis Project Team November 2020.
Enforcement Mechanisms	- Information recorded on official controls could include the measures/actions taken when non-compliances are detected. - The Department should, on an ongoing basis, use detailed information and updated evidence to determine the suitability of the enforcement mechanisms in place.
Risk based controls	- Procedures are in place to ensure the inspection system and sampling/surveillance plans are based on the evaluation of risk. - Work is ongoing to ensure consistency across all of the sections of the Department involved in food and feed controls.
Documented Procedures	- The Harmonisation Project team developed a template for standard operating procedures. - Work is needed on an ongoing basis to improve access to current electronic documented procedures. - In its most recent contract with FSAI (signed July 2021) the Department has agreed to work towards maintaining a library of current controlled documented procedures for food controls, on the Department's intranet service. - It is important to ensure there are documented procedures in place in all divisions regarding the supervisory checks they undertake to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of official controls. These supervisory checks should include a review of the appropriateness of documented procedures.
Laboratory Resources	- A cohesive strategy is in place for the development of the Department laboratory resources. We understand work is ongoing in the implementation of this strategy.
Coordination and Cooperation	- Co-ordination and co-operation within the Department could be enhanced to ensure that the Department has an effective, efficient and co-ordinated framework for the organisation of all FSFA activities guided by an overarching policy. Implementation of the recommendations from the Phase I projects will assist in this. - Co-ordination with other Departments and agencies is also important.
Source: Consultancy Review Team Analysis	

Legal Provision

In considering any potential gaps in the wider regulatory and policy framework it is useful to consider legislative responsibilities. Food and feed policy and legislation should be developed on the basis of written principles and procedures that enable a comprehensive and participatory process and ensure "fit-for-purpose" results.[49]

The Department's responsibility for legislation in the areas of food and feed is required to ensure the legislation developed is robust and provides sufficient enforcement powers (legal and administrative) to competent authorities. This enables authorities to have:

- Legal powers to perform official controls and other official activities and to take the necessary action provided by law; and
- Legal procedures in place in order to ensure that staff have access to the premises of, and documents kept by, operators so as to be able to accomplish their tasks properly (Article 5 Regulation (EU) 2017/625).

The Department's role in overseeing the effectiveness of the legislation involves reviewing the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms provided for under the Department's legislation, examining the types of enforcement tools used by officials; the cases in which these are being used; if they are being used in a proportionate and suitable manner and, if the enforcement mechanism is effective in the closure of non-compliances detected within the industry and in helping maintain industry compliance. The Department works in partnership with FSAI and the Department of Health developing food policy and legislation. Collaboration and co-operation between the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health are essential to ensure a harmonised approach to many areas such as designation, enforcement powers, appeal mechanisms, official control fees, etc., to promote consistency across the food safety regulatory sector at national level. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and DOH have given effect to food legislation, including Regulation 2017/625 through separate statutory instruments. We understand that this is in the main effective as the policy responsibilities are clearly differentiated but there are some issues in relation to differences in enforcement approach, i.e., powers, sanctions, and transparency in some case for similar types of activities or food businesses. The FSAI have also pointed out to the Consultancy Review Team that some major food safety issues (BSE, dioxins) had their origins in animal feed. The Department has the responsibility for official controls on the whole agri-food chain and the reform programme and the FSFA address all aspects of that chain. A number of previous reports examined aspects of food control and compliance with legislative requirements and policies. The consultancy review team have examined these reports, but we note that a number of these reports were prepared prior to Article EU 2017/625.[50] We have also reviewed the subsequent Phase I project which dealt with this issue. An extract from this Phase I project is presented in Table 5.17.

[49] FAO and WHO. 2019. Food control system assessment tool: Dimension A – Inputs and resources. Food safety and quality series No. 7/2. Rome

[50] Evaluation of the Official Food Control Inspection System in Ireland.

Table 5.17: Analysis of Phase I Project in Relation to Compliance and Legal Provision	
Report	**Key Findings/Recommendations**
Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation Project[51]	- Recommended that the Department should encourage divisions to use the 'Compliance Toolkit' as a tool when developing policies and regulation - Recommended the establishment of a new unit or division to ensure that the Department has an effective, efficient and co-ordinated framework for the organisation of all FSFA activities guided by an overarching policy - Concluded that there was a need to include all stakeholders in the design of regulations and the associated requirements for compliance; this would increase the likelihood of 'buy in' which could be achieved by encouraging stakeholder-led stewardship programmes
Source: Consultancy Team Review of Previous Reports	

Transparency

Transparency is important to build and maintain confidence in the integrity of the regulatory system. Ensuring the system is transparent in the eyes of other stakeholders is a way to promote confidence and assist in the dissemination of information, in particular the sharing of best practice with other regulatory bodies and industry stakeholders.

The Department has a responsibility to carry out its activities with a high degree of transparency, in particular by giving relevant information to the public as soon as possible. The public should have access to legislation; information on the control activities of the competent authority and their effectiveness; information on food or feed risks when they arise; and the measures which are to be taken to prevent, reduce or eliminate such risks. The Department must balance the need for transparency against the risk of undermining the control system's ability to achieve its objectives.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Annual Report is an example of information that is available to the public on the Department's food and feed control activities. The level of information provided varies between divisions, as can be seen in the information provided in Table 5.18, with the majority of divisions reporting the number of controls while the feed division reporting more in-depth meaningful information on the outcomes of official controls. The report from the Feed Division contains useful information about the level of compliance in the sector and identifies the key areas where non-compliances were detected. This information was highlighted by the press/news websites (www.agriland.ie) and made available to a wider audience. Another official agency, the HSE, provides detailed information to the public on its enforcement activities through the publication of all enforcement orders on the FSAI website. These reports relate to enforcement activities under the FSAI Act and the European Union (Official Controls in relation to Food Legislation) Regulations 2020 (S.I. No. 79 of 2020) and prosecutions under food legislation. In-depth information for these enforcement orders is provided to external stakeholders through this publication and stakeholders can download the specific enforcement reports from this site which outline the inspector's findings and the breaches of legislation that led to the enforcement action.

[51] Compliance through Cohesive Policies and Regulation commissioned by the Department, FSFA Harmonisation Project Final Report, Nov. 2020.

Table 5.18: Examples of Variation in the Details of 2020 Official Controls Reported by FSFA Divisions in the Department's Annual Report 2020	
Meat and Meat Products	2,956 controls were carried out on meat establishments during 2020 to verify that the relevant legislative requirements are being fulfilled at all stages of production, processing and distribution. Supplementary technical controls included 6,883 visits to meat FBOs.
Milk and Milk Products	In 2020, the corresponding number of controls carried out in dairy establishments (including market support) was 1,800. Supplementary technical controls included approximately 9,000 samples taken in 2020.
Meat and Milk combined	The Department also issued 57,742 certificates in support of meat trade and 29,704 certificates in support of dairy trade to internal and international markets. A total of 1,155 milk and meat notices were served on dairy and meat FBOs, notifying them of infringements under the regulations and follow-up action was taken, as necessary. A further 208 contracts were reviewed under Aid to Private Storage.
Feed	In 2020, a total of 885 inspections/audits were performed. The majority of non-compliances identified during official controls related to deficiencies in the FBOs' HACCP plans, comprising 31% of the total number of non-compliances. Other non-compliances identified related to general hygiene (32%), labelling (13%) and traceability (9%). FBOs were informed of the non-compliances identified, and these have all been followed up. 1,430 official control samples of animal feed were taken in 2020 and sent to a range of laboratories for over 10,000 analyses, including undesirable substances, processed animal protein, chemical and microbiological contaminants. Over 90% of all tests conducted on official samples related to feed safety. Where results indicated the presence of contaminants/ undesirable substances, appropriate action was taken so that affected batches were withdrawn/recalled. In addition, 1% of official samples reported out-of-tolerance for qualitative properties.
Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2020 Annual Report	

A number of previous reports have considered aspects of how the current food safety and food authenticity regulatory system performs in relation to the principle of transparency. These highlight the importance of communication which is an area which has been given prominence in the current FSFA programme.

Table 5.19: Analysis of Key Report Findings in Relation to Transparency	
Previous Report/ Surveys	**Key Findings and Surveys/Recommendations**
National Ploughing Championship 2019 Survey	- Overall, public perception of the Department is positive but there were issues relating to communication. - The low occurrence of food safety incidents was mentioned as being an indicator that the Department does a good job in food safety, but without knowing how. - Greater communication between the Department and the public is needed.
Internal Stakeholder Questionnaire 2017	- Many respondents noted the need for greater cooperation between divisions involved in FSFA activities, including the sharing of data and better coordination of control activities. - The Department was considered to have a good reputation in the FSFA area but needed to do more to communicate this with customers and the public. - A communication strategy based on transparency, encompassing information, for example on relevant research funded by the Department, and availing of social media opportunities was suggested.
FSFA Strategic Communications Project	- Public visibility of the Department's role in protecting food safety and authenticity should be heightened by highlighting the controls conducted by staff, in particular at the level of primary production. - Enhance communication, leading to greater awareness and collaboration on Food Safety and Food Authenticity within the Department, with stakeholders and with the wider public. - Build further trust in the Department as a leader in Food Safety and Food. Authenticity through better communication and more collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. - Provide an improved consistency and quality of communication concerning Food Safety and Food Authenticity.
FSFA Harmonisation Project	- Every Division maintains and publishes its own register of approved businesses; a current central register does not exist. - Recommends the allocation of a sufficient IT resource to develop a system capable of delivering an online platform for the submission and approval and/or registration of FBOs.
Source: Consultancy Team Review of Previous Reports	

Resources, Competencies and Capabilities

An assessment of the existing resources, competencies, and capabilities within the Department for the implementation of the programme is an important issue considered in this As-Is Report. There is recognition of the critical role of the Department providing a sufficient number of suitably qualified and competent staff, funding, infrastructure and other resources needed within the control system and to implement the programme. Staff needs access to continuous professional development through an annual training programme. It is a requirement of the service contract between the FSAI and the Department, that the Department shall ensure that staff conducting official controls and/or other official activities, is kept up to date in their area of competence. The service contract arrangement between the FSAI and the Department includes provisions for the Department and/or FSAI to identify a specific training requirement in relation to official food controls.

A number of previous reports considered aspects of the resources, competencies, and capabilities relevant to the implementation of the programme, extracts of which are presented in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20: Analysis of Previous Report Findings in relation to Competency

Report	Key Findings/Recommendations
Audit of the Dairy Produce Inspectorate (DPI) [52]	- Identified additional training requirements to improve staff competency - Audit team noted that DPI staff were knowledgeable about national and EU legislation requirements and also about DPI SOPs
FSFA L&D Training for Authenticity Project[53]	- Current mechanisms that look at training requirements, tend to focus on individual requirements and were slow to identify what front-line staff need to perform their duties - Recommendations to fill training gaps and the development of an initial training course were outlined while also highlighting the importance of a training evaluation plan into the future
FSFA Risk Project	- Noted insufficient resources and training are being directed towards risk analysis
Source: Consultancy Team Review of Previous Reports	

The Consultancy Review Team has made a number of observations in relation to the competencies and capabilities of the Department's FSFA staff during our engagements with the heads of division. Veterinary and agriculture inspectors all possess the relevant third-level degree for their area of work, while technical officers have a more varied background depending on when they joined the Department. While newer technical officers typically hold a Level 8 degree in Agriculture on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or equivalent, some staff may have been recruited with a Level 5 or 6 certificate on the NFQ. The laboratories specialist staff hold at least a Level 8 degree in chemistry or biology.

Staff are recruited from specialist or generalist panels assembled through the Public Appointments Service (PAS), which is Ireland's centralised recruitment system for the civil and public service and the Department has a recruitment licence from the Commission for Public Service Appointments to recruit directly through its dedicated HR Competitions and Recruitment section. A number of divisions expressed a need for candidates with sophisticated skills in data management and data analyses as these are currently lacking. This feeds into the data aspect of this report, underlining a key gap in terms of the competencies required to analyse data for the enhancement of the FSFA system. It must be noted that this is a wider issue for the public service and other Departments and agencies face similar challenges in recruiting staff with skills in data management and analysis.

The Food Safety and Authenticity strategic review identified a gap in training with respect to food fraud/authenticity, initiating a FSFA L&D Training for Authenticity project.[54] This found that the current mechanisms that look at training requirements tend to focus on the individual and are slow to identify what front-line staff need to perform their duties.[55] The project involved a systematic evaluation of the controls required under the Regulation in relation to food fraud and authenticity in order to identify the skills and training needs of staff to implement these requirements. The study

[52] Audit of official controls in Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine supervised infant formulae and follow-on formulae establishments Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – Dairy Produce Inspectorate DECEMBER 2016 TO APRIL 2017

[53] FSFA Learning and Development training for Authenticity Project Report

[54] FSFA Learning & Development training for Authenticity project report

[55] The Learning Needs Analysis now completed by Heads of Division in respect of their Business Areas is an opportunity for strategic gaps in L & D to be identified and addressed.

then identified a training course to be piloted within the Department to assist with the delivery of the skills and training needs of staff. This training will assist, enable, and equip them with the skills to identify potential/actual fraud; to improve fraud detection practices; to effectively deal with food fraud and authenticity issues; and, to ultimately protect consumers' interest and enhance confidence in the Department's controls. A paper which set out recommendations for how training needs could be met was also published. This examined course content, frequency, current availability of training and current training needs. It also made recommendations on how to fill training gaps and the development of an initial training course.

A summary of observations made in relation to core competencies and capabilities within the Department, based on our engagements with the heads of division, and our review of existing documentation is presented in the next table. This should be reviewed combined with issues identified in the Phase I projects.

Table 5.21: Resources, Competencies and Capabilities within FSFA Divisions

Skills Profile	Recruitment Experience	Mobility	Gaps
• Mix of generalists and specialists • Specialists hold a minimum Level 8 degree in their area of expertise • Admin staff across the majority of grades typically join with varying entry requirements through open recruitment[1] • New recruits require in-house training and induction** to develop the required skills/knowledge gaps	• Difficulties retaining staff due to promotions • Vacancies often take a long time to fill (12+ months) • Loss of staff due to promotions can leave divisions 'unexperienced' • Unable to recruit to specific positions within the divisions • Location and working hours are key considerations for candidates • Private sector may be more attractive for some specialised skill areas	• Mobility may not make sense for very specialist divisions • Potential for more mobility in control divisions operating under the same legislation • Flexibility in terms of staff sharing would be useful during crises • Plenty of transferrable skills between implementation divisions • Potential for one inspector to take multiple samples from the same site on behalf of different divisions	• Lack of harmonisation in risk training • Limited skills in data management and analysis • Need for guidelines and training to ensure consistency in enforcement • Constraints on use of temporary staff to address temporary shortages* • Divisions would benefit from ongoing training in administrative skills, especially for new staff in responding to FOIs, complaints, etc. • Merit of increased strategic planning for future challenges

** We note that there are Industrial relations and Public Service constraints in relation to the use of temporary staff*
***A new induction programme is under development*
Source: Consultancy Review Team

Independence

The importance of the Department's officials being free from any commercial, financial, hierarchical, political or other pressures that might affect their judgement or the outcome of their official controls or other official activities, is recognised. It must be noted that the Department's staff operate under the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001 in relation to the declaration of interests by Designated Positions and the Civil Service Code of Standards and Practice (Section 14) which sets out requirements in relation to declaring any conflicts of interest. The Consultancy Review Team notes that there are rules in Regulation 2017/625 which ensure independence.

Approach to Risk

Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 establishes the principle of risk analysis and its three inter-related components; risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. The three interconnected components of risk analysis — risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication — provide a systematic methodology for the determination of effective, proportionate and targeted measures or other actions to protect health, through the reduction, elimination or avoidance of a risk to health.

The general rules on official controls set out in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625[56] set out the requirement for competent authorities to perform official controls on all operators regularly, on a risk basis and with appropriate frequency. The Department in its role as Competent Authority for food and Central Competent authority for feed must ensure official controls are conducted in accordance with these legal requirements.

Guidance from the European Commission on the new rules in Regulation (EU) 2017/625 specifies:[57]

- Operators at all stages of production, processing and distribution that handle animals, plants, food, feed, goods, substances, materials or equipment are governed by the new rules. Controls will be performed without prior notice unless this is necessary.
- With this risk-based approach, the frequency of controls will be linked to risks that a product or process presents with respect to fraud, health, safety, animal welfare or in certain cases the environment. Other factors included in the assessment of the risk are, for example, the operator's past record of compliance or the likelihood that consumers are misled about the properties, quality, composition or country of provenance of the food.
- Such targeted controls will free up resources to focus on areas where enforcement needs to be prioritised. The new rules also require increased transparency and greater accountability from Member State authorities, who are also obliged to publish annual reports. Transparent rules for the calculation of fees for official controls will ensure that Member States can safeguard proper financing of their services, and operators can avoid being overcharged.

The Department ensures these requirements are being met by employing robust inspection system and sampling/surveillance plans based on evaluation of risk – details of which are included in the National Control Plan. Inspections are carried out in accordance with an annual inspection programme or in line with the frequencies established in documented procedures. The criteria for determining the risk of each establishment and subsequent frequency of inspection include:

1. The outcome of previous inspections
2. Compliance history
3. Nature of risk to public health in terms of type of product produced
4. Effective food safety management systems
5. Self-monitoring programmes operated by the food business operator
6. Size and throughput

The following is a summary of an extract from the FSFA Phase I project in relation to risk.[58]

[56] Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

[57] EC Fact Sheet - Enforcement of rules along the agri-food chain in the EU Mar 2017.

[58] We also reviewed a number of reports compiled prior to the introduction of EU Regulation 2017/625. These included the Report of the Scientific Committee on the Review of the Official Controls.

Table 5.22: Analysis of FSFA Phase I project in relation to Risk	
Report	**Key Findings/Recommendations**
FSFA Risk Project[59]	- The Food Safety and Authenticity strategy pointed to a dispersed and inconsistent system of risk analysis within the Department, resulting in certain vulnerabilities. The review of current risk practices in the Department's Divisions found that while there are many examples of good practices in the area, there are also some significant weaknesses in risk analysis processes. The Department lacks an overarching risk management policy and organisational structure, and there is in general insufficient separation of risk assessment and risk management processes across the organisation. Additionally, at present the Department does not have a documented, organisation-wide risk communication policy and structure which would solicit risk information from stakeholders and inspectors.
Source: Consultancy Review of Previous Reports	

It also be noted that risk is also examined as part of various regular EU audits that have taken place. As shown in Table 5.13, these audits have indicated that an effective risk-based system of controls is applied in relation to food safety and food authenticity in Ireland.

In addition to the wider issues identified above the FSAI have identified other opportunities to improve the 'As-Is' as follows:

- The development of more national rules for 'small quantities' of foods, as required by EU food hygiene legislation, which could facilitate the operations of small food producers. There may also be some scope for identifying permitted derogations allowing flexibility for traditional methods of food production.
- Currently, the Department is the policy lead for food contact materials which has been given effect through Department SIs. However, due to the complexity of this issue, there may be merit in considering the best way to achieve the objectives of this policy.
- Improving the consistency of legislation between Government Departments where feasible. For example, the regulation of primary producers of non-animal origin foods who engage in processing of those foods (e.g., apple producers who produce apple juice drinks) is provided for in such a way (SIs Nos 22 of 2020 and 369 of 2006) that results in the supervision of these businesses by both the Department and the HSE being legally required.

[59] The Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy Risk Project, FSFA Risk Project Final Recommendations.

6 Programme Outputs, Benefits and Risks

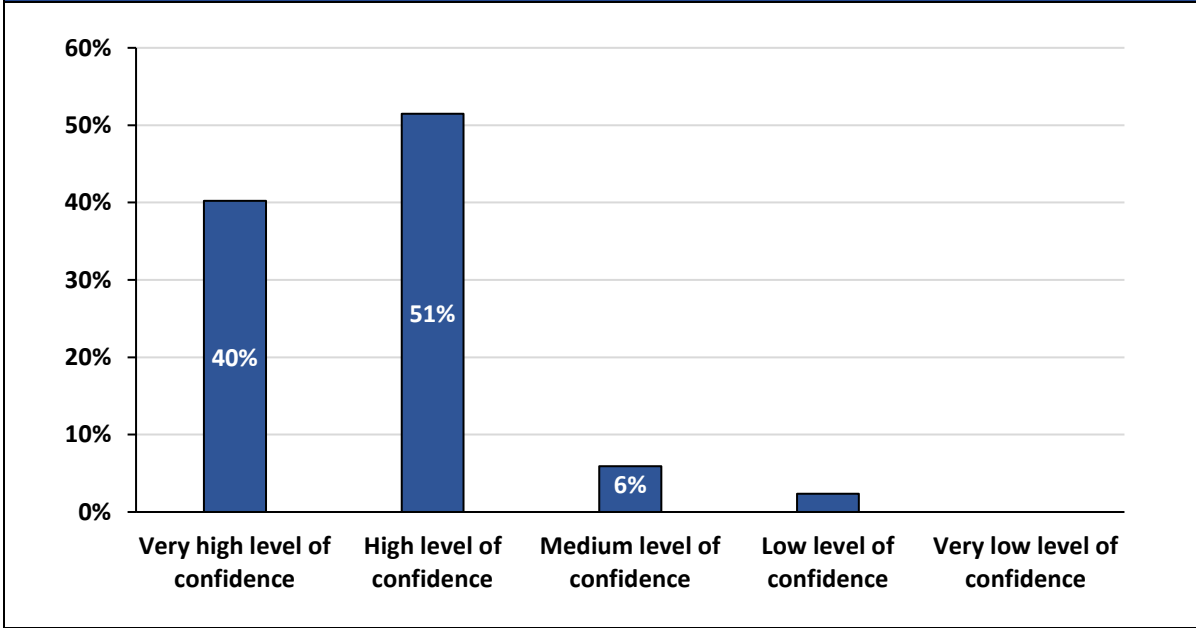
6.1 Introduction

Drawing on the findings of the Broad Reach Survey of the food production sector, this section considers the expected outputs, benefits and risks due to the implementation of the FSFA programme. In interpreting the results of the Broad Reach Survey, it is important to recognise that its findings primarily represent the views and opinions of the sector rather than detailed factual data. These views are however important in the evaluation of the sector's perspectives and priorities. We begin by looking at the level of confidence stakeholders have in the food safety regime in Ireland, helping to set a baseline against which responses dealing with the FSFA programme can be considered.

6.2 Views on Food Safety Policy, Regulatory and Institutional Context

This section considers Broad Reach Survey respondents' views on how agri-food is regulated at the national level. Figure 6.1 illustrates the level of confidence respondents have in the day-to-day regulation of food safety in Ireland, with the vast majority having a high or very high degree of trust in the system. There is, however, a need to build on the existing regulatory and policy measures. Given the importance of this area, it is essential to avoid complacency and for this reason, the Department sought support from the European Commission DG Reform for this current project.

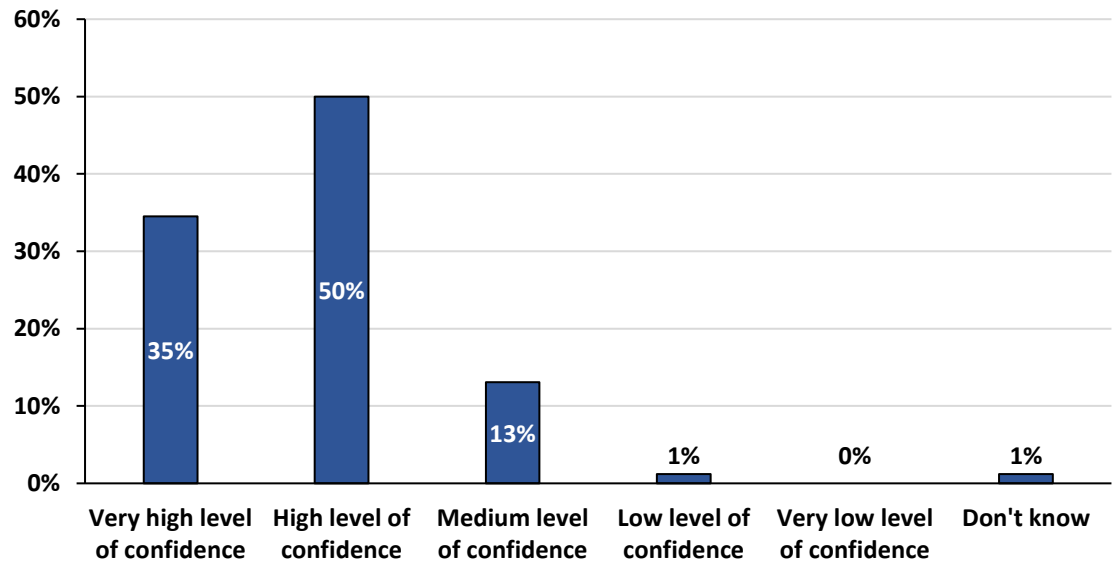
Figure 6.1: Level of Confidence in How Ireland Regulates Food Safety on a Day-to-Day Basis



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

Respondents to the Broad Reach Survey considered their level of confidence in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's abilities to effectively respond to a food safety crisis. The results are presented in Figure 6.2. While responses to a crisis are always challenging, most of the industry respondents had a high level of confidence in Ireland's ability to respond.

Figure 6.2: Level of Confidence in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Abilities to Effectively Respond to a Food Safety Crisis

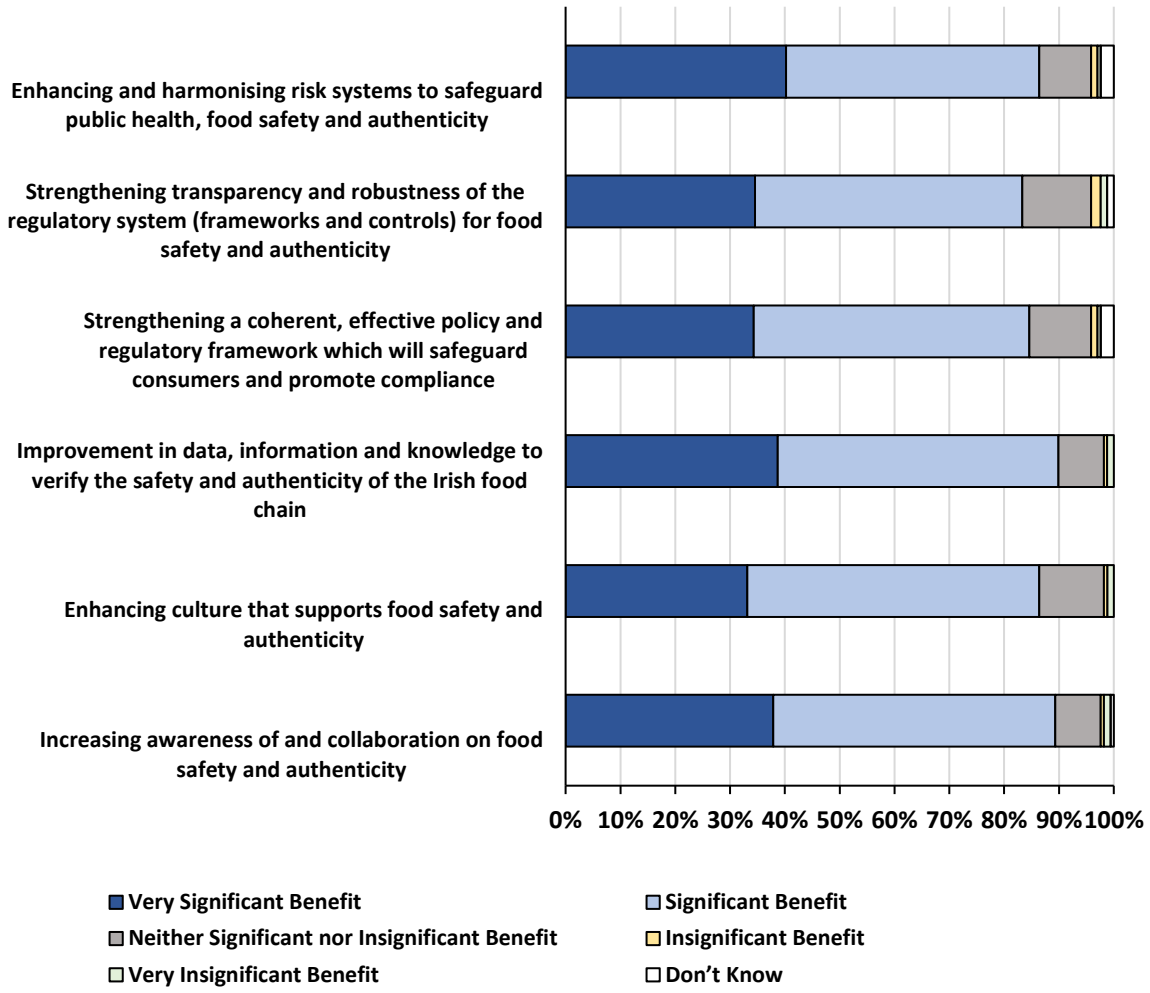


Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

6.3 Views on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme

The Broad Reach Survey sought respondents' views on the FSFA programme and the likely extent of its effects on the agri-food sector, customers, and consumers. Figure 6.3 presents the responses for a range of expected benefits due to the programme. Identification of whether the FSFA programme will benefit the sector and customers and consumers is an important issue for the future To-Be Report. Encouragingly the evidence suggests that the programme, when implemented, will have significant potential benefits in a range of areas.

Figure 6.3: Views on the Extent to Which the FSFA Programme will Benefit the Agri-Food Sector, Customers and Consumers

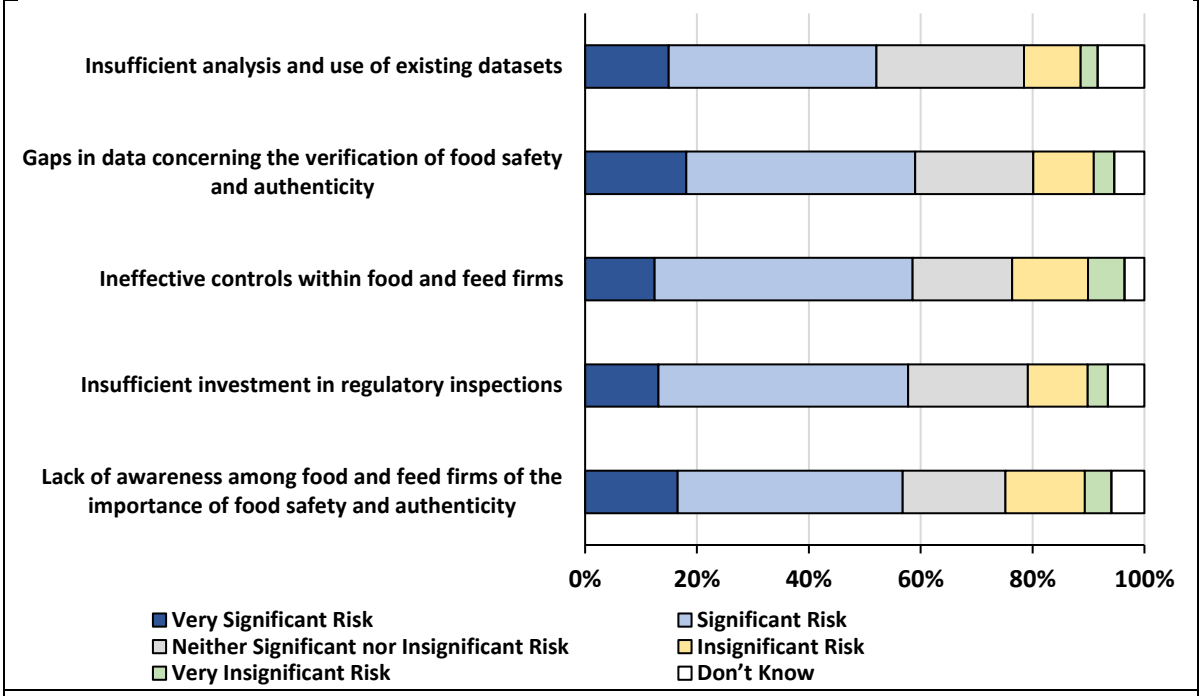


Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

6.4 Risks to Implementation

Despite the positive views on the programme, it is important to consider potential risks. The Broad Reach Survey sought the assessment of the food sector on potential risks to the implementation of the programme, with the responses shown in Figure 6.4. A number of these risks were identified in the FSFA programme and in the Department's strategy. Potential risks include: insufficient analysis and use of existing data; some gaps in data availability; ineffective controls; insufficient investment in regulatory inspections; and, a lack of awareness in the sector of the importance of food safety and authenticity. The Broad Reach Survey highlighted the importance of these issues in relation to the implementation of the FSFA programme.

Figure 6.4: Views on the Significance of Various Potential Risks to the Implementation of the Programme



Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

In addition, respondents had an opportunity to express their views on any other issues or risks to the implementation of the programme, with a selection of responses presented in the box below. One notable observation is that a number of respondents were concerned about the lack of clarity on the meaning of 'authenticity' and how this might undermine the implementation of the programme.

Box 6.1: Views on Any Other Issues or Risks to the Implementation of the Programme:
"Ensuring adequate resourcing of official controls is important. Some tightness in availability of personnel has been evident in recent times." "The risk is lack of communication on the implementation of the Department's food authenticity programme. All sectors including GAFTA (Grain and Feed Trade Association) contracts, raw material suppliers, feed producers and the food industry need to be aligned in the approach for a successful implementation." "I feel that the Department does a very good job on management of food safety as far as the feed industry is concerned. Authenticity is a different issue and more needs to be done here." "A lack of clarity leading to confusion within industry on the concepts of safety versus authenticity and how they are inter-related. Very little evidence of fraud within the feed industry, leading to a lack of buy in to the need for the strategy." "Conflation of the two issues - food/feed safety should be first and foremost. Possibly a risk introducing the authenticity component which may deflect attention away from important work on feed safety. Feed fraud is not a major issue, whereas there are significant gains to be made in terms of understanding of risk in feed supply chains and the regulation and mitigation of the same." "The program will only yield benefit if implemented properly at the grass root level of the food chain, especially at the farm level." "There can be an audit fatigue problem underlying the industry. For large companies with significant resources to handle multiple audits, this is no great issue. However, for smaller businesses who have achieved high levels of external accreditation this should be acknowledged and reflected in audits from regulatory bodies." "Poor (if any) IT Infrastructure for all parties involved in the sector to share relevant data."
Source: Indecon's Broad Reach Survey of the Food Production Sector

The analysis of programme outputs, benefits and risks identified in this chapter combined with the evidence in earlier chapters of this report will contribute to the successful completion of the remaining Deliverables of this important project supported by DG Reform. These are as follows:

- Deliverable 3: Programme Governance Plan
- Deliverable 4: Change Management Plan
- Deliverable 5: To-Be Report
- Deliverable 6: Digitalisation Plan

Annex 1 Broad Reach Survey

CONFIDENTIAL BROAD REACH SURVEY ON FOOD SAFETY & FOOD AUTHENTICITY IN IRELAND

About this survey

This study is part of a comprehensive analysis of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's (DAFM) role in the regulation of food and feedstuffs in Ireland. It will inform policymakers on the future development of the Irish agri-food sector. It will also assist in the delivery of a more harmonised system for overseeing food safety and food authenticity (FSFA), especially in the context of European Regulation (EU) 2017/625 which sets out how food and feed legislation should be enforced. This survey provides you with a unique individual opportunity to contribute to DAFM's vision in this area. Your co-operation in completing this short survey is greatly appreciated. This survey is being undertaken independently by Indecon Research Economists on behalf of the European Commission (DG Reform) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Survey is voluntary and strictly confidential

This survey is voluntary and strictly confidential. All responses will be aggregated by Indecon and individual responses will not be shared with the Department or any other parties and will not be used for any other purposes. Personal data will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Legislation (EU 2016/679) and the Irish Data Protection Act 2018.

About You

1. Name or name of organisation (Optional): _____

2. Please indicate the nature of your business/organisation (if you operate in more than one area, please select your main activity only):

Food Business ❑ Feed Business ❑ Farmer, please specify: _____

State Agency ❑ Other, please specify: _____

3. Please indicate the approximate current number of full-time equivalent employees in your organisation: _____

4. If you are a commercial organisation, please indicate what percentage of your output is sold on the following markets:

Ireland: % _____ Other EU: %_____ UK: % _____ Rest of the World: % _____

Views on Food Safety Policy, Regulatory and Institutional Context

DAFM is one of a number of organisations in Ireland involved in food safety and food authenticity controls. It is important therefore to get your views on how agri-food is managed at a national level.

5. How confident are you in how Ireland regulates food safety on a day-to-day basis?

Very high level of confidence	High level of confidence	Medium level of confidence	Low level of confidence	Very low level of confidence	Don't know
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

6. If you have a low level of confidence or very low level of confidence in how Ireland regulates food safety on a day-to-day basis, please explain why:

_____

_____

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

European Commission

7. How confident are you in DAFM's abilities to effectively respond to a food safety crisis?

Very high level of confidence	High level of confidence	Medium level of confidence	Low level of confidence	Very low level of confidence	Don't know
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Views on DAFM's Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has a Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme, which it is currently implementing. The Programme aims to build on Ireland's already high standards in this area through improved effectiveness, efficiency, harmonisation and co-ordination. Food authenticity here refers to "the quality of a food to be genuine and undisputed in its nature, origin, identity, and claims, and to meet expected properties"[1].

In this section, we ask for your views on the programme which can be accessed at the following link: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4e0ea-food-safety-public-health-consumer-issues/#food-safety-and-food-authenticity-programme

8. Overall, how do you think having a Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme will benefit the agri-food industry, consumers and customers:

	Very Significant Benefit	Significant Benefit	Neither Significant nor Insignificant Benefit	Insignificant Benefit	Very Insignificant Benefit	Don't Know
Increasing awareness of and collaboration on food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Enhancing culture that supports food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Improvement in data, information and knowledge to verify the safety and authenticity of the Irish food chain	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Strengthening a coherent, effective policy and regulatory framework which will safeguard consumers and promote compliance	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Strengthening transparency and robustness of the regulatory system (frameworks and controls) for food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Enhancing and harmonising risk systems to safeguard public health, food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

9. Please indicate your views on the significance or otherwise of the following potential risks to the implementation of the DAFM Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme:

	Very Significant Risk	Significant Risk	Neither Significant nor Insignificant Risk	Insignificant Risk	Very Insignificant Risk	Don't Know
Lack of awareness among food and feed firms of the importance of food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Insufficient investment in regulatory inspections	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Ineffective controls within food and feed firms	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Gaps in data concerning the verification of food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Insufficient analysis and use of existing datasets	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

[1] Codex Alimentarius (2018). – Discussion paper on food integrity and food authenticity - Joint FAO/WHO food standards programme. Codex committee on food import and export inspection and certification systems. TwentyFourth Session. Brisbane, Australia, 22 - 26October 2018. CX/FICS 18/24/7.

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10. Please outline your views on any other issues or risks to the implementation of the DAFM Food Safety and Food Authenticity Programme:

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Information and Data

Being able to easily access reliable information is important for consumers, food businesses and regulators. The collection, analysis and communication of information is one of the key areas of DAFM's FSFA Programme.

11. Please outline any sources of information or databases which you or your organisation use to verify the safety and authenticity of the Irish food chain:

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12. How would you describe the adequacy of information and datasets held by DAFM and other regulators or the food/feed industry in Ireland for measuring food safety and food authenticity?

	Very Good	Good	Neither Good nor Poor	Poor	Very Poor	Don't know
Adequacy of national/regulatory datasets	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Adequacy of food/feed industry datasets	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

13. How easy is it for you to find legislation/guidance or updates on food safety and food authenticity?

Very Easy	Easy	Neither Easy nor Hard	Hard	Very Hard	Don't know
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

14. Please outline any views you may have on gaps in national government or regulatory datasets in order to maintain the existing high standard of food safety and authenticity in Ireland:

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Measuring Success: Socio-Economic and Environmental Key Performance Indicators

Irish food has a very good reputation for safety and authenticity. However, it is important to be able to measure this both in terms of official controls (government and regulatory measures) and also the broader agri-food sector.

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15. How important do you think the following key performance indicators **concerning government and regulatory measures** are to developing a monitoring system for a food safety and authenticity programme:

Government/Regulatory Measures	Very important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant	Don't know
Measures to monitor the implementation of the Food Safety and Authenticity Programme including robust framework for food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Availability and use of databases to verify the safety and integrity of the food chain	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Implementation of risk management systems to safeguard public health, food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Effectiveness and speed of regulatory control responses to food/feed safety incidents	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Levels of investment in evidence-based policy to support safe and authentic food	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control) inspections	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of other food/feed safety controls inspections carried out	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of food/feed safety incidents reported to the regulatory authorities	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of cases of non-compliance detected from inspections	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of specific control campaigns including inspections at operators	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of food fraud aspects covered in review of controls	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of recommendations from external audits of Ireland's food safety system	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Change in disease indicators	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

16. How important do you think the following other potential key performance indicators **concerning public, food or feed sector measures** are to developing a monitoring system for a food safety and authenticity programme:

Food or Feed Sector Measures	Very important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant	Don't know
Level of awareness within the food production/feed sectors and regulatory organisations in Ireland of importance of food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Businesses own food/feed safety controls	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Level of trust in effectiveness of measures to safeguarding food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of export markets which have approved Irish food products	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Agriculture Sector Measures			❑			
Awareness of agriculture and seafood sector of importance of food safety/feed authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of farmers engaged in climate and environmental action	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Number of farmers farming organically	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
External Reputation of Irish Food Safety and Food Authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Assessment of trade buyers in Irish and export markets of Irish food/feed safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Public Measures			❑			
Level of public awareness of importance of food safety and food authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

17. Please indicate any other performance indicators which you believe are important to ensuring a successful food safety and food authenticity framework for Ireland:

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FUTURE VISION FOR FOOD SAFETY AND AUTHENTICITY IN IRELAND

It is very important for all aspects of the agri-food chain, from producer to consumer, that Ireland continually strives to improve its food safety and food authenticity controls. An understanding of the many factors which contribute to this is important in order to focus on priority areas.

18. In considering the future vision for Irish agri-food, what level of importance should be given to the following factors in order to reduce risk and enhance compliance in relation to food safety and authenticity?

	Very important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant	Don't know
Engagement with industry	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Food safety culture	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Greater consumer awareness	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
More guidance on food and feed safety for feed business operators	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Unannounced inspections	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Increased enforcement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Increased penalties	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Verification tools	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Microbiological Sampling	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Risk-based sampling	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Traceability	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Collaboration and coordination with regulators in Ireland and outside Ireland	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Integrity of your own Food Safety Management systems	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Improvement in data and evidence of food safety and authenticity	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Other - please state: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

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19. In your opinion, how important for the future of Irish agri-food are the following factors to ensure compliance with food safety and authenticity requirements?

	Very important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant	Don't know
Acceptance of the rules	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Awareness of the rules	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Closure orders	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Company having adequate resources to comply	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Fear of reputational damage	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Financial penalties	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Harmonised approach to official controls	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Harmonised approach to enforcement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
League tables	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
License withdrawal	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Market access	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Peer influence	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Publish best/worst performers	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Most compliant receive fewer risk-based inspections	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Reputational enhancement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Signage in premises	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Simplicity of policy	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Sufficient support structures	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Robust supermarket requirements	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Food safety culture	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Hazard Analysis and Critical Control (HACCP)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Regular training in food safety	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Regular audits in food safety	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

20. Please indicate any views you may have for the 'future' vision for the Irish agri-food sector in the medium and longer term related to food safety:

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21. Please indicate any views you may have for the 'future' vision for the Irish agri-food sector in the medium and longer term related to food authenticity:

Other Comments:

Please outline any other views you may have concerning enhancements of food and feed safety and food authenticity in Ireland:

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this confidential information request. If you have any queries re this, please contact Dr. Greg Swinand, Partner, Indecon Research Economists (email: gswinand@indecon.ie). Please note all information will be treated as strictly confidential and will be aggregated with other responses. All information provided will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality by Indecon Research Economists in accordance with Irish and European Data Protection legislation.

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