



# Risk Insights

# Food Newsletter

Eurofins Food Testing UK Ltd

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## 2025

A new year providing updates on food integrity and safety risks

Bisphenol A (BPA)

WHO and FAO report ranking foodborne viruses

The European Union One Health 2023 Zoonoses report

FSA publish research into eggs

Food fraud

Welcome to the January 2025 newsletter from the Eurofins Compliance and Risk Management Team which includes health reports and the latest food risks from around the world.


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

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## Bisphenol A (BPA)

On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024, the European Commission (EC) officially adopted a ban on Bisphenol A (BPA) in all food contact materials due to its potential health risks. Previously, BPA was already prohibited for use in infant bottles and similar products in the European Union (EU). The ban, which also includes other harmful bisphenols will take effect after an 18-month phase-out period after which time BPA will not be permitted in any products which come into contact with food or drink, including; metal cans, reusable drink bottles, water distribution coolers, kitchenware and food processing equipment. There are expected to be a few exceptions to the 18-month transition period in cases where no BPA alternatives exist to allow industry more time to adapt.

This decision follows a reassessment (April 2023) of BPA's health risks, which highlighted its harmful effects on the immune system and established a tolerable daily intake (TDI) for BPA which is 20,000 times lower than was previously determined. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is also investigating methods for assessing the risk of BPA alternatives.

 The ban on BPA is expected to result in a rise in the use of alternative chemicals and therefore the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) is investigating methods for assessing the risks of potential BPA alternatives.


## WHO and FAO report ranking foodborne viruses of highest public health concern

A joint Expert Committee from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (of the United Nations; FAO) reviewed the viruses known to be associated with human foodborne illness from a global perspective and ranked the frequency of illness, clinical severity of disease and food-virus commodity pairs in the context of foodborne illness.

The causes of viral foodborne disease in humans were ranked in three groups:

1. Norovirus
2. Hepatitis A virus and hepatitis E virus ranked in order
3. Rotavirus, sapovirus, enterovirus, astrovirus and enteric adenovirus ranked in order.

Norovirus was ranked as the leading cause of viral foodborne illness. Hepatitis A virus and hepatitis E virus were ranked equally but higher compared to norovirus in terms of clinical severity.

 The report stated that each year, norovirus is estimated to cause 125 million cases of foodborne illness and 35,000 deaths globally. Norovirus is highly infectious, and outbreaks have been linked to foods with low levels of contamination.

A lack of surveillance data, the potential for asymptomatic shedding of viruses and under reporting of foodborne virus cases pose a major challenge to prevention and control strategies.

The Expert Committee ranked the food virus commodity pairs as seen in this table:

Norovirus	Hepatitis A virus	Hepatitis E virus
1. Prepared foods	1. Shellfish*	1. Pork
2. Frozen berries*	1. Frozen berries*	2. Wild game
2. Shellfish*	1. Prepared foods*	

\* Substantial regional differences were noted





# The European Union One Health 2023 Zoonoses report

Published 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Zoonoses refer to infectious diseases that can spread between animals and humans due to bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites (zoonotic microorganisms). These microorganisms can infect people through contaminated food and water, contact with infected animals, vectors (e.g., mosquitos, ticks) or a contaminated environment.

The EFSA, in collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is required (by [Directive 2003/99/EC](#)) to examine zoonotic disease data from EU Member States and compile an annual report. The 2023 report found that the five most reported zoonoses in humans in 2023 were as shown in the table below:

Ranking	Zoonosis	Reported cases	Reported cases per 100 000 people	Increase in notification rate compared to 2022
1	Campylobacteriosis	148 181	45.7	4.3%
2	Salmonellosis	77 486	18	16.9%
3	Shiga toxin-producing <i>Escherichia coli</i> (STEC) infections	10 217	3.1	30%
4	Yersinosis, caused by <i>Y. enterocolitica</i> or <i>Y. pseudotuberculosis</i>	8 738	2.4	13.5%
5	Listeriosis, caused by <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	2 952	0.66	5.8%



**Note:** All five of the most reported zoonoses in humans were foodborne diseases. The number of foodborne outbreaks reported in 2023 was 5,691 (a decrease of 1.2% compared to 2022), while the number of reported human cases increased by 7.2% to 52,127. Hospitalisations (2,894) and deaths (65) increased by 4% and 1.6% respectively. The number of deaths from foodborne outbreaks was the highest of the last 10 years. *Salmonella spp.*, *Bacillus cereus* toxins and norovirus were the most common causes of foodborne outbreaks in 2023.

In 2023, the highest rate and confirmed cases of *Listeria monocytogenes* since 2007 was reported. The number of listeriosis infections has increased significantly between 2019 and 2023. The highest proportion of ready-to-eat food testing positive for *L. monocytogenes* was reported for 'fermented sausages'.



## Food Standards Agency publish research into the risk profile of imported eggs and egg products

Full report [here](#). This Food Standards Agency (FSA) report' focused on the primary hazards associated with shell eggs and egg products imported into the United Kingdom from domestic poultry species. It included liquid, dry, cooked and preserved egg products but excluded composite foods containing eggs or egg products.

22 key hazards were shortlisted (from over 100 hazards) for characterisation including microbiological and chemical hazards. The selected microbiological hazards included *Campylobacter spp.*, *Listeria monocytogenes* and non-typhoidal *Salmonella* (*Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium), with *Salmonella* Enteritidis being the most frequently reported hazard.

Chemical hazards characterised included agricultural contaminants (aflatoxins, ochratoxin A, pyrrolizidine alkaloids), biocides (fipronil, chlorate), environmental contaminants (persistent

organic pollutants, melamine, metals), various pesticides, veterinary medicinal products and feed additives.

For microbiological hazards the risk factors included hygiene and biosecurity failures, flock size and age, and environmental conditions. Mitigation measures included eradication and vaccination programmes.

➔ For the chemical hazards, environmental exposure and misuse of chemical substances were cited as risk factors with mitigation measures being environmental controls and monitoring programmes.

It was concluded that regulatory measures in Great Britain and Northern Ireland are in place to control both microbiological and chemical hazards in eggs. The report supports the Department of Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the FSA in mapping the risk profile of imported eggs and egg products, and guiding market access and audit activities.

## Food fraud

### Food supplements

⚠️ **SINGAPORE** – The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) have seized three types of slimming products which were being sold online and found to contain banned substances including sibutramine and phenolphthalein. Consumers are being warned to exercise caution and be mindful of the risks associated with consuming food bought on-line through e-commerce platforms.

### Olive oil

➔ **TURKEY** – the Ministry of Agriculture has found that the 21 brands of olive oil belonging to the company Onay Ticaret were found to contain seed oil. Sabri Akin, the owner of Onay Ticaret, mixed seed oil into the olive oil. There are 43 brands of olive oil which belong to Sabri Akin.

## Food fraud

### Cheese

**!** **UK** – Cheese products which were manufactured by, or contain ingredients that originated from Wicklow Farmhouse Cheese in the Republic of Ireland and sold by Dunnes Stores in Northern Ireland have been recalled due to the possible presence of *Listeria monocytogenes*.

### Meat

**UK** – more than 6 tonnes of illegal meat was seized by Dover Port Health Authority (DPHA) between 6-7th December 2024. The illegal meat included pork from areas in Romania that have been affected by African swine fever (ASF). The National Pig Association (NPA) is urging the UK Government to increase funding for checks for illegal meat imports amidst high rates of criminal activity and funding deficits reported by Dover District Council. The NPA fears that the 147 tonnes of illegal meat seized by DPHA over the last 12 months is just ‘the tip of the iceberg’ with only 20% operational coverage by the DPHA due to funding shortages. With increasing pressures on port authorities, lack of funding and staffing there is potential for these vulnerabilities to be exploited by criminal importers.

**USA** – Over 4.5 million kilograms of ready-to-eat meat and poultry products have been recalled across the United States over fears of *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination.

### Tea

**!** **INDIA** – During an inspection of a manufacturing unit, food safety officials have confiscated 300kg of ground tea leaves adulterated with coconut shell powder, toxic chemicals and artificial colours and flavourings. The inspection was carried out as the result of a tip-off and uncovered a large-scale tea adulteration operation in Hyderabad, India. The food safety officials discovered that low-quality tea powder purchased, adulterated and then sold for over twice its original value.

Routine testing by the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) found the finished products, produced by BrucePac, tested positive for *Listeria monocytogenes* resulting in the recall which included ready-to-eat products which had been distributed to schools.


This recall comes after a *Listeria monocytogenes* outbreak which began in May 2024 involving Boar’s Head deli meat in Virginia which resulted in 10 deaths. An investigation into the manufacturing factory uncovered of widespread document fraud including the falsification of certificates of inspection and production records. The factory was shut down in September 2024, but it has brought to light serious concerns regarding the integrity of the food industry in the United States and the potential risks to public health.



## Food Fraud

### Cocoa beans

**GHANA** - The Ghana Cocoa Board's anti-cocoa smuggling task force apprehended a truck driver for attempting to smuggle cocoa beans across the border into Togo. Acting on a tip-off, the task force discovered 100 sacks of cocoa beans hidden under wood chips in the truck. This operation is part of efforts to combat the growing cocoa smuggling issue in Ghana which is exacerbated by factors including climate change, crop diseases and illegal mining. The task force has intercepted around 250 tonnes of cocoa this season, compared to 17 tonnes last season.

 **IVORY COAST** – Coffee and Cocoa Council (CCC) of Ivory Coast has seized 33 trucks carrying approximately 1100 tonnes of smuggled cocoa beans across the border with Guinea. Poor harvests in Ghana and Ivory Coast have seen smuggling in the region increase. The reduced production has pushed markets into a four-year supply deficit which in turn has driven up global cocoa and chocolate prices.


### Wine

**FRANCE** – A Europol operation involving co-ordinated raids by French, Italian and Swiss investigators have resulted in the crackdown of a criminal gang selling cheap bottles of wine with counterfeit French Protected Designation of Origin labels for up to 15,000 euros. The leader of the fraudulent operation is believed to be a Russian national with previous convictions dating back 10 years.

### Non-alcoholic beverages

**USA** – Coca-Cola has recalled thousands of cases of its Minute Maid 'Zero Sugar' Lemonade after discovering that some contained the regular formula of the lemonade (which contained 40g sugar per 12-ounce can) rather than the sugar-free version as labelled.

### Sprouted seeds

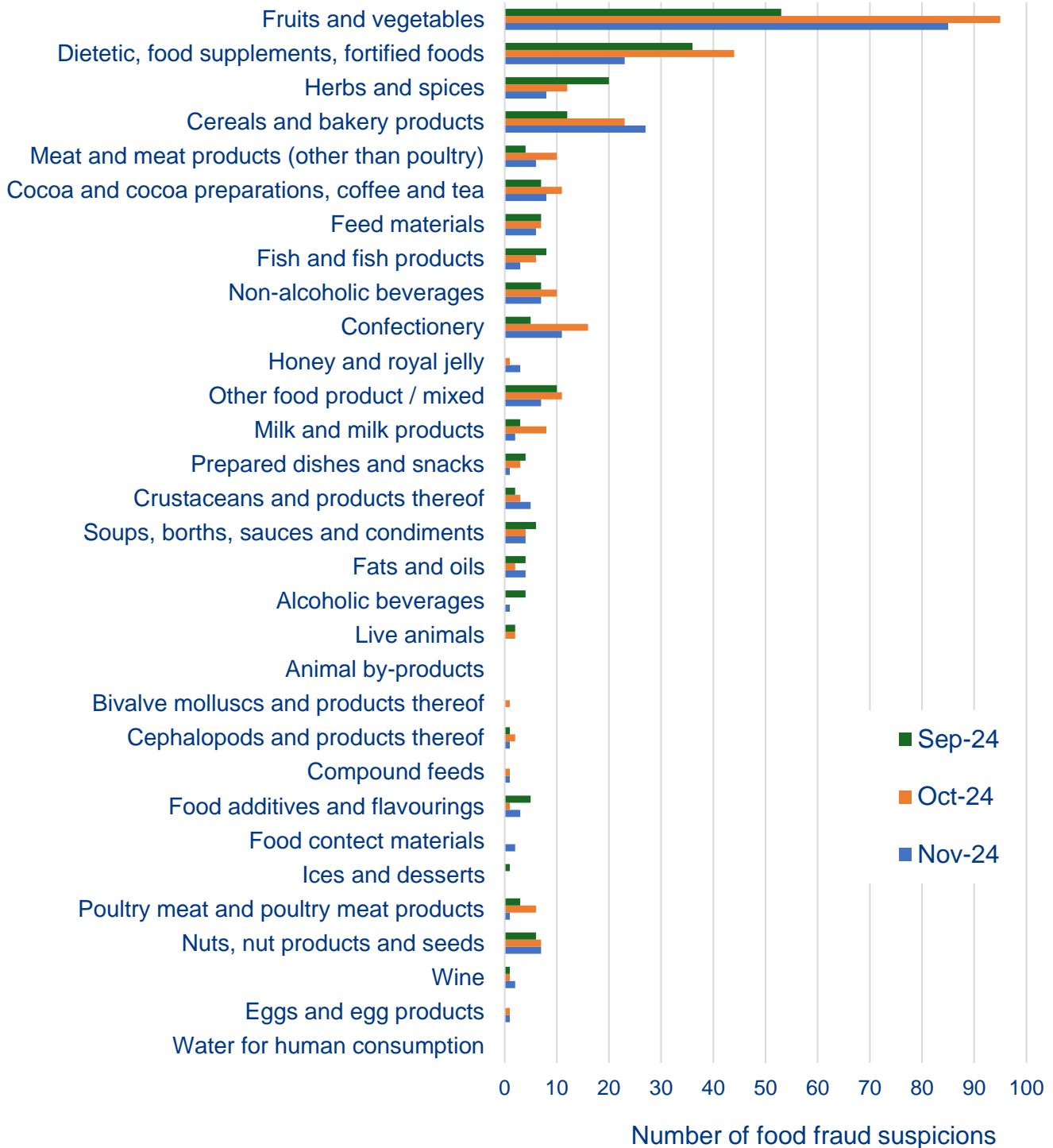
 **NORWAY** – An outbreak of Salmonella food poisoning has affected more than 50 people in Norway with the source of the outbreak having been identified as organic alfalfa sprouts. Reports of illness started in mid-October with 24 people requiring hospitalisation. The majority of cases (42) showed infection with Salmonella Newport with a lesser number (7) being infected with *Salmonella* typhimurium. The Norwegian Veterinary Institute detected *Salmonella* Newport in the organic alfalfa sprouts and in the production environment at the sprout producer. *Salmonella* typhimurium has also been detected in an outbreak in Sweden linked to organic alfalfa sprouts. The producers in Norway and Sweden both received seeds from the same European distributor.



## A new year of food safety

We hope you are enjoying our Risk Insights Newsletters. As we step into 2025, we're excited to continue delivering key insights and valuable updates to you. Wishing you a successful and insightful year ahead!

## Summary of Food Fraud Suspicions (IRASFF) Sept - Nov 2024





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# Risk Insights Food Newsletter

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

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



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