



Risk Insights **Food Newsletter**

Eurofins Food Testing UK Ltd
Issue 08 | April 2025



In Focus

Emerging
issues, trends
and legislative
changes

GM vs GE

Hepatitis A outbreak linked to blueberries

Artificial Intelligence in the food industry

Resources

Market price fluctuations

Chemical contaminants in fish & seafood

Phosphonic acid legislation update

Summary of food fraud suspicions

Welcome to the April 2025 newsletter from the Eurofins Compliance and Risk Management Team which includes recalls, the latest food fraud news and issues in the meat industry.

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

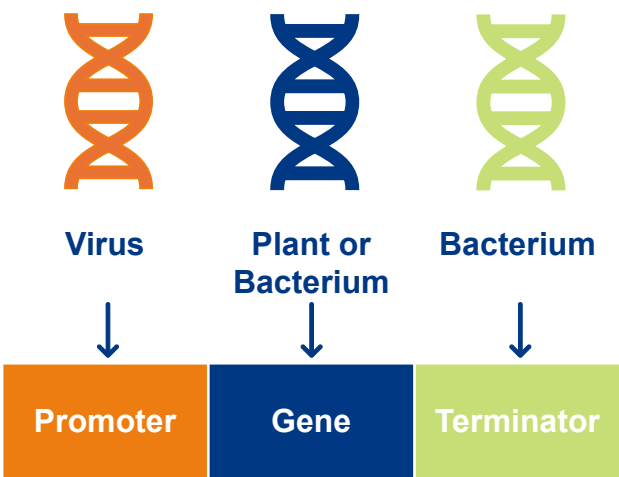


GM vs GE

The terms "genetically engineered" (GE) and "genetically modified" (GM/GMO) are often used interchangeably to describe crop varieties created through methods other than traditional breeding. There is a significant difference though.

In GM crops, foreign genes are incorporated into a plant's DNA to introduce specific traits, such as pest resistance or herbicide tolerance. An example of how this is done is given below.

- **Promoter:** The "on switch" for gene expression (commonly derived from viruses).
- **Gene of Interest:** The primary trait (e.g., herbicide resistance).
- **Terminator:** The "off switch" (usually from bacteria).



Screening tests use these foreign genes as general GMO markers. Such as the 35S promoter and Nos terminator genes, which are shared components across biotech products. Meaning it has the advantage that it can detect multiple GMO events (insertions of DNA) through the one test across a range of crops.

In GE crops, (also known as precision breeding) the plant's DNA is carefully modified by deleting, adding, or altering a few selected genes, without introducing foreign DNA to achieve beneficial traits. This makes it almost impossible to detect as some of the minute changes may have occurred through natural variation.

Currently there are no crops or animals resulting from GE/precision breeding technology that have been authorised for sale in the UK.

The Precision Breeding Act became law in England in March 2023. This is an England only Act, meaning that it has provided a new category for precision bred organisms to be authorised in England. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, these organisms will remain classified as genetically modified organisms.

As a result of the introduction of The Precision Breeding Act (England), the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is creating a new authorisation framework that will assess the potential risks of these organisms on a case-by-case basis, ensuring precision-bred products will only be authorised if they are deemed:

- Not to pose a health risk
- Not misleading to consumers
- Not nutritionally inferior to their traditionally bred counterparts



Hepatitis A outbreak linked to Blueberries

In the Netherlands, 24 people fell ill with hepatitis A after consuming frozen blueberries. The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) reported the cases, which occurred between November 2024 and February 2025. Eight of the affected individuals, aged 16 to 77, required hospital admission. Nineteen people had eaten the contaminated blueberries, and three cases were directly linked to them. The source of infection for one case is unclear, while another possibly contracted it from another patient.

Foodborne viruses represent a significant public health concern and can be a real challenge for the food industry. This is why it is important they should be given due consideration in a business's HACCP (Hazard analysis and critical control points) as a biological hazard.



There are three viruses of primary concern in food safety: Norovirus, Hepatitis A and Hepatitis E

Testing for viruses can be carried out using PCR techniques; this reveals the presence of virus particles but does not identify if they are capable of causing infection. The test is therefore useful for monitoring the effectiveness of a control measure but does not tell us if the food is likely to cause illness.

Control measures for viruses throughout the food chain are required to minimise the risk of contamination; these include promoting good personal hygiene, effective environmental hygiene, and implementing procedures for staff returning to work after sickness. For growers of produce, clean irrigation water is an important requirement.

AI Tech can assist the food industry

The food industry is the fourth fastest adopter of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the UK. With much focus on how AI can optimise production processes, reduce waste, and enhance supply chain management. It shouldn't be forgotten that AI can improve foodborne pathogen detection, identification, characterisation, enhance public health systems and food safety risk prediction alongside machine learning which can anticipate contamination trends, allowing for proactive risk management. Together they will lead to safer and improved higher-quality experiences for both workers and customers.



A recent study in the U.S. using whole-genome sequencing (WGS) and Machine learning, found that up to 64% of Salmonella cases in the U.S. can be traced back to chicken and vegetables. Analysing patterns in outbreak data, the technology provides more accurate mapping of contamination sources, helping improve food safety measures.



FSA concerned about lack of resources

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has raised concerns about local authorities' (LAs) capacity to meet food safety standards due to insufficient resources. A decline in staffing levels, particularly food hygiene and food standards officers, has led to backlogs in food business inspections. While food safety remains high, there is growing pressure, with LAs competing for limited budgets, making it harder to recruit and retain staff. The FSA suggests reforms to improve efficiency but emphasises that sustainable funding is crucial for long-term success. Moreover, LAs are struggling with workforce development and the ability to offer discretionary services, which are vital for supporting businesses and preventing future issues.

The FSA continues to explore ways it can use data from supermarkets for food safety. Having recently backtracked on plans to give greater

control to supermarkets and large food companies after concerns were raised by Environmental Health, Trading Standards and local government officers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The aim was to give LAs more time to concentrate on smaller problematic operators while the FSA and wider food industry oversee the big data.

Many companies are already sharing data through the Food Industry Intelligence Network (FIIN), which was established following the recommendations of The Elliott Report (2013 horsemeat scandal). The network was created as a 'safe haven' for the industry to securely collect, collate, analyse, and share information and intelligence. By collaborating with governmental bodies, this shared intelligence helps identify emerging risks and supports the integrity of the food supply chain.

New waste segregation rules in force in England



From 1st April 2025, updated legislation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Section 34) and the Waste Regulations 2011 requires stricter on-site waste segregation. These changes form part of Defra's Simpler Recycling reforms, aimed at creating a consistent recycling system across England.

All businesses and other non-household premises with 10 or more full-time equivalent employees must now separate food waste, dry mixed recycling (DMR), glass, and general waste to comply with mandatory waste segregation requirements and improve recycling rates.



Market data

Bananas



In early 2025, the banana industry, especially in Central America, has been hit hard by La Niña and cold weather. While supply conditions should improve extreme weather events like droughts, floods, and cold fronts are still disrupting production and supply chains. Banana production is down compared to last year, with Central America, a major supplier to North America, facing significant challenges. Additional issues include plantation diseases, logistics problems like port congestion, and rising costs from higher labour expenses and exchange rate fluctuations, are leading to increased banana prices in tropical regions.

Apple juice



While orange juice prices may have eased, apple juice is seeing higher prices. Poland is facing its second-lowest apple harvest in a decade due to severe weather, including spring frosts and drought. This has caused a sharp rise in raw apple costs and apple juice concentrate prices.

With limited fresh apple supplies and high global demand for concentrate, prices are soaring. Labour shortages and logistical issues are also worsening the situation.

There are four main types of fruit juice integrity issues:

- Non-compliance with the regulatory reference standards (e.g. Brix/density, ethanol, heavy metals, etc.)
- Addition of exogenous sugars and/or water (for direct juices), or addition of exogenous compounds, such as flavours, organic acids, sweeteners, dyes, preservatives, etc to enhance consumer attraction.
- Blending with cheaper fruits or use of non-edible parts of fruits.
- Mislabelling with false declaration of origin, product type, or nutritional values.

Corn stocks



Global corn supplies are heading toward a record low, driven by reduced stockpiles. The U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasts world corn stocks could drop to a 12-year low of 87 million metric tons. When considering corn supplies that are actually accessible to the global market, this is predicted to be the lowest since 1995-96. The hopes are that farmers increase planting to ease supply constraints.



Lab-grown food may be available on UK supermarket shelves by 2027

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is looking to accelerate the approval process for cell-cultivated products. Lab-grown meat for pet food is already on sale, and food-grade alternatives may be available for general sale within two years.

The FSA, in collaboration with Food Standards Scotland (FSS) is to launch an innovative sandbox programme for cell-cultivated products (CCPs).

CCPs are new foods made without using traditional farming methods such as rearing livestock or growing plants and grains. Using science and technology, cells from plants or animals are grown in a controlled environment to make a food product.

The sandbox programme will enable the recruitment of a new team to work across the FSA and FSS. They will gather rigorous scientific evidence on CCPs, and the technology used to make them. This information will allow more timely science and evidence-based recommendations to be made about product safety and address relevant questions before any CCPs can enter the market.

A sandbox serves as an environment, enabling organisations to run applications in a secure space before they are introduced into the production stage.

Chemical contaminants in fish & seafood survey

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has published the results of its chemical contaminants in fish & seafood survey for the UK & Northern Ireland (NI). Samples were assessed against a mixture of UK and EU Limits by Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd (Public Analysts).

Survey summary

For NI, 62 samples were analysed for the contaminants; mercury, lead, cadmium, PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) & dioxins and PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls).

- **Metals** - Taking into account the measurement uncertainty, mercury was detected above the maximum regulatory level of 0.5 mg/kg in one of the Dublin Bay prawn.
- **Dioxins & PCBs** - Concentrations of dioxins and PCBs were below the regulatory limits.

In the UK, 152 samples of fish, crustaceans and cephalopods were analysed:

- **Metals** - Cadmium was detected at above regulatory limits in one of the mackerel samples. Mercury was detected above the maximum level of 0.5 mg/kg in four of the sea bass samples.
- **PFAS** - Four cod samples and two crab samples exceeded EU Limits.
- **Dioxins & PCBs** - Concentrations of dioxins and PCBs were below the regulatory limits.

Source: <https://science.food.gov.uk/article/127616-chemical-contaminants-in-wild-caught-fish-and-crustaceans-northern-ireland>

Updated legal regulation for phosphonic acid residues in food



In November 2024 Regulation (EU) 2024/2619 amending the maximum residue levels of fosetyl, potassium phosphonates and disodium phosphonates entered into force with the regulation applying from 29 April 2025.

Phosphonic acid is, among other things, a degradation product of the fungicide fosetyl aluminium (fosetyl-Al), which is used in the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. However, residues of phosphonic acid in food cannot always be traced back to the use of fosetyl-Al, as other possible entry routes include disodium phosphonate and potassium phosphonate, which are authorised substances in the EU.

Potassium phosphonates are also used as a component of other agricultural products (e.g. fertilisers, soil improvers). The treatment of plants with such products can lead to detectable phosphonic acid residues. The EU considered it necessary to take into account the other possible entry routes when setting the maximum residue levels.

Regulation (EU) 2024/2619 (amending Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 maximum residue levels of pesticides) describes the change in the previous maximum residue definition from “fosetyl-Al (sum of fosetyl, phosphonic acid and its salts, expressed as fosetyl)” to “phosphonic acid and its salts, expressed as phosphonic acid”. In addition, fosetyl will no longer be part of the definition in future.

This means that findings of fosetyl are not taken into account in an assessment. Only the maximum level for phosphonic acid and its salts applies.

Meanwhile, the UK Government has published its first Pesticides National Action Plan. The Action Plan sets out how all four UK governments will support farmers, growers and other land managers to increase their use of nature-based techniques, reducing the potential harm from pesticides, while still controlling pests effectively. The Plan has three key objectives:

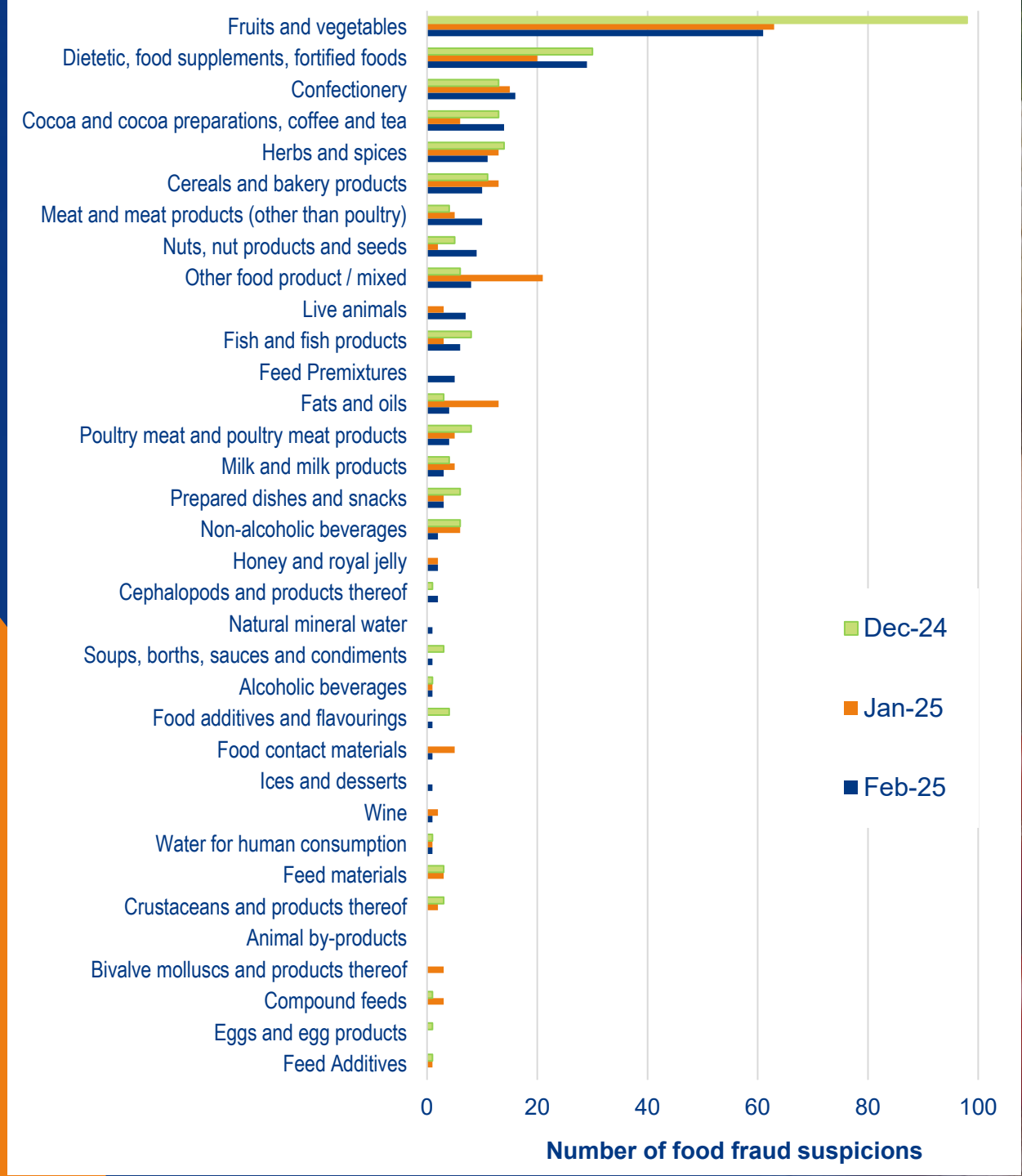
1. Encourage the adoption of integrated pest management and alternative approaches to conventional pesticides.
2. Set clear targets and measures to monitor pesticides use in the UK.
3. Support safe pesticide use to ensure better environmental outcomes.

Further information can be found [here](#).



Summary of Food Fraud Suspicions (IRASFF) Dec 2024 – Feb 2025

Summary of Food Fraud Suspicions



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



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.



eurofins.co.uk/food



risk@ftuki.eurofins.com



+44 (0) 845 604 6740