

Food crime

Understanding food crime and how to report it.

Consumers should have confidence that their food is safe and what it says it is.

We define food crime as serious fraud and related criminality in food supply chains. This definition also includes activity impacting on drink and animal feed. It can be seriously harmful to consumers, food businesses and the wider food industry.

The Food Standard Agency's [National Food Crime Unit](#) (NFCU) works to prevent, detect and investigate food crime across the UK.

Types of food crime

The National Food Crime Unit focuses its work on seven types of food crime:

- **theft** - dishonestly obtaining food, drink or feed products to profit from their use or sale
- **illegal processing** - slaughtering or preparing meat and related products in unapproved premises or using unauthorised techniques
- **waste diversion** - illegally diverting food, drink or feed meant for disposal, back into the supply chain
- **adulteration** - including a foreign substance which is not on the product's label to lower costs or fake a higher quality
- **substitution** - replacing a food or ingredient with another substance that is similar but inferior
- **misrepresentation** - marketing or labelling a product to wrongly portray its quality, safety, origin or freshness
- **document fraud** - making, using or possessing false documents with the intent to sell or market a fraudulent or substandard product

Preventing food crime

Food crime can occur in various ways. It can range from isolated acts of dishonesty by individual offenders to organised illegal activity co-ordinated by criminal networks.

Food crime can be reduced by denying offenders the means to commit offences, or by reducing the likelihood of individuals and groups becoming offenders in the first place.

The NFCU works with the food industry to ensure that businesses are well-informed of food crime risks and are capable of implementing measures to protect themselves from food crime.

Ensuring the food production, food manufacturing and retail sectors are hostile environments to individuals or groups intent on offending is key to preventing food crime.

Food Crime Strategic Assessment 2020

The FSA's National Food Crime Unit and Food Standards Scotland's Scottish Food Crime and

Incidents Unit (SFCIU) have produced an assessment of food crime threats to the UK.

The Food Crime Strategic Assessment examines areas of the food supply chain which may be vulnerable to food crime, as well identifying emerging threats which need to be addressed.

[View Food Crime Strategic Assessment 2020 as PDF](#) (2.46 MB)

Reporting food crime

Members of the public and those working in the food and drink sector can speak up about food crime through [Food Crime Confidential](#).

Instances of poor food hygiene are of concern to the Food Standards Agency, but are not defined as food crime. Hygiene concerns should be [reported to the local authority](#), not the NFCU, if there is no direct intention to deceive.

Anyone with suspicions of food crime can report it safely and confidentially to the NFCU. You can [report a food crime online](#) or by phone on **0207 276 8787**.