

# Impact of labour shortages: Executive Summary

Results available: Results available

Area of research interest: [Food insecurity](#)

Research topics: [Emerging issues](#)

Project code: FS430887

Authors: Newcastle University and the Food Standards Agency

Conducted by: Newcastle University and the Food Standards Agency

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46756/sci.fsa.oac747>

Planned completion: 31 March 2022

Project status: Completed

PDF

[View The impact of labour shortages on UK food availability and safety as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (2.24 MB)

## Authors

Ruth McAreavey is Professor of Sociology at Newcastle University; Sonal Choudhary is Professor of Sustainable Management at University of York; Dr Raymond Obayi a Lecturer in Management Sciences at University of Manchester; Dr Adrienne Attorp is Senior Social Researcher at the Scottish Government; Dr Roxana Barbulescu is an Associate Professor in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at University of Leeds; Dr Alvaro Martinez Perez is a Lecturer in International and Comparative Social Research Methods at the University of Sheffield; Dr Rakesh Nayak is a Consultant at LeanSig.

## Executive Summary

This research used a food systems approach to examine the impact of labour supply shortages on key aspects of the food system. It provides insight into the consequences of labour shortages as reported in 2021, the complex processes that combined to create the shortages and the resultant impact on the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) ability to effectively do its job. The research also explored consumers' perceptions of food availability and food safety.

Three key questions guided our research:

- how do labour shortages impact on food availability and safety, now and in the future?
- how do labour shortages impact the FSA's ability to execute their protocol, now and in the future?
- what are consumers' perceptions of food safety and how does this relate to potential food risks arising due to labour shortages?

To answer these questions, we needed to identify the key labour shortages across the food sector (food production, processing, and logistics) and the risks arising from those labour shortages in the wider food system. A summary of those risks as they relate to the FSA is presented below:

Role

Related risks to the FSA

Butchers	Food chain information verification risks at ante-mortem inspections, Food safety risks (biological, physical, chemical, allergenic and cross-contamination), Food adulteration, substitution and misrepresentation risks, Potential safety, provenance and traceability risks, Potential increase in product misrepresentation and document fraud risks, Potential risk of unlawful processing, and diversion of food meant for disposal into the chain.
HGV	Potential safety risks due to microbiological growth arising from delayed transport of meat that has not been chilled, or has only been partially chilled and food withdrawal and recall risks from safety and quality hazards.
Packers and Pickers	Availability, assortment and price inflation risks (eggs bread, fruit and vegetables), Potential long-term food security risks, Potential food fraud, recall and withdrawal risks, Higher provenance and traceability risks associated with harmonising national regulatory standards with new regional trade and bi-lateral food safety requirements for imports from new locations.
MHIs	Biosecurity risks, potential increase in public health, food safety, animal health and welfare monitoring risks.
OVs	Potential increase in the risk of food documentation fraud, animal welfare breaches, and public health reassurance to consumers and Impeded knowledge transfer of subjective scoring criteria for risk-based inspections from retiring workforce.
Retail, food services and warehouses operatives	Food availability risks, long-term food security risks

Related research: [Local Authority Capacity and Capability Research](#)