

FSA publishes latest Retail Surveillance Survey as new targeted approach to food inspection continues?

The Retail Surveillance Survey is specifically targeted where we know there is potential risk, as well as where sampling is needed to help inform FSA policy and science.??

The survey took place in October 2022 and sampled products from a typical basket of food, along with a range of other foods. ?

Food samples were bought from national supermarkets and smaller independent retailers, with some samples bought online. The samples were tested for undeclared allergens, contaminants, adulteration, inaccurate composition or incorrect labelling.??

The survey found:??

- 96% of foods tested from larger food businesses met regulatory requirements and were compliant with the legal standards they were tested against
- Overall, 81% of foods tested met regulatory requirements and were compliant with the legal standards they were tested against
- Food authenticity rates for foods tested were 97%?
- There are no overall geographical hotspots for non-compliance?

While most food tested as part of this targeted sampling programme was safe and authentic, the project has highlighted some issues, including undeclared allergens in some African spices and prepacked food for direct sale (PPDS). These results are also not representative of food safety in the UK as the sampling programme targeted food products where we know there is risk, or where we need more information. The survey showed that of 267 food products:

- 16% of foods tested for allergens contained undeclared allergens
- 27% of African spices tested were found to contain undeclared peanut protein
- 17 out of 47 prepacked foods for direct sale (PPDS) tested had allergens present without the correct labelling

The survey does not provide evidence of the overall public health risk of allergens in food, which remains unchanged.

Professor Rick Mumford, Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor & Deputy Director of Science, Research and Evidence at the Food Standards Agency said:?

“This survey is designed to help Local Authorities (LAs) to target their food safety inspections so that they can use their resources more effectively, to better protect consumers. Recent changes to the [Food Law Code of Practice](#) in England and Northern Ireland help LAs to take a more risk-based, intelligence-driven approach to inspection, focusing their time and resources on food businesses that pose a greater risk to consumers.?

We have also made available some funding for local authorities in England and Northern Ireland to sample pre-packaged for direct sale foods and spice blends for allergens, following the results of this survey.

We will continue to carry out targeted surveillance programmes to identify and find emerging risks within the UK food system to help ensure the safety of consumers.”

The retail survey is part of the multiple layers of protection built-in to the food system to protect consumers, which includes our new [Food Standards Delivery Model](#) in England and Northern Ireland. A specific 'Allergen Information' risk factor, which considers compliance with allergen information requirements has been added to the risk assessment for food businesses. Together with the information from the retail survey, local authorities (LAs) can direct their resources towards the greatest areas of risk. Where any incident of non-compliance is found, referrals are made to the relevant LAs to investigate and take appropriate action. ? ?

The programme was delivered in partnership by the three Local Authority Official Food and Feed Laboratories (OLs) and two private OLs in England and Wales. The [full survey](#) is available in the research section of our website. ?