

FSA and FSS publish assessment of food crime in 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.

The assessment found that most food crime relates to two broad activities – either selling something of little or no value to the food chain as edible and marketable, or selling passable food, drink or feed as a product with greater volume or more desirable attributes. In practice, this could include replacing ingredients with cheaper and inferior materials, falsely extending use-by dates, or deliberately marketing unsafe products as being fit for human consumption.

Darren Davies, Head of the National Food Crime Unit, said:

‘Our assessment demonstrates that while the UK has some of the safest and most authentic food in the world, the threat posed by criminals remains. Vulnerability can exist at any place along the route from farm through to fork, both in the UK or overseas.

‘We are committed to preventing and protecting consumers and legitimate businesses from food fraud and are prepared to lead, co-ordinate or support robust action against those committing these crimes.

‘As we face new challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, we aim to create a hostile environment for those engaging in food crime and will continue to work with partners to ensure that food is safe and what it says it is.’

The NFCU have identified priority areas of work for this year in their [control strategy](#). These areas include combatting the selling of dangerous non-foods sold for human consumption, preventing illegal shellfish entering the food chain, and increasing understanding of the use of online platforms to facilitate food crime. The Unit will continue its work with local authorities, law enforcement agencies and the food industry to prevent and protect against incidences of food crime and take action when they occur.

What is food crime?

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.

About the National Food Crime Unit

The National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) is a dedicated law enforcement function of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The unit provides leadership on food crime across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The unit works closely with the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit within Food Standards Scotland.

The NFCU was established in 2015 following a review of the 2013 horse meat incident. The NFCU is tasked with protecting consumers and the food industry from food crime within food supply chains.