



Údarás Sábhálteachta Bia na hÉireann  
Food Safety Authority of Ireland

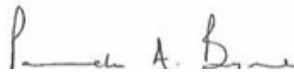
ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023

## **To the Minister for Health**

The Board is pleased to submit to the Minister for Health its Annual Report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023, in accordance with Section 25 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998.



**Ms Ann Horan**  
Chairperson



**Dr Pamela A Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer

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## Chairperson's statement



**It was a great honour to be appointed Chairperson of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and I now have the pleasure of presenting the 2023 Annual Report.**

This year's annual report highlights the extensive work and achievements of the FSAI in the midst of an increasingly challenging external environment. External challenges which impact on food safety include the potential for food supply disruption due to political unrest in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine, regulatory divergence as a consequence of Brexit, the critical focus on environmental sustainability and its unintended consequences for food safety and the growing importance of health and wellness in society. I am very impressed with the way that the Authority planned and adapted to the opportunities and challenges that presented during the year, while steadfastly maintaining its primary focus on the protection of consumers and of public health.

### Role and purpose

The FSAI is an independent regulatory body, established in 1998 with the mandate to ensure that food produced in Ireland and Irish food distributed within the State and overseas, meets the highest food safety and hygiene standards. Our vision is 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone'. The FSAI is the central competent authority responsible for the system of controls, and it operates through a series of service contracts with official agencies which include the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) and others. The FSAI agrees contracts with these agencies, monitors performance, and reports on levels of compliance and food safety in general.

### Consumer protection and public health

One of the fundamental bases of a functioning society and economy, involves healthy people making informed choices about the food that they eat. The current Department of Health's (DoH's) Statement of Strategy recognises the importance of appropriate legal frameworks, forward-thinking policy and cohesive structures in order to achieve the highest standards of food safety possible and to achieve the objective of improving the health and well-being of people in Ireland. Unsafe food can have short- and long-term health effects, which can impact considerably on quality of life. The consequences of food poisoning can impact on the economy at a societal level through inability to work, as well as through healthcare and social welfare costs.

Engaging with and listening to consumers is an important part of our work. The Authority actively encourages consumers to contact it about any food safety complaints or issues they may have. In 2023, our Advice Line received 4,395 complaints from consumers regarding hygiene standards in food businesses; food unfit for human consumption; and consumers with suspected food poisoning. All complaints received were followed up by a food inspector.

Social media continues to be an important tool for the Authority to engage with consumers regarding the risks associated with food and during the year, the team had an online community of more than 76,000 followers on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

## **Food industry compliance**

Food and drink manufacturing is the largest indigenous sector in Ireland, with an average annual turnover of €27.5 billion. According to the DAFM, employment in the agri-food sector accounts for 6.5% of total employment in Ireland. Irish dairy exports were valued at €6.3 billion last year, meat and livestock sector exports were valued at more than €4 billion, while prepared consumer food exports recorded a 7% increase on the previous year with values exceeding €3 billion (source Bord Bia). The FSAI's commitment to compliance building and the provision of safe food underpins the performance of these economically crucial national industries. It also plays a significant role in protecting Ireland's image nationally and globally as a world-class producer of safe and trustworthy food.

To ensure food businesses are complying with the law, the Authority oversees a system of controls that resulting in over 50,000 inspections and the analysis of over 60,000 food samples. Unfortunately there continues to be those food businesses that do not comply with the law and in serious cases of non-compliance where there is a grave and immediate danger to public health, the Authority, in partnership with food safety inspectors, issued 272 enforcement notices that involved the closure of 76 food businesses, and prosecuted 8 food businesses.

During 2023, the FSAI continued to engage with all sectors of the food industry through the mechanisms of the Food Safety Consultative Council (FSCC) and the Retail, Artisan and the Service Sector forums. A highlight in 2023 was the open meeting held by the Authority and the FSCC with the catchy title 'When Food Safety Met Sustainability' that explored how the food system can meet the ever-changing needs of society, while continuing to protect consumers' health in relation to food safety.

## Strategic planning

Our current strategic plan ends in December 2024 and under the guidance and leadership of the Board in June 2023, we commenced an extensive process for the development of a new 5-year plan. A project team was established and a series of workshops were held. Attendees included members of the Board, the Senior Leadership Team, and managers. A panel of experts was convened to provide an external perspective and the team engaged in extensive consultation with key stakeholders including the DoH, the DAFM, and the official agencies. The Statement of Strategy was recently submitted to the DoH for consideration and we look forward to unveiling our plans in next year's annual report.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging the contribution of my predecessor Martin Higgins to the Board of the FSAI over 7 years including the last 5 as Chairperson. During his time as Chairperson, Martin's many achievements included guiding the FSAI through the development and delivery of a 5-year strategic plan and helping the organisation to successfully navigate the challenges of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of the Board members and myself, I want to both acknowledge Martin's significant contribution to the FSAI and wish him the best for the future.

On behalf of the Board, I extend our gratitude to the Minister for Health, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, their advisors and the staff of their departments and agencies for their continued support of the FSAI and its activities.

I would like to thank the Chief Executive, Pamela Byrne, the Senior Leadership Team, and all managers and staff and to acknowledge everything that has been achieved in 2023. The significant workload and results are clear for everyone to see in the following pages of this report. As an organisation, we are lucky to have such a dedicated and professional workforce that is so clearly committed to delivering on the FSAI's mission of ensuring safe food for everyone.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the members of the FSAI Board for their commitment and for the advice and expertise provided throughout a very busy year. In addition to my own appointment as Chair, we also welcomed Eilis O'Brien and Lisa Manselli as new members of the Board in 2023. As a Board, we are committed to succession planning and ensuring that the Board has the right mix of skills and expertise to deliver on our mandate.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Chairs and members of our Audit and Risk Committee, Performance Remuneration Committee, the Scientific Committee and the FSCC. I would like to make a special mention of Mr Ray Bowe from Musgraves for his leadership of the FSCC, as he has stepped down after 10 years in this role. The contribution of the committees is of enormous value to the FSAI and we could not manage without all the independent experts who give freely of their time and knowledge.



**Ms Ann Horan**

Chairperson





**About the Food Safety Authority of  
Ireland**

## I.1 Introduction

**The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) was established in 1998 under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 as an independent government agency responsible for the enforcement of food legislation in Ireland. This Act was enacted in July 1998 and came into effect on 1 January 1999.**

The Authority is a statutory, independent and science-based regulatory enforcement body dedicated to protecting public health and consumer interests in the areas of food safety, hygiene, integrity and authenticity. It reports to the Minister for Health, who appoints a 10-member Board. The FSAI also has a 15-member Scientific Committee (also appointed by the Minister for Health) which assists and advises the Board. As a result, decisions relating to food safety, hygiene and integrity are made using the latest and best scientific advice, evidence and information available.

This ensures that people in Ireland, as well as consumers of Irish food in 180 countries across the world, have access to safe and trustworthy food. The FSAI is legally mandated to take all reasonable steps in order to make sure that food consumed, produced, distributed or marketed in Ireland meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene reasonably attainable, and that food complies with legal requirements or, where appropriate, with recognised codes of good practice. These activities are key to underpinning Ireland's societal health and economic growth.

## I.2 What the Authority does

The Authority's key remit is the enforcement of food legislation, which is coordinated through working in partnership with other food regulatory authorities.

Food legislation is enforced on behalf of the Authority by a network of official agencies through a service contracts programme, which the Authority monitors. The Authority also reports on the official agencies' activities and seeks continuous improvement and accountability through a programme of regular audits. The [range and scope of the FSAI's work](#) includes:

- ▶ **Putting consumer interests first** and foremost
- ▶ **Managing risk** in association with frontline agencies and the food sector, and communicating risks to consumers, public health professionals and the food industry

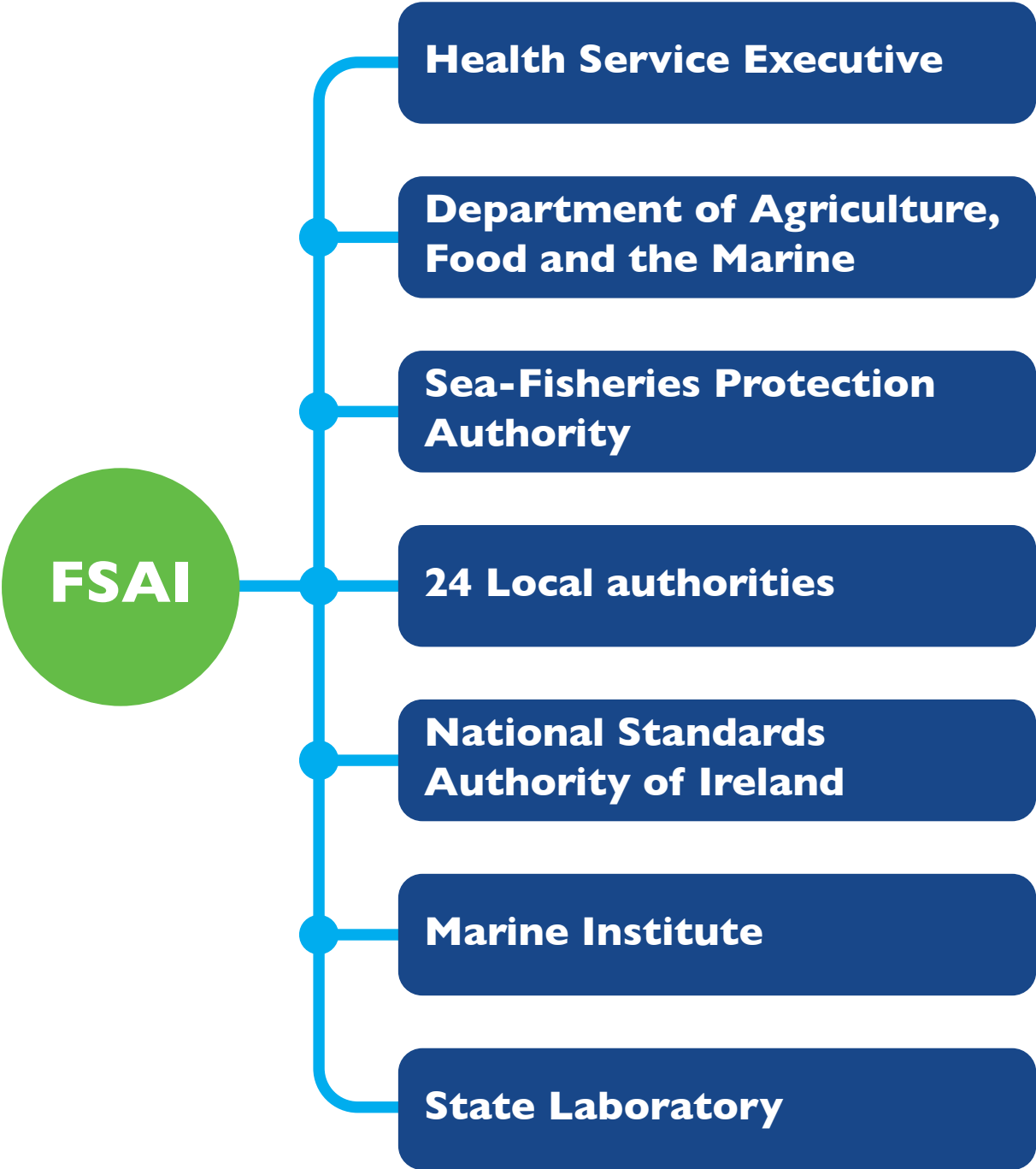
- ▶ **Providing advice** to Ministers, regulators, the food industry and consumers on food safety issues
- ▶ **Setting food standards** based on sound science and risk assessment
- ▶ **Ensuring the coordinated and seamless delivery of food safety services** to a high standard agreed by the various State agencies involved
- ▶ **Working with the food industry** in order to gain its commitment to the production of safe food
- ▶ **Ensuring that food complies with legal requirements** or, where appropriate, with recognised codes of good practice.

## **I.3 How we operate**

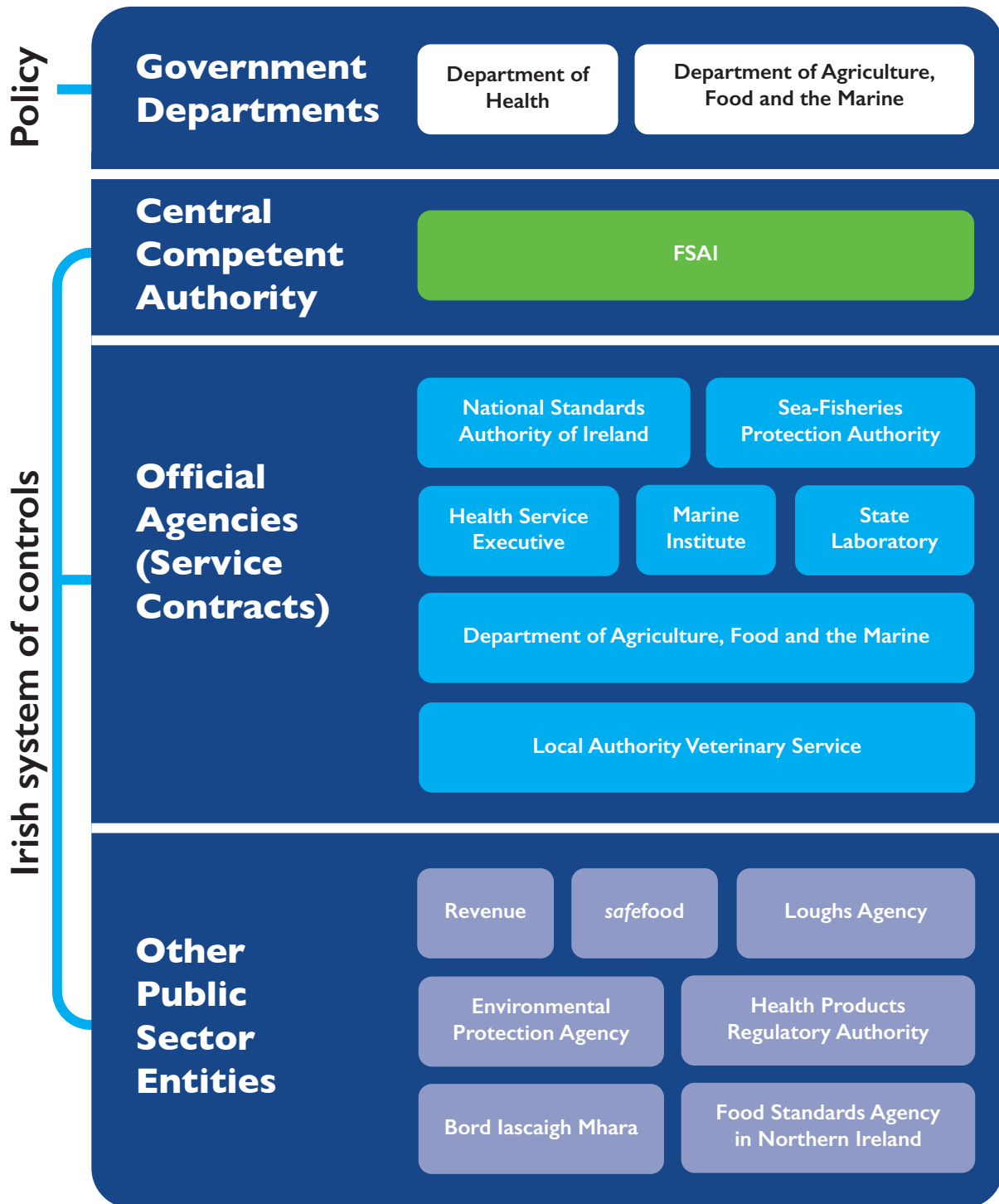
**In 2023, the Authority enforced food legislation through service contracts with 30 official agencies, for which the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 provides the requisite legislative basis.**

The Authority's role is to coordinate and monitor the activities of these official agencies through service contracts, which outline an agreed level and standard of food safety activity that the official agencies will perform. [Service contracts](#) are in place for a minimum of 3 years and may be reviewed during that time at the request of either the Authority or the official agency. The Authority has service contracts with the official agencies listed in Figure 1. Regular meetings are held with senior management in each official agency and with the line managers responsible for the delivery of the inspection and analysis service.

In addition to service contracts, the Authority works in partnership with other State agencies through memoranda of understanding. Figure 2 provides an overview of Ireland's food safety control system that outlines the relationships between Government Departments, official agencies that have responsibility for official controls, and other public sector entities that we work with in order to deliver on our mission.



**Figure 1 How the FSAI operates**



**Figure 2 The Irish food safety control system**



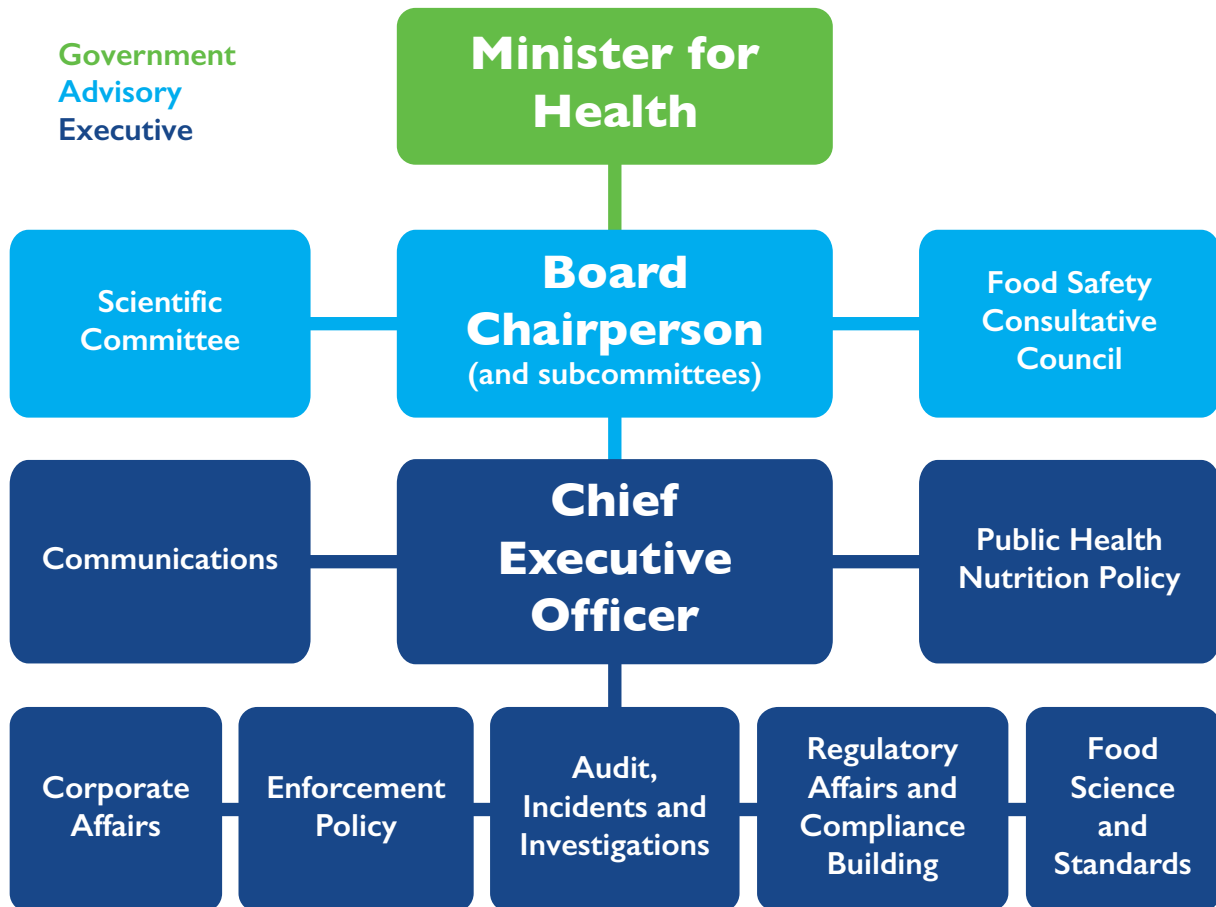
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## Governance and management

## 2.1 Governance structure

The Authority comes under the aegis of the Minister for Health. It has a Board, which is advised by the Scientific Committee and the Food Safety Consultative Council. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the direct link to the FSAI Board.



**Figure 3 FSAI organisational chart**

## 2.2 Our Board

The Authority has a non-executive Board. It is the governing body of the Authority and it is appointed by the Minister for Health. It is responsible for the appointment of the CEO and the oversight of corporate governance in accordance with government guidelines.

The key functions of the Board include setting the strategic direction for the Authority and agreeing major plans of action, risk management policies and procedures, annual budgets, and business plans with the executive. It is also responsible for setting performance

objectives and monitoring the implementation of the Authority's strategy and business plans, as well as for overseeing major revenue, capital expenditure and investment decisions.

Membership of the Board is made up of a Chairperson and nine non-executive directors who have been appointed by the Minister for Health. Mr Martin Higgins' term of appointment ended in February 2023, at which point Ms Ann Horan was appointed Acting Chairperson by decision of the Board. Ms Horan was formally appointed Chairperson Designate of the Board by the Minister for Health in June 2023 and, following her appearance before the Joint Oireachtas Committee in November 2023, was appointed Chair. In January 2023, Ms Eilis O'Brien and Ms Lisa Manselli were both appointed as members of the Board for a 3-year term.

In order to fulfil the requirements of Section 41(1) of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, the FSAI provided the Minister for Health with the declarations of interests of Board members, Scientific Committee members, and relevant staff members of the Authority for the year ending 31 December 2023. Furthermore, as per the statutory responsibilities under the Ethics in Public Office legislation, statements of interest for the Board, Scientific Committee members and relevant staff members of the Authority were provided to the Standards in Public Office Commission for 2023.

The members of the Board during 2023 included:



**Ms Ann Horan**  
Chairperson



**Mr Martin Higgins**  
Former Chairperson



**Ms Mary Cullen**



**Professor Martin Cormican**



**Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan**



**Mr Patrick Knight**



**Mr Gerard McCurdy****Professor Francis Butler****Ms Lisa Manselli****Ms Eilis O'Brien**

## 2.3 Board meetings

In total, the Board met seven times in 2023 in order to progress various significant matters.

## 2.4 Board committees

Two Board committees support the activities of the Board in governing the FSAI: the Audit and Risk Committee and the Performance Development Committee (now the Performance and Remuneration Committee).

### 2.4.1 Audit and Risk Committee

The Authority has a fully functioning Audit and Risk Committee which undertook the following audits during 2023: review of internal financial controls, cyber security, procurement and contracts, incidents and audit and Investigations. In 2023, the Audit and Risk Committee carried out an effectiveness survey and presented a report on its findings to the Board for consideration. The financial statements, as approved by the Audit and Risk Committee and by the Board, were subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Audit and Risk Committee has an independent role in providing the Board with assurance on internal control, risk management, audit, and assurance matters as part of the systematic review of the Authority's control environment and governance procedures. The Audit and Risk Committee operates under an agreed charter and prepares a formal annual report for the Board.

- ▶ Number of meetings in 2023: Four
- ▶ Chairperson: Mr Gerard McCurdy
- ▶ Membership: Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Ms Mary Cullen and Mr Fergal Ó'Briain. In September 2023, Ms Ann Horan stepped down from the Audit and Risk Committee, and Ms Mary Cullen was appointed as a member to the Audit and Risk Committee.

## 2.4.2 Performance Development Committee

The Performance Development Committee (now the Performance and Remuneration Committee) is appointed to devise and implement an appropriate mechanism through which to assess the performance of the CEO and, through the CEO, to review the performance of the FSAI Executive Team. As required, the Committee agrees remuneration with Government Departments, develops job descriptions, identifies the relevant competencies and ideal candidate profile for posts, agrees the recruitment and search process, and sets a specific timetable. The Performance Development Committee convenes as required by the Board.

- ▶ Number of meetings in 2023: Three
- ▶ Chairperson: Ms Ann Horan
- ▶ Membership: Ms Mary Cullen and Mr Patrick Knight.

## 2.5 Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

In compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (published in 2016), the Authority has a Corporate Governance Framework in place. This Framework was developed in order to assist in improving efficiency and enhancing openness and transparency. The Framework provides guidance for the FSAI, detailing aspects such as conducting Board business, strategic planning, operational processes, risk management, financial controls and standards of behaviour. During 2023, the Authority ensured and maintained compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (published in 2016).

## 2.6 Secretary to the Board

Kevin Roantree, Director of Corporate Affairs, is the Secretary of the FSAI Board. The Secretary supports the Board through the Chairperson in relation to governance matters and ensures that all relevant information is available to the Board and its committees. Along with the Chairperson, the Secretary is responsible for the formal induction of new members of the Board and for organising training, development and mentoring for Board members where required.

## 2.7 Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee is composed of 15 independent scientists appointed by the Minister for Health in consultation with the Board of the FSAI. The Chairperson of the Scientific Committee is a member of the Board. The Scientific Committee advises the Board on scientific matters underpinning food safety and nutrition, and the Authority may not act on an issue referred to the Scientific Committee until such time as the Scientific Committee's opinion is provided to the Board. The Scientific Committee establishes standing Biological Safety, Chemical Safety, and Public Health Nutrition subcommittees, in addition to establishing ad hoc subcommittees to work on areas outside of the remit of the standing subcommittees. The subcommittees are composed of independent scientists; consequently, the Authority is advised by the work of approximately 79 scientists. The work programme of the Scientific Committee is published on the FSAI website along with the Committee's opinions. In 2023, the membership of the Scientific Committee was composed of:

- ▶ Professor Martin Cormican (Chair) (member of the FSAI Board), University of Galway and the Health Service Executive (HSE)
- ▶ Professor Kevin Cashman, University College Cork
- ▶ Dr Geraldine Duffy, Teagasc
- ▶ Professor Séamus Fanning, University College Dublin
- ▶ Professor Mark Fenelon, Teagasc
- ▶ Dr Andrew Flanagan, Public Analyst's Laboratory, Dublin
- ▶ Dr Montserrat Gutierrez, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
- ▶ Professor Alan Kelly, University College Cork
- ▶ Ms Ita Kinahan, State Laboratory (retired)
- ▶ Professor Anne Molloy, Trinity College Dublin (retired)

- ▶ Dr Lois O'Connor, National Health Protection Office
- ▶ Professor Dolores O'Riordan, University College Dublin
- ▶ Ms Ann Marie Part, HSE
- ▶ Professor Dagmar Stengel, University of Galway
- ▶ Professor Martin Wilkinson, University of Limerick.

## 2.8 Food Safety Consultative Council

The Food Safety Consultative Council ([FSCC](#)) is a statutory Council established under Section 14 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. Its purpose is to facilitate consultations for the purpose of promoting higher standards or for any other matters relating to the functions of the Authority. During 2023, the FSCC was chaired by Mr Ray Bowe, who completed his term as Chair at the end of 2023 after 10 years of service in this role. At the end of 2023, the Council comprised 22 consumer, food industry, food inspectorate and academia representatives.

The membership of the FSCC in 2023 included:

- ▶ Mr Ray Bowe, Musgrave Group
- ▶ Mr Adrian Cummins, Restaurants Association of Ireland
- ▶ Mr Dale Crammond, Meat Industry Ireland
- ▶ Mr Dermot M Jewell, Consumers' Association of Ireland
- ▶ Mr Jamie Knox, Keurig Dr Pepper
- ▶ Ms Siobhán Murphy, HSE
- ▶ Mr Dave Lang, Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland
- ▶ Ms Deirdre Ryan, Bord Bia
- ▶ Mr Eamonn Quinn, Kelsius
- ▶ Mr Mark Christal, Enterprise Ireland
- ▶ Ms Annette Sweeney, Technological University Dublin
- ▶ Ms Paula Barry Walsh, DAFM (retired)
- ▶ Mr Paul McKeown, Health Protection Surveillance Centre
- ▶ Mr Jonathan Griffith, Irish Health Trade Association
- ▶ Mr Patrick Farrell, Keelings

- ▶ Ms Sorcha Kavanagh, Kepak
- ▶ Ms Catherine Morrison, Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- ▶ Ms Janis Morrissey, Irish Heart Foundation
- ▶ Mr Conor Mulvihill, Dairy Industry Ireland, Ibec
- ▶ Ms Alice McGlynn, Consultant
- ▶ Ms Louise Reynolds, Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute
- ▶ Ms Regina Sexton, University College Cork.

## 2.9 Senior Leadership Team

The Authority is led by the Senior Leadership Team, which is responsible for the FSAI’s business functions. The membership of the Authority’s Senior Leadership Team as at 31 December 2023 included:



**Dr Pamela Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer  
(CEO)



**Mr Kevin Roantree**  
Director  
Corporate Affairs



**Dr Bernard Hegarty**  
Director  
Enforcement Policy



**Dr Michelle Minihan**  
Director  
Audit, Incidents and  
Investigations



**Ms Gail Carroll**  
Director  
Regulatory Affairs and  
Compliance Building



**Dr Wayne Anderson**  
Director  
Food Science and  
Standards

## CEO's year in review



I am pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report and accounts for the FSAI. This report covers my ninth year as CEO of the Authority and I would like to recognise each individual FSAI team member for their expertise, enthusiasm and professionalism in advancing the FSAI's mission in 2023. I remain inspired by the professionalism and passion of the team's commitment to delivering on our legislative mandate and striving to achieve our ambitious vision of 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone'.

2023 marked the 25th anniversary since the establishment of the Authority, providing a good opportunity to look back at how the food control system has evolved. The system has been transformed from one where food safety was managed at a very local level by individual agencies of the State to one that is now less fragmented and more coherent. However, there is more to do to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose in an ever evolving and more complex food system as we transition to a more sustainable food system that meets societal, environmental and economic needs as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals. As we transition in Ireland and at a global level, we must continue to develop our control systems to keep pace with new and emerging risks, new food ingredients, new food production systems, better management of known risks, new technological innovations in industry, digitalisation and data-driven decision-making, as well as meeting the higher expectations of consumers.

As the central competent authority in Ireland for coordinating the enforcement of food legislation, the FSAI performs a key function in providing assurances through a robust and coherent system of food controls that ensures Ireland is well positioned to protect consumers at home and in 180 markets across the world that consume Irish food. This significant task is achieved through a system of controls that is based on 30 service contracts with official agencies in the State including the HSE (the National Environmental Health Service and the laboratories), the DAFM, the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), and the local authorities. The Authority also has contracts with the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), the Marine Institute, and the State Laboratory. It also relies on partnerships with other agencies of the State and on the island of Ireland, as well as strong relationships with our peer organisations at European and international level.

The legal and primary responsibility for placing safe food on the market rests with the food industry. Our job is to verify and validate that they comply with their legal obligations and

that they have a strong culture of food safety in their businesses. Verification and validation are achieved through numerous mechanisms including inspections, ongoing monitoring of food samples for chemical and microbial hazards, analysis of food samples, audits, investigations etc. In 2023, the food safety inspectorate in Ireland undertook more than 60,000 official controls which was an 8% increase on 2022. Following the collection of food samples from food businesses, the laboratories analysed almost 60,000 foods – an increase of 13.5% from 2022. We also saw an increase in the number of staff dedicated to food safety in the official agencies rising from 1,551 in 2022 to 1,656 in 2023. When looking back over the last 5 years of official control activity, we can see that we are returning to the level of activity pre-COVID-19.

In relation to the industry and how it is expanding, the number of food businesses supervised by the official agencies has increased only slightly but it remains critical that the resources dedicated to food safety controls are at a level that can verify the sector's compliance with the law. Despite the slight increase, by the end of 2023, we saw an increase in the total number of enforcement actions taken compared with 2022. The most notable increase was in the number of Closure Orders and Improvement Notices being issued to food businesses across Ireland. The publication of these enforcement actions every month provides consumers with important information regarding the level of non-compliant food businesses nationally and in their local area. Our investigation of 89 protected disclosures made by employees in the food industry to the Authority led to several enforcement actions being taken including the removal of a significant quantity of food from the market that posed a danger to public health. This, in addition to our strong presence on social media and our Advice Line, ensures consumers have access to key facts can make informed choices, and this is critical in maintaining their trust in the safety of their food. However, we still observe instances where businesses are putting consumers' health at risk, and this is not acceptable.

To this end, we continue to engage with the food industry to ensure they have a strong culture of food safety – a legal requirement since 2021 – within their food business. By continuing to develop a culture of excellence in food businesses in Ireland and by engaging with those who can directly improve food safety - the manufacturers, processors, retailers, and caterers, as well as the State agencies – collectively we can provide greater protection for consumers' health and their interests when it comes to food. The importance of an independent, robust, respected and well-regarded food safety inspectorate system is a tremendous asset for our country's economic reliance on its food sector. I am delighted that we continue to host the industry fora where we can engage with a variety of stakeholders throughout the year to raise awareness on new legal obligations, changes coming in the legal framework, listening to their concerns and challenges regarding legislative compliance but importantly developing those important relationships that will be needed when things

go wrong in their sector or their businesses. In addition, we continued our commitment to provide advice, host seminars and disseminate publications to support those in the food sector to continue to raise food standards in line with our mission.

We have a strong regulatory system in Ireland. However, the challenges faced by the agri-food sector due to climate change, biodiversity loss, shifts in the policy imperatives as well as the tense global geopolitical environment continue to put our systems under pressure. Therefore, food businesses must work hard to ensure the highest standards in food safety are in place. We must all work together to achieve the highest possible level of compliance. With this in mind, FSAI embarked on a significant e-learning training project during the year which will be launched in 2024. This training tool, building on significant resources already developed by the Authority, will support food businesses and keep them up to date with new legislation in food safety but also allow businesses to strengthen their teams' knowledge of food safety challenges within their businesses. There is no market for unsafe food, and it is incumbent on all involved in Ireland's food system – especially those within the food industry – to ensure that consumers' health and interests in respect of food are protected in so far as is reasonably possible, and food safety training is a key element of achieving this.

The food system – national and global - contains biological, chemical and physical hazards and it is important that we make every effort to manage, mitigate and/or remove these hazards from the system. Sometimes these hazards pose a risk to human health because they are at levels that are greater than the regulatory limit that is set out in the legislation or they find their way into food in an unexplained way. Therefore, action must be taken. In 2023, the Authority dealt with 773 food incidents with 425 of those incidents being of serious concern. While this was a decrease compared with previous years, we are noticing that these food incidents are more complex than ever before. This complexity requires expertise, data, and evidence to understand and we, along with inspectors from across the official agencies – the National Environmental Health Service, the DAFM, the SFPA, the local authorities and the network of official laboratories – worked tirelessly to resolve complex food incidents. Our ability to protect consumers is predicated on knowing where a product (or ingredient) has come from and is going to; how it has been managed within the food chain; how it has been controlled at various stages of production, processing and transport; and whether it has been consumed. The failure of food businesses to recognise the importance of robust and fit-for-purpose traceability systems can lead to a risk to public health, and this is not acceptable when it is avoidable in the majority of cases that we deal with. By the end of 2023, we had issued 71 public warnings about food being recalled from the market, 39 of which were advising the public not to consume a particular food as it was deemed unsafe, and 32 of which were issued to inform consumers of the illegal presence of a food allergen in food.



2023 proved to be very fruitful; highlights of which included a successful International Heads of Food Agencies Forum meeting in May – a gathering of 17 regulatory agencies from countries including Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, China, Morocco, Singapore, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) - to discuss how best to prepare for food safety crises and manage food safety incidents in what is becoming an increasingly complex global food system. The Forum was also joined by senior officials from the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. We also hosted several events for industry and other stakeholders including workshops on food reformulation – a key commitment in our service level agreement with the Department of Health (DoH). Our FSCC open meeting in November was a great success with more than 200 people joining us in person to hear from national and international speakers who shared insights on how the pursuit of food sustainability is driving innovation, as well as exploring efforts in policy, standards development and regulation, which are shaping the way our food is produced, distributed and consumed. We also launched our new website – our shop window to the world – an important resource for consumers, businesses and the global regulatory community. Our capacity building project in Albania came to end with many important and useful outputs delivered to a country seeking membership of the European Union (EU). An important milestone was reached with an inter-Departmental agreement in principle that the Local Authority Veterinary Service would be transferred to the DAFM – leading to one State veterinary service. We continued to provide important advice to Government in areas such as designation of laboratories to carry out official controls, the drinking water directive, the critical entities resilience directive, e-commerce, food labelling, food contact materials, regulatory divergence between the EU and the UK, and many more. We initiated a significant project of food supplements – the aim of which is develop a robust risk-based regulatory approach to assessing compliance with the complex legal framework that exists for these products. We hosted two Science Foundation Ireland fellows who supported our work on probiotics and data – both providing valuable insights for the team as well as undertaking regulatory science-based research to support our activities. Our Scientific Committee continued to work on scientific opinions that will inform our risk management decisions. I would like to thank the Scientific Committee for its dedication and commitment to supporting the Authority.

Throughout the year, I observed a definite passion among the team to ensure that the Authority embraced the opportunity provided by new technology; new working arrangements; and new learning opportunities. As a public sector body, we have worked hard to understand and build capacity to comply with any new requirements put in place by Government. Throughout the year, we continued to intensify our efforts to be compliant with all corporate governance requirements and deliver on our environmental and social responsibilities. I want to thank the Staff Committee and its subcommittees for all their work on making the FSAI a great place to work but also providing an important mechanism

for identifying opportunities to improve how we work together. In alignment with Ireland's broader public service innovation strategy, the Our Public Service 2020 framework, and the FSAI's strategic goals, the Authority's Innovation Team played a pivotal role in fostering a culture of creativity and continuous improvement. In 2023, the team organised the first all-staff event dedicated to innovation, featuring insightful talks from various government and public sector bodies. This event included a facilitated workshop designed to equip staff with the skills needed to drive innovation within the Authority.

Ensuring we can deliver on our legislative mandate requires a team aligned to a common purpose with a north star to guide our work and I am very privileged to have a very professional and committed team within the Authority. I would like to thank most sincerely my Senior Leadership Team – they have worked hard and with their teams have delivered a significant body of work, while dealing with highly pressurised situations, but have done so professionally and respectfully and fully in line with our values of teamwork and collaboration.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Secretary, Mr Greg Dempsey and his team in the Food Unit led by Louise Kissane, in DoH, for their continued support of the Authority. We have worked through some challenging yet critical issues in a respectful and collaborative way with the right balance of accountability and professionalism that one expects from those committed to public service. I would also like to thank our colleagues in the DAFM, the National Environment Health Service, the Health Services Laboratories, the SPPA, the State Laboratory and the NSAI for their unwavering commitment to food safety over the year. I would like to pay special thanks to colleagues in the local authorities: we have navigated some challenging times, but I believe we have reached a significant milestone that will deliver good outcomes for consumers and businesses alike.

Finally, I would like to thank Martin Higgins, who stepped down from his role as Chairperson of the Board and to Ann Horan who was appointed to Chairperson of the Board during 2023. Both Martin and Ann, as well as their Board colleagues, have been very supportive and have provided guidance to me and to the Senior Leadership Team over the year, and have worked together with us to develop the next strategy. I am looking forward to continuing to work closely with the Board and Ann, the team within the Authority, the Scientific Committee, the FSCC, and the industry fora as we continue to protect consumers – in Ireland and of Irish food abroad.



**Dr Pamela A Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer



**3.**

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**Strategy**

The FSAI launched its **current strategy** in 2019. The strategy sets out its vision, mission, values, and strategic goals and objectives for the 5 years from 2019 to 2023.

### 3.1 Vision, mission and values

**Our Vision**  
Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone

**Our Mission**  
We protect consumers and raise compliance through partnership, science and food law enforcement



**Figure 4 The FSAI’s vision, mission and values**

## 3.2 Strategic goals

### Goal 1

#### **Enforcement and compliance**

To enforce food law and increase compliance in collaboration with our regulatory partners through a world-class food control system

### Goal 2

#### **Science, expertise and evidence**

To advance food safety and integrity through independent science, expertise and a strong evidence base

### Goal 3

#### **Engagement and communication**

To be a leader in the safety and integrity of food through communication, partnership, collaboration and advocacy

### Goal 4

#### **Organisational excellence**

To empower our people, strengthen our systems and develop our culture in order to achieve organisational excellence and maximise our impact

### 3.3 Key achievements in 2023



## 3.4 The official food control system: The numbers at a glance

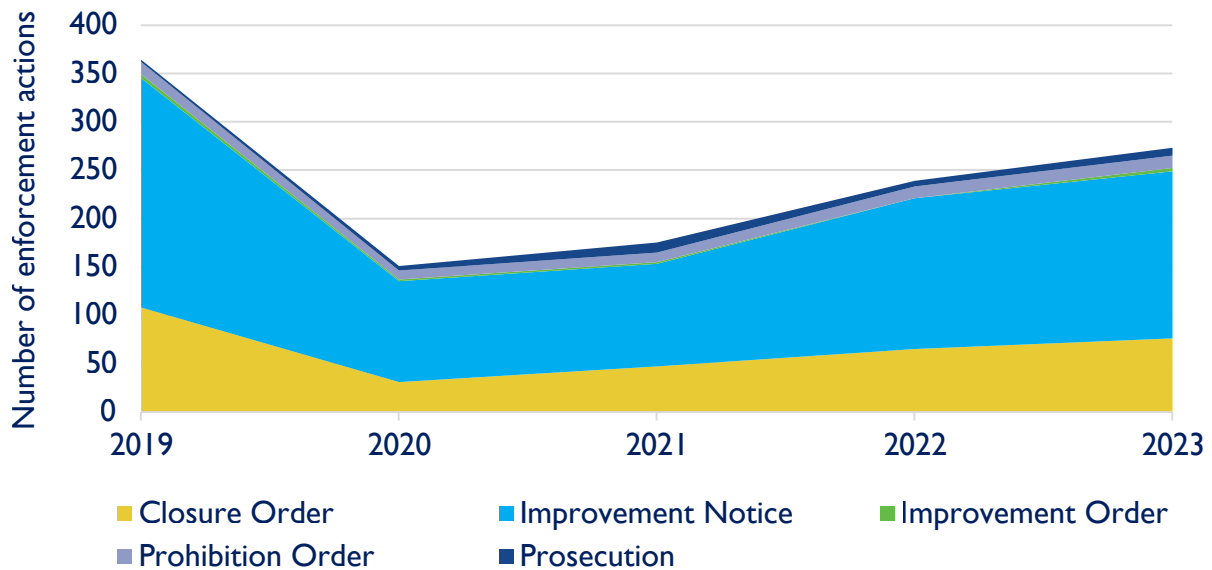
### 3.4.1 Enforcements

During 2023, food inspectors served food businesses with 76 Closure Orders, 3 Improvement Orders, 13 Prohibition Orders, and took 8 prosecutions against food businesses throughout Ireland (see Table 1 and Figure 5).

**Table 1 Enforcement notices and prosecutions, 2019–2023**

Enforcement action	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Closure Order	108	31	47	65	76
Improvement Notice	237	104	106	156	173
Improvement Order	4	2	2	0	3
Prohibition Order	13	9	10	12	13
Prosecution	2	5	10	6	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>273</b>

Recurring issues of food safety negligence were identified in food businesses which resulted in Enforcement Orders being issued in 2023. These food safety issues included inadequate food storage with the risk of contamination; a lack of pest control procedures such as monitoring and pest-proofing; inadequate temperature control in food storage, preparation and distribution; and insufficient staff training in food safety, personal hygiene and record-keeping.



**Figure 5 Enforcements and prosecutions, 2019–2023**

### 3.4.2 Food businesses supervised by Ireland’s official agencies

In 2023, 51,790 food businesses were under the supervision of official agencies that have service contracts with the Authority (Table 2). These food businesses carry out a wide range of activities, from importing and manufacturing to distributing, retailing and catering operations.

**Table 2 Number and type of food businesses under the supervision of official agencies, 2019–2023**

Official agency	Premises type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
DAFM	Primary producers	340	355	480	495	568
	Manufacturers and packers	428	494	424	429	373
	Distributors and transporters	132	108	115	113	111
	<b>Total</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>1019</b>	<b>1037</b>	<b>1052</b>



Official agency	Premises type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>HSE</b>	Service sector	28 832	28 769	29 267	28 722	28 881
	Not assigned	36	160	285	505	771
	Transporters	130	128	130	131	130
	Wholesalers/ distributors	1194	1193	1222	1295	1367
	Packers	112	107	121	120	118
	Retailers	13 373	13 673	14 537	14 153	14 268
	Manufacturers	1400	1526	1571	1641	1609
	Third-country importers/exporters	42	36	37	32	32
	Administrative food businesses	263	306	344	372	384
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45 382</b>	<b>45 898</b>	<b>47 514</b>	<b>46 971</b>	<b>47 560</b>
<b>Local authorities</b>	Slaughterhouses	175	166	175	164	154
	Small meat manufacturing plants	217	199	216	194	194
	Poultry plants	32	35	38	37	34
	Cold stores	38	42	53	50	53
	Butcher shops	9	7	7	5	5
	Mobile businesses	23	32	31	35	37
	Traders/brokers	0	6	7	9	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>487</b>

Official agency	Premises type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>SFPA</b>	Fishing vessels	2077	2080	2081	2085	2107
	Molluscan production areas	187	189	189	190	190
	Registered food businesses on land (including ice plants)	15	15	15	15	14
	Food brokers	1	1	1	2	2
	Freezer and factory vessels	67	57	62	59	55
	Processing plants	116	105	101	98	90
	Fresh fishery products plants	72	68	66	65	59
	Importers	62	56	55	54	35
	Cold stores	4	5	5	6	8
	Shellfish farmers	30	30	33	33	32
	Purification plants	28	23	24	22	22
	Dispatch centres	14	15	15	15	16
	Transporters	9	8	9	11	10
	Wholesalers/distributors	42	48	53	53	49
	Auction halls	1	1	1	1	1
	Other	0	1	1	1	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>2725</b>	<b>2702</b>	<b>2711</b>	<b>2710</b>
<b>Total number of food businesses</b>		<b>49 501</b>	<b>50 044</b>	<b>51 771</b>	<b>51 212</b>	<b>51 790</b>

### 3.4.3 Official controls and inspections

All official agencies operate risk-based programmes of official controls, and each agency categorises risk in agreement with the Authority. Those food businesses that carry out activities that present the greatest potential risk to human health are prioritised for inspection. Unannounced inspections of food businesses are a key element of the official controls, so that food businesses can be assessed while they are operating under normal conditions in order to determine their compliance with food legislation. Food businesses are also inspected for other reasons, such as for food sampling and investigating incidents and outbreaks. In addition to planned inspections, a significant number of unplanned inspections take place – for example, to investigate food incidents or to follow up on complaints from the public, and through advisory visits to food businesses. There was an 8.6% increase in the number of food inspections in 2023 compared with 2022 (Table 3).

**Table 3 All reported inspections in food businesses, 2019–2023**

Official agency	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>HSE (National Environmental Health Service)</b>	42 224	26 820	26 903	38 337	40 473
<b>DAFM (Inspectorate)</b>	12 214	7408	9538	11 375	13 770
<b>Local authorities</b>	4320	3790	3445	3643	3548
<b>SFPA</b>	2121	1911	2237	1982	2339
<b>National Standards Authority of Ireland</b>	88	37	40	76	47
<b>Total number of food business inspections</b>	<b>60 967</b>	<b>39 966</b>	<b>42 163</b>	<b>55 413</b>	<b>60 177</b>

### 3.4.4 Staff working in official controls

The official agencies report to the Authority annually on the staff resources they have dedicated to official controls under the service contracts. In 2023, 1,656 whole-time equivalents (WTEs) were involved in carrying out official controls in Irish food businesses (Table 4). There was an increase of 105 WTEs in 2023 over the number in 2022. The food safety inspectorate continues to develop its expertise, including through training courses, such as those provided or supported by the FSAI.

**Table 4 WTEs by official agency, 2019–2023**

Official agency	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>DAFM</b>					
Inspection Service	407	495	533	548	601
Laboratory Service	90	88	93	87	101
<b>HSE</b>					
National Environmental Health Service	377	425	431	479	500
Laboratory Service	125	132	131	142	148
<b>FSAI</b>	79	87	103	96	105
<b>Local authorities</b>	102	88	91	93	93
<b>Marine Institute</b>	41	39	38	26	27
<b>National Standards Authority of Ireland</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>SFPA</b>	45	47	52	59	59
<b>State Laboratory</b>		18	18	20	21
<b>Total number of WTEs</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>1420</b>	<b>1491</b>	<b>1551</b>	<b>1656</b>

### 3.4.5 Food sampling (as reported by laboratory analysing)

The service contracts include programmes by the official agencies for the sampling and testing of food for compliance with all aspects of food legislation. Samples taken by the food safety inspectorates are analysed by a network of official and national reference laboratories operated by the official agencies. In 2023, 59,693 samples were taken and tested, compared with 51,662 in 2022 (Table 5).

**Table 5 Number of samples taken and tested by the official agencies, 2019–2023 (as reported by laboratories analysing samples)**

Sampling agency	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>DAFM</b>	32 296	30 934	25 511	26 981	32 958
<b>HSE (National Environmental Health Service) Laboratory</b>	13 823	7626	11 648	11 792	13 747
<b>Marine Institute</b>	8455	6434	6244	6561	6903
<b>Local authorities</b>	2181	2088	2506	2573	2503
<b>State Laboratory</b>		3234	3793	3755	3582
<b>Total</b>	<b>56 755</b>	<b>50 316</b>	<b>49 702</b>	<b>51 662</b>	<b>59 693</b>



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**Directors' reports**

## 4.1 Dr Pamela Byrne

### Chief Executive's Office

**The CEO is the accounting officer for the FSAI and is responsible for the overall strategic and operational management of the Authority, as well as for providing leadership among her peers in food safety agencies across Europe and beyond.**

She reports directly to the Board and is supported by the Senior Leadership Team, which oversees operations within the Authority's five functional areas. The CEO represents Ireland on the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum and the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies and is the Vice Chair of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In 2023, she chaired a subcommittee of the EFSA Management Board in order to review EFSA's Independence Policy. She is the Vice President of the Global Food Regulatory Science Society, a not-for-profit organisation working to promote the development of the competencies, know-how and knowledge – including scientific policy analysis – that underpin food regulatory decisions and support the development and implementation of food control systems across the world. At a national level, she is a member of the Food Vision 2030 High Level Implementation Committee and is the FSAI's representative on the Steering Committee for Sustainable Food Systems Ireland (SFSI).

The CEO's Office has responsibility for liaising with the Authority's Board and coordinating the FSAI's communications function, which includes stakeholder management and engagement; the FSAI Advice Line; organising events; designing and publishing the Authority's publications; the FSAI website; leading the EuropeAid capacity building project in Albania; and promoting the Authority's work in the media. She is a prescribed person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. The Public Health Nutrition (PHN) Policy function is also part of the CEO's Office.

#### 4.1.1 Communications

The Authority actively engages with its stakeholders through a variety of online and in-person communication channels. These channels facilitate the flow of information, two-way dialogue and engagement on important food safety issues and topics.

During 2023, the Authority's communications team continued to manage the FSAI Advice Line, website, social media pages, events, publications and webinars. These platforms enable the Authority to communicate important messages and to provide advice on food safety to key stakeholders. By embracing online channels, the Authority is able to reach a wider audience in real time, and this ensures that consumers have access to timely and accurate information, which in turn allows the Authority to protect consumers.

#### 4.1.1.1 Media

In 2023, the Authority responded to 150 media queries and issued 19 press releases, which directly resulted in 964 outputs in print, online and broadcast media. Authority staff were regularly invited to speak on national and local radio throughout the year. The team continued its work on stakeholder engagement in order to create a wider understanding of the Authority’s role, to keep stakeholders updated on the latest scientific developments and changes in regulation, and to communicate with consumers with regard to food safety hazards.

#### 4.1.1.2 The FSAI Advice Line

The Authority’s Advice Line is a critical communications channel for active engagement with our stakeholders. During 2023, the Advice Line handled a total of 7,732 queries from various stakeholders and complaints from consumers. The Authority actively encourages consumers to contact it about any food safety complaints or issues they may have. In 2023, of the 4,395 complaints from consumers, 1,404 related to poor hygiene standards, 1,196 to unfit food and 1,175 to suspected food poisoning. This was an 8.3% increase compared with 4,058 complaints in 2022, which continues an overall upwards trend in the number of complaints over the past 5 years (see Figure 6). All complaints received by the FSAI in 2023 were followed up on and investigated by food inspectors throughout the country.

The Advice Line also provided advice and information throughout the year. In 2023, the Advice Line received 3,337 queries from the food industry, food safety consultants, researchers, consumers and others. Popular topics included: how to start a food business; requests for FSAI publications; food labelling information; best practice in food businesses; food safety training; and advice on importing and exporting food.



**Figure 6 Consumer complaints received by the FSAI Advice Line, 2019–2023**



#### **4.1.1.3 Social media**

The Authority has continued to enhance its social media channels, enabling it to alert consumers to food safety issues, respond to queries and engage one-to-one with consumers and food businesses. These social media channels also provide a key mechanism by which stakeholders can contact the Authority. At the end of 2023, the Authority had an online community of 76,356 engaged stakeholders between its Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube accounts. During the year, the Authority ran social media campaigns on various topics, including food safety training, food allergens, FSAI Enforcement Orders, labelling, World Food Safety Day, food reformulation, and starting a food business.

#### **4.1.1.4 Guidance**

The Authority continues to be a leading expert in food safety for its stakeholders, providing timely food safety guidance, conducting studies, and publishing scientific reports on a regular basis. During 2023, a total of **14 new publications** were published. All of these were published on the Authority's website, and they include reports from the DoH-funded Food Reformulation Task Force, guidance documents to support the food industry in legislative compliance, reports of audits undertaken by the Authority, a Scientific Committee report on vitamin D, and other content to support the achievement of the Authority's vision of 'Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone'.

#### **4.1.1.5 Events**

In May 2023, the Authority welcomed global food regulators to Dublin for the fourth annual meeting of the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum. The meeting was officially opened by Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Hildegard Naughton, and 17 regulatory agencies from countries including Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, China, Morocco, Singapore, Germany and the UK met to discuss how best to prepare for food safety crises and manage food safety incidents in what is becoming an increasingly complex global food system. Senior officials from the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the Codex Alimentarius Commission also joined the Forum.

In November 2023, the Authority hosted the FSCC open meeting, titled When Food Safety Met Sustainability, in order to discuss how food safety interacts with food sustainability. The meeting explored the need to ensure that the food system can meet the ever-changing needs of society while continuing to protect consumers' health in relation to food safety. Sustainable food systems must have food safety at the forefront of their processes.

The Authority also ran a number of other events during 2023, including a Breakfast Bite webinar on starting a food business and a Food Reformulation in Ireland workshop for food businesses working to reduce salt, sugar and fat in their products.



**A Food Reformulation workshop for food businesses was held in Cork in 2023.**

#### **4.1.1.6 The Authority's website**

The FSAI website is a valuable resource of food safety information for the Authority's stakeholders. In May 2023, the Authority launched a new website in order to better meet the needs and expectations of users, offering improved navigation and enhanced search capabilities. The website had more than 1,170,000 pageviews in 2023, with the most popular sections being Food Alerts, enforcement reports, Starting a Food Business, and Our Publications. Almost 40% of users came from Ireland, 49% from the UK, and the remainder from India, Canada, and other parts of the EU. The Authority's website is regularly updated with new information and has become a recognised source of accurate and timely information for all stakeholders as well as for other regulators across the world.

## 4.1.2 Public Health Nutrition Policy

The Public Health Nutrition Policy team provides scientific secretariat support for the Public Health Nutrition Subcommittee of the Authority's Scientific Committee. In 2023, work began on the development of the scientific recommendations to underpin Ireland's national food-based dietary guidelines for adolescents (aged 10–19 years) living in Ireland. The DoH will use these recommendations in order to develop healthy eating guidelines. This work incorporates guidance on sustainable dietary habits to protect the environment.

In March 2023, the Chief Specialist, Public Health Nutrition, assisted by the Technical Executive, participated in the 43rd plenary meeting of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU). In 2023, the Chief Specialist, Public Health Nutrition, also chaired a physical Working Group on establishing Nutrient Reference Values for labelling foods targeting older infants and young children. The Public Health Nutrition Policy team has been leading this work on Ireland's behalf since November 2017. The physical Working Group meeting was held in order to progress the general principles to establish actual values for the vitamin, mineral and protein requirements of infants and young children aged 6–36 months.

## 4.1.3 The Food Safety Project in Albania

The FSAI-led, EU-funded Food Safety Project in Albania concluded its activities on 30 October 2023. During its tenure (14 January 2019 to 30 October 2023), significant progress was made towards achieving the goal of strengthening food safety, animal health and plant health standards in Albania and to support Albania on its journey towards EU accession. Over its 57-month time span, the project worked with Albanian Government bodies to:

- ▶ Strengthen organisational and human resource capacities
- ▶ Enhance public awareness and communication on food safety
- ▶ Develop legislation, policy and strategies in order to bring Albania's systems and rules closer to EU standards.



### **The Food Safety Project in Albania closing event in Tirana, Albania, 19 October 2023.**

During 2023, activities were implemented in order to support the following key areas:

- ▶ Drafting laws on official controls, animal health and plant health in order to align with the respective EU regulations
- ▶ The development of a national programme for improving the quality of raw milk in Albania
- ▶ On-site training for inspectors in order to assess and categorise food establishments in line with EU requirements
- ▶ The development of an action plan to support the implementation of Albania's National Agri-Food Safety Strategy
- ▶ Making preparations for bilateral meetings between the European Commission and Albania
- ▶ Continued collaboration between Albanian laboratories and official laboratories in Ireland on the validation of test methods for veterinary medicine residues.

While the Food Safety Project in Albania's work has concluded, sustainable project outputs in key areas – including policy and legislation, capacity building, and crisis management – remain. These outputs are the cornerstones upon which Albanian Government bodies can continue to build as Albania strengthens its agri-food control system.

## 4.2 Mr Kevin Roantree

### Director, Corporate Affairs

**The Corporate Affairs functional area, led by Kevin Roantree, ensures the quality and alignment of the Authority's corporate operations in order to ensure that supporting structures, processes and systems are in place to maximise the delivery and impact of the FSAI strategy. During 2023, Kevin continued to progress an extensive programme of work, along with colleagues in the senior leadership and management teams, in order to develop an inclusive working environment aligned with the FSAI's values.**

Corporate Affairs has responsibility for the FSAI's human resources (HR), finance, information technology (IT), information and data management, organisational development, freedom of information, corporate governance, data protection, risk management, legal services, and general facilities management functions. This functional area is key to ensuring that the Authority achieves its business objectives and utilises efficient and effective approaches in order to continuously improve its services and ensure the optimal utilisation of resources.

The Corporate Affairs team also leads the Authority's compliance with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2015 Quality management systems compliance certification by working with colleagues across the organisation in developing and delivering on the FSAI's business planning and reporting mechanisms.

During 2023, the Authority's staff continued to work within a blended working model involving attendance in the office for a minimum of 2 days per week and working from home on the remaining days. An evaluation of the Authority's hybrid working model was initiated in 2023. The Corporate Affairs functional area continued to provide support to staff members through ensuring the availability of technological support in order for staff to work remotely, by maintaining the highest level of communication and support for staff, and by adapting processes and developing solutions in order to allow staff to deliver on their business objectives within a hybrid working environment.

## **4.2.1 Organisational compliance**

During 2023, the Authority ensured, and reported on, its compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (published in 2016), and it agreed its Oversight Agreement/Performance Delivery Agreement with the DoH. In addition, it provided the DoH with quarterly updates on progress against the Oversight Agreement/Performance Delivery Agreement (OA/PDA) as part of the agreed governance arrangement, and it did so within an improved business planning and reporting framework, which clearly highlighted progress against business objectives as well as any deviations from planned work and the measures being taken to manage them.

### **4.2.1.1 Statutory and other notices**

In accordance with Section 41 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001, members of the Authority's Board and Scientific Committee, as well as designated FSAI staff, are required to submit a declaration of interests annually.

### **4.2.1.2 Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997**

The FSAI's policy is to ensure that all payments are made promptly. Every effort is being made to ensure that all suppliers are paid within the required time frame, consistent with proper financial procedures and in accordance with best practice. The FSAI publishes quarterly reports of compliance on its website.

### **4.2.1.3 Data protection**

The FSAI endeavours to be compliant with all relevant data protection legislation. In so doing, it carries out all work required and updates its policies within this legislative framework. It has produced an information governance strategy, which includes maintaining compliance with data protection legislation, and it is being rolled out on an organisation-wide basis.

In 2023, no Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs) were made under data protection legislation.

### **4.2.1.4 Freedom of Information Act 2014**

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the FSAI is a designated Freedom of Information body. In compliance with this legislation, the FSAI provides its Publication Scheme on its website and processes requests for information on a continuing basis.

In 2023, the FSAI received 23 requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Of these requests, six were granted, six were partially granted, one was withdrawn, none were transferred and nine were refused. At year end, one case remained open.

The majority of requests for information processed under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 are for non-personal (i.e. corporate) information. Requests generally seek information about the FSAI and its work.

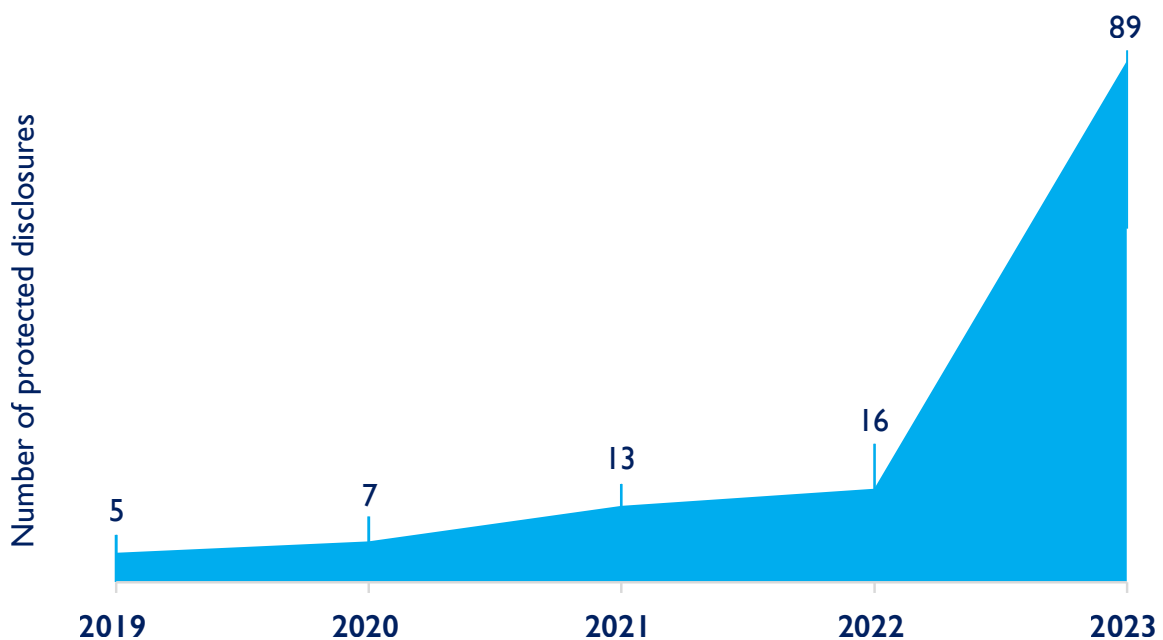
#### 4.2.1.5 Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Regulations

The Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Regulations give people the right to request access to environmental information held by public authorities.

In 2023, the FSAI received two requests under the AIE Regulations. At year end, no cases remained open.

#### 4.2.1.6 Protected disclosures

The CEO of the FSAI is a prescribed person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. During 2023, 89 protected disclosures were made to the CEO. Where breaches of food law were detected, the appropriate enforcement action was taken by either the FSAI or the official agency in order to ensure that consumer health and consumer interests were protected. Figure 7 shows the number of protected disclosures from 2019 to 2023.



**Figure 7 Protected disclosures, 2019–2023**

#### **4.2.1.7 Quality management**

The Authority is committed to having a strong quality management system in place. This is essentially based on the concept of identifying customers and their requirements, planning how to meet these requirements, documenting procedures where appropriate, setting measurable objectives for all functional areas and all staff, and regularly reviewing achievements.

In 2023, the Authority maintained its certification to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

#### **4.2.1.8 Official languages legislation**

The FSAI is committed to the aims of the Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021. All stationery, signage and recorded announcements being in Irish and English, and the Annual Report being published in Irish and English are among the initiatives being pursued. The FSAI has an Irish Language Representative who liaises with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media on the new requirements of the Official Languages Acts and reports back to the CEO and SLT at regular intervals. The FSAI is carrying out work on its Irish Language Strategy to make the implementation of obligations efficient and easy to monitor.

### **4.2.2 Organisational development**

The HR team within the Corporate Affairs functional area focused on ensuring that staff had the requisite competencies, skills and knowledge to meet both organisational and personal development needs. The Authority places a strong emphasis on continuous learning and development, and it encourages staff to engage in continuing professional and personal development activities. During 2023, a broad range of training programmes was delivered in order to support this; in addition, a management development programme was delivered, and the Authority supported a number of staff members through developmental and further education programmes.

### **4.2.3 Finance**

An efficient and effective finance function continues to be in place within the Authority in order to ensure appropriate management and control over resources, as well as to ensure that relevant accounting standards are met and adhered to and that effective financial management systems and controls are operating. During 2023, the internal auditors conducted a review of the systems of internal financial controls, and the level of assurance achieved was 'substantial to moderate'. The Authority also ensures that Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform budgetary measures are implemented in terms of salary, travel rates, procurement and other expenditure savings.



## 4.3 Dr Bernard Hegarty

### Director, Enforcement Policy

**The Enforcement Policy functional area, led by Dr Bernard Hegarty, is responsible for overseeing the enforcement of food legislation in Ireland. A key activity of the team is the management of the service contracts with the Authority's official agencies. These agencies carry out the majority of Ireland's enforcement activities.**

The Authority currently has 30 service contracts in place with official agencies of the State. These agencies undertake official control activities under these service contracts with the Authority. This mechanism for the enforcement of food safety legislation is set out under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, as amended. There are four main official agencies, and the Enforcement Policy team proactively manages these agreements in order to ensure that the official agencies are performing in accordance with the various indicators set out in the contracts. Contracts are signed by the FSAI CEO and by senior management in the official agencies. The team also organises the preparation and follow-up for the cross-agency audits carried out by the European Commission and other bodies. In 2023, the Authority was designated as the national contact point for the development of Ireland's national control plan for food.

The Enforcement Policy team also provides advice to Government Departments on proposed legislation, and it operates one of the Authority's consultative fora (the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee).

The official controls on food continued to operate in 2023, with enforcement action taken where necessary. During the year, the Authority published 92 Enforcement Orders (including 76 Closure Orders, 3 Improvement Orders and 13 Prohibition Orders) that were served by the official agencies or the Authority on food businesses for breaches of food safety legislation. This was a 19% increase on the 77 Enforcement Orders served in 2022, continuing the trend of an increase in enforcement activity following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The full texts of the Enforcement Orders served on food businesses were published in order to provide transparency on the official controls process and also to inform other food businesses of practices to avoid.

Eight prosecutions were taken during 2023 for breaches of food safety legislation: seven by the HSE and one by the FSAI.

The official controls are carried out under service contracts with 30 official agencies.

Most of the service contracts ran continuously through 2023, and therefore did not require renegotiation. The service contract with the Marine Institute was extended into 2023 in order to permit a new service contract to be finalised. The contracts with the local authorities were also extended during 2023 in order to permit inter-Departmental discussions on the future of this service. The FSAI and the official agencies continued to carry out management and monitoring of the service contracts through a combination of virtual and face-to-face meetings.

The Enforcement Policy team was greatly assisted in its online, remote and virtual work of engagement with the official agencies by its colleagues in the FSAI's IT team. The greater use of online and remote working technologies facilitated more extensive engagement, more rapid communications and, often, quicker decisions and better progress on important matters. Remote working technologies made attending and participating in events – or parts of events – a more realistic option for a wider range and greater number of stakeholders, so it was important to retain these benefits in stakeholder engagement.

### **4.3.1 Official controls legislation**

During 2023, the Authority continued its activity on the EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625. This Regulation, supplemented by a set of detailed implementing and delegated legislation, sets out rules for EU Member States' performance of controls in the agri-food sector.

A programme of work to implement Regulation (EU) 2017/625 continued during 2023, including:

- ▶ Collaboration with the official agencies to oversee the development of the official controls system
- ▶ Input into the development of tertiary legislation at EU level (implementing and delegated EU regulations) in relation to Regulation (EU) 2017/625
- ▶ Input into the development of EU guidance on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/625
- ▶ The provision of guidance to the official agencies on the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 and the implementing national legislation
- ▶ The provision of advice to the DoH and the DAFM on the national legislation to give effect to the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

### 4.3.2 Management of service contracts

During 2023, the long-term future of the Local Authority Veterinary Service was considered between stakeholders. The transfer of the service to the DAFM was proposed in 2021 as a future option, and the service contract with and funding of the local authorities were extended into 2023 by agreement with the County and City Management Association (CCMA), (which represents the chief executives of the local authorities) in order to allow this proposal to be further considered. By the end of 2023, inter-Departmental discussions reached an agreement in principle that the Local Authority Veterinary Service should transfer to the DAFM in 2024 and the service contracts were again extended to 29 February 2024. The local authority veterinary inspectors continued to carry out official controls in order to ensure consumer protection and business continuity while inter-Departmental discussions were ongoing. During the year, the Enforcement Policy team worked with the local authority veterinary inspectors to develop guidance for food safety management systems in small slaughterhouses, which was launched with a series of regional training sessions for the industry.

Since the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, Ireland's official controls system has had to accommodate significantly increased levels of official controls on the import of food, reflecting the status of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) as a third country. With regard to exports, the Authority continued to work with the official agencies in order to prepare for the proposed UK requirement that veterinary certificates accompany consignments of foods of animal origin from Ireland to or through Great Britain, which had been deferred into 2023 and was deferred again during the year until 31 January 2024. The preparations included the transfer of some food businesses between the official agencies in order to facilitate efficient export certification, the development of new procedures and the provision of training on certification.

S.I. No. 79 of 2020 – which gave effect to the revised EU legislation on official controls, Regulation (EU) 2017/625 – assigned some new responsibilities to the FSAI, including oversight of official laboratories designated by the DoH, and a requirement for the FSAI and the HSE to publish guidelines to support the implementation of various aspects of the EU Regulation, including the use of its enforcement powers. The FSAI continues to provide guidance on supervisory arrangements for food businesses with complex food activities that could potentially involve more than one official agency carrying out official controls. A meeting of a cross-agency group agreed changes to the existing guidance. This group also drafted guidance to improve the interagency consistency of processes for obtaining approval from an official agency when processing foods of animal origin – a legislative requirement for certain food businesses.

The Enforcement Policy team coordinates the preparation and follow-up of the official agencies for the audits that the European Commission (DG SANTE) conducts in order to verify Ireland's compliance with the official controls legislation.

In 2023, this work included the following:

- ▶ Assisting the DAFM with the coordination of the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) audit DG(SANTE)2023-7693 between 20 and 31 January 2023. The audit was carried out in order to evaluate the monitoring and reporting of antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic and commensal bacteria. The hybrid audit consisted of remote technical meetings and on-site visits.
- ▶ Coordinating extensive cross-agency preparations in advance of, and responses during and in follow-up to, the fishery products audit (DG(SANTE) 2023-7716) that was carried out in order to evaluate the food safety control systems in place governing the production and placing on the market of fishery products. The hybrid audit consisted of remote technical meetings and on-site visits carried out over a 3-week period, between 20 February and 13 March 2023. The official agencies involved in the audit include the SFPA, the Marine Institute and the DAFM.
- ▶ Coordinating Ireland's competent authority response to the draft audit report DG(SANTE) 2021-7188 on bovine meat, including traceability, following extensive discussions with the DAFM, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders. The Irish response was submitted to DG SANTE by the agreed deadline of 15 December 2023 for publication in 2024.

### 4.3.3 Advisory work

In 2023, the FSAI prepared advice for the DoH on developments in national and EU legislation. This advice supported the DoH's preparation of a new order (S.I. No. 222 of 2023) under Section 5 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 to update the list of food laws within the remit of the FSAI and the service contracts. During 2023, the FSAI advised the DoH on the following:

- ▶ The revision of provisions in the national legislation on official controls (S.I. No. 79 of 2020) concerning the rights of food businesses to avail of a second expert opinion where the results of official testing are disputed
- ▶ The DoH's transposition of Directive (EU) 2022/2557 on enhancing the resilience of critical entities, as the FSAI was considered as a potential competent authority for the enforcement of this Directive in the food sector

- ▶ The cross-Departmental development of national legislation to transpose the recast of Directive (EU) 2020/2184 on the quality of water intended for human consumption, which resulted in the issuing of S.I. No. 99 of 2023 in early 2023. The FSAI set up and chaired a cross-agency implementing group in order to develop a process for an exemption in the regulation for food businesses with their own private water supply from the requirements of the Directive.

#### **4.3.4 EU engagement**

EU engagement included continued participation in three EU Member State and European Commission expert groups working on the legislation governing food contact materials, the official controls Regulation and on a standard format for producing national control plans for official controls across the EU and reporting on them. The DoH and the DAFM have appointed the FSAI as the single contact point required by Regulation (EU) 2017/625 for producing national control plans. Enforcement Policy team members also participated in an EU working group examining compliance with EU rules on olive oil monitoring and reporting.

## 4.4 Ms Gail Carroll

### Director, Regulatory Affairs and Compliance Building

**The Regulatory Affairs and Compliance Building (RACB) functional area, led by Gail Carroll, has four teams: Environmental Health, Training and Compliance, Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture, and Imports and Exports.**

RACB works closely with staff in the official agencies in order to facilitate the informed, consistent and effective application of food law by supporting implementation and by providing clarity on the application of legal requirements, including training and guidance. The team provides expert advice to the DoH and the DAFM in order to support the development of legislation and policy at national and European level. The team is also involved in the development of approaches to the implementation and enforcement of legislation at European level – for example, through the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies group.

RACB works to raise compliance with food legislation and standards in the food industry through developing industry compliance supports and guidance, delivering training and seeking opportunities to influence the adoption of the highest food safety standards. The RACB team chairs the Authority's Retail, Food Service and Artisan fora, working directly with representatives from these sectors to improve compliance. Our technical experts also contribute to the development of industry standards, where we can support the prominence of food safety messages. The team is also responsible for the management of the Authority's FSCC, which facilitates consultations and discussions with the FSAI's stakeholders for the purpose of promoting higher standards with representatives of consumers, producers, retailers, distributors, caterers, manufacturers, the food inspectorate and academia.

#### 4.4.1 Food supplements

Those food businesses placing a food supplement on the market for the first time in Ireland are legally obliged to notify and provide the Authority with a copy of the supplement label. In 2023, the FSAI's online food notification system facilitated the notification of 3,789 food supplements to the Authority as part of compliance with food businesses' legal obligation to notify. This represented an increase of more than 100% from 2018. Applying a risk-based approach, the Authority identified 818 of these supplements that, due to their ingredients, required follow-up in order to address any possible risks to consumers. There continues to be a high level of complex regulatory and enforcement issues arising upon the assessment of

notified products. These include the increasing popularity and range of food supplements; the growth in their supply from non-EU countries through e-commerce; Brexit and other specific issues, such as other EU Member States using Ireland as their point of notification to the EU market; the emergence of the popularity of cannabidiol (CBD) supplements; and the presence of novel foods and substances that are not permitted in food supplements. In response to these trends, 2023 saw extensive work being undertaken in order to inform and support the development of a risk-based approach to regulating this sector, which is better placed to mitigate risks to the consumer. In addition, improvements in the regulation and compliance of food included the provision of in-person training to official agency officers, the development of an online training resource and the production of compliance-building supports for the industry. The FSAI regulates food supplements in conjunction with the HSE, with significant work carried out in 2023 in order to address safety and compliance issues. The FSAI also works with other agencies, such as the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

## **4.4.2 Environmental Health and Regulatory Affairs**

The Environmental Health team plays a critical and strategic role in protecting the consumer through supporting the FSAI, the National Environmental Health Service, the Food Safety Laboratory Service of the HSE, and other official agencies in the consistent and effective implementation and enforcement of food legislation.

The Environmental Health team works closely with industry members in order to build compliance and foster a culture of food safety within Ireland's food industry, including leading the food service and retail fora. In 2023, the RACB Environmental Health team led the provision of expert advice on a range of regulatory affairs issues, including in relation to a major change to food labelling legislation proposed under the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy.

The team had regular engagement with trade bodies on food safety and regulatory issues, including those in relation to spirit drinks, dealing with industry complaints on labelling, and various compliance issues. The FSAI worked on regulatory issues in collaboration with the DAFM and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), as well as with Revenue, and Customs.

During 2023, the team regularly engaged with Food Drink Ireland (FDI), Enterprise Ireland and other trade bodies on a range of regulatory issues, including food labelling; food additives; food safety and labelling issues associated with the war in Ukraine; spirit drinks; and other matters.

Work continued in relation to the regulation and official controls of foods sold through e-commerce. The FSAI worked with the HSE in relation to responsibilities for registration and other requirements of food law relevant to e-commerce food business operators and online platforms that facilitate the delivery of prepared food from restaurants and takeaways. The increasing prevalence of these operators requires the development of new regulatory approaches to food law enforcement.

During 2023, members of the Environmental Health team participated in EU working groups on general food law, e-commerce, food supplements, food information and labelling, official controls, and import controls, contributing to the development of legislation at EU level; in addition, the team provided expert advice to the DoH in relation to food legislation.

### **4.4.3 Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture**

In November 2022, the FSAI appointed a new Chief Specialist in Veterinary Public Health to lead the Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture team. The Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture team provided expert support for the FSAI, the official agencies and industry members by advising on scientific, technical and enforcement issues; incident management; developing guidance; and supporting service contract management and liaison. In 2023, key aspects of this internal support included the reactive management of incidents such as undeclared importation and *Salmonella* in the poultry meat chain, as well as contribution to DG SANTE audits and corrective actions to reports received.

Among some key work areas for the Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture team in 2023 included providing support for the technical advisory committees of Bord Bia Quality Assurance Schemes in a 2023 revision initiative regarding all primary producer standards, and providing technical advice for Ireland's move towards compliance with the significant changes to the official control monitoring of residues of veterinary medicines in foods of animal origin. During 2023, the Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture team took FSAI lead on the development of the FSAI's approach to both guidance and the official control of food safety culture legislative obligations, and undertook a holistic appraisal of the FSAI's approach to sustainability initiatives. Areas where policy advice was developed included the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the modification to legal requirements for the production of foods of animal origin.

### **4.4.4 Food imports and exports**

During 2023, the RACB Imports and Exports team continued to support the official agencies in their official controls on imported food, with increased collaboration for food exports. A cross-agency working group was established in 2023 as a platform to discuss compliance issues in the area of food imports and exports and regulatory divergence. This is



a collaborative group for representatives from the FSAI, HSE, DAFM and Revenue to share information and discuss cross-agency compliance issues.

During 2023, with the UK's publication of *The Border Target Operating Model*, the RACB Imports and Exports team supported the official agencies responsible for issuing export certificates for goods destined for the UK market. A number of bilateral meetings were held with official agencies and advisory notes were published for food business operators.

Three meetings of a separate cross-agency working group on import controls on high-risk foods of non-animal origin were held during 2023 in order to discuss inputs to EU legislative developments on high-risk foods of non-animal origin.

The RACB Imports and Exports team participated in EU working groups and expert groups on official controls and imports of food of non-animal origin (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793) and on veterinary import controls legislation. The team also attended meetings of the European Heads of Food Safety Agencies working group on imports and certification. The EU working group meetings led to amendments to the listing of products of non-animal origin subject to official controls on entry to the EU, while the meetings regarding the veterinary import controls legislation provided an opportunity for the exchange of information, experience and good practice between the European Commission and EU Member States.

During 2023, the RACB Imports and Exports team continued to monitor and examine the implications of regulatory divergence between the EU and the UK on foods destined for the Irish market. Some of the areas of potential regulatory divergence that were considered included the introduction in the UK of the precision breeding bill (which allows for new technologies such as gene editing) and the EU amendments to the use of nitrates and nitrites, both of which could have impacts on foods destined for the Irish market. The RACB Imports and Exports team provided advice to the Irish Government, the official agencies and industry throughout 2023 on the areas of imports, export controls and regulatory divergence.

With the publication of the Windsor Framework in 2023, the RACB Imports and Exports team considered and continued to monitor developments regarding the implications of the Framework for food being placed on the market in Ireland. A frequently asked questions advisory section on the Windsor Framework was published on the FSAI's website.

The RACB Imports and Exports team contributed to the Irish Government's ongoing work in relation to Brexit through the DoH's Brexit and UK Strategic Oversight Group, which continued to meet throughout 2023, with the FSAI providing advice on food safety and authenticity issues arising as a result of Brexit.

## 4.4.5 Training and Compliance

Throughout 2023, the Training and Compliance team continued to develop training and compliance-building materials for inspectors, food businesses and FSAI staff.

The FSAI's Food Safety and You training programme is a 4-hour, induction-level food safety course for food handlers that promotes active learning and the application of training in the work environment. The FSAI employs a 'train the trainer' approach with this programme, whereby the FSAI trains managers, supervisors and trainers from food businesses so that they can deliver the Food Safety and You programme to their own staff. In 2023, 90 trainers participated in this programme. The Training and Compliance team also delivered the induction-level programme to FSAI staff.

Official agency staff undertook face-to-face, virtual and self-serve training throughout the year.

Forty-three inspectors from the National Environmental Health Service attended training on food supplements in 2023. This training focused on key food safety legislation for food supplement composition, labelling, and nutrition and health claims.

Ninety-one inspectors from the HSE, the DAFM, the SFPA and local authorities attended Food Fraud Investigations training in 2023. The objective of the training was to have a cohort of trained inspectors that are knowledgeable about and confident in carrying out food fraud investigations as part of their work.

In 2023, a total of 117 inspectors attended 2 Better Training for Safer Food (BTFS) sustained training missions that were held for official control inspectors in Ireland. The sustained training missions were on:

- ▶ Food hygiene and flexibility
- ▶ Microbiological shelf-life studies of ready-to-eat foods related to *Listeria monocytogenes*.

The content of the two training courses was tailored to Irish needs, and subject matter experts from Ireland and the EU delivered the courses. This allowed the tailoring of the courses to focus on the experience of inspectors in the field, which included reflecting Irish situations and challenges in the exercises, workshops and case studies.

The FSAI facilitates the participation of inspectors from the HSE, the SFPA and local authorities, as well as FSAI staff, in the EU Better Training for Safer Food programme. In 2023, 61 participants from Ireland attended Better Training for Safer Food training courses.

As part of the FSAI's continued e-learning programme, 616 inspectors and FSAI staff participated in e-learning courses in 2023. Significant work was also carried out on the upgrading of the FSAI's learning management system and the development of a new FSAI Learning Portal.

## 4.5 Dr Michelle Minihan

### Director, Audit, Incidents and Investigations

**Michelle Minihan leads the Audit, Incidents and Investigations functional area, which is responsible for conducting audits, managing food incidents, and investigating fraudulent and deceptive practices and protected disclosures.**

The Audit, Incidents and Investigations team carries out audits of the official food control system, as well as targeted audits of food businesses in order to ensure compliance with the Authority's legal mandate. It also provides support during third-country and European Commission DG SANTE audits in Ireland.

The Audit, Incidents and Investigations team conducts investigations in conjunction with official agencies and other State agencies where serious breaches of food law have been alleged or food fraud has been detected. These investigations determine the nature and extent of non-compliance with food law and/or related food fraud offences. Outcomes from such investigations may result in enforcement actions and prosecutions being instigated. Notifications to the CEO (a prescribed person under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014) are investigated by the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team.

#### 4.5.1 Audits

The Authority's risk-based audit programme is designed to ensure adequate coverage of all relevant areas of activity and all official agencies over a period of 5 years. Audit reports and their corrective action plans are published [on the Authority's website](#). In 2023, the Authority published two audit reports on official controls in both the dairy production chain and the bottled water industry. The Authority also published corrective action plans to address the recommendations of both reports, which included actions already taken by official agencies and those actions which were still to be closed out, but for which time frames are in place to close out on outstanding actions.

In 2023, the Authority commenced one official control audit. This was an audit of official controls in food business operators supervised by the Local Authority Veterinary Service. This audit report will be published in 2024.

There was one targeted audit carried out in 2023: an audit of ambient storage and distribution food business operations. The audit looked at various food storage and distribution establishments, including wholesalers and retail distribution centres across Ireland. This audit report will be published in 2024.

In addition to this, a fact-finding review of official controls and food business operator compliance with food safety culture requirements took place in 2023. The purpose of this fact-finding review was to establish the extent to which food business operators incorporate, maintain and demonstrate food safety culture within their organisation.

#### **4.5.1.1 International audits**

Ireland's official controls system is subject to regular assessment by the European Commission's DG SANTE audit function. In 2023, the European Commission carried out four audits between January and June. These audits included a hybrid audit of the monitoring and reporting of antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic and commensal bacteria, a fishery products audit, an audit of food of non-animal origin – the marketing and use of plant protection products - and an on-farm animal welfare audit. The audits were conducted with the relevant supervising official agencies. Representatives of the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team attended two of these audits, and also supported the official agencies and engaged with the auditors as required.

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continues to carry out foreign surveillance inspections in Ireland in order to ensure that food business operations in Ireland that supply food to the United States of America meet the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). In July 2023, the FDA carried out five inspections of food business operators in Ireland. The implementation of any corrective action in response to non-compliances raised by the FDA inspectors is monitored by official agency personnel in so far as they relate to compliance with EU or national food legislation.

The Authority also continues to represent and participate on behalf of Ireland in the European Commission-chaired National Audit Systems (NAS) Network. The Authority attended two NAS meetings in 2023.

### **4.5.2 Food fraud investigations**

During 2023, authorised officers from the FSAI, together with other State regulatory authorities and official agencies, conducted 57 investigations and 21 online investigations. These investigations required a variety of approaches, ranging from the execution of a search warrant obtained from the District Court to the monitoring of social media pages in cases where the online operation of unauthorised food businesses was suspected.

Outcomes from various protected disclosures and investigations in 2023 resulted in three Closure Orders, two Prohibition Orders and four Compliance Notices. Food safety concerns identified during these investigations necessitated the removal and disposal of more than 141,806 kg of products of animal origin.

During 2023, the Authority engaged with online platforms (such as Facebook and Instagram) where illegal food businesses were selling products online. This engagement resulted in two unregistered food businesses' pages being taken down by the social media sites.

The Food Fraud Task Force is chaired by the Director of Audit, Incidents and Investigations. During 2023, one meeting of the Food Fraud Task Force was convened. This multi-agency, multidisciplinary forum continues to consider and exchange information on issues that are likely to significantly impact on food integrity or authenticity. In 2023, Audit, Incidents and Investigations functional area staff also attended one meeting of the Cross-Border Task Force on Food and Rural Crime. This meeting was chaired by the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland.

On behalf of the Authority, the Audit, Incidents and Investigations functional area acts as the national food fraud contact point for the European Commission. During 2023, the FSAI participated in two EU Agri-Food Fraud Network meetings. The European Commission published a report that was the result of a project to collect information on potential fraud risks identified by Member State authorities and control methods to detect fraudulent and deceptive practices in the agri-food chain. The Joint Research Centre's technical report, [\*\*\*Fighting fraudulent and deceptive practices in the agri-food chain\*\*\*](#), was published in 2023.

In addition, the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) database was monitored. Ireland published two fraud cases in 2023, the first relating to an information request regarding an alcohol company in France and the second in relation to the fraudulent misdeclaration of consignments imported from the UK to Ireland.

The Authority continues to participate in the Food Industry Intelligence Network (FIIN) and meets with members of the management board on a quarterly basis. FIIN currently represents a number of large food industry companies from Ireland and the UK. In Ireland, the Authority sits on the Emerging Risks and Threats Forum, which is jointly chaired by Ibec and the FSAI. During 2023, Authority staff participated with official agency staff at one multi-agency roadside checkpoint that was organised by An Garda Síochána.

In collaboration with An Garda Síochána and Revenue's Customs Service, the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team participated in the joint Europol/INTERPOL operation known as Operation OPSON XII, which targeted counterfeit and fraudulent food. Operation OPSON XII ran from December 2022 to May 2023. The returns submitted by the FSAI to Europol included seizures and disposal of 13,983.16 kg of food of animal origin.

### 4.5.3 Prosecutions

In April of 2023, a Louth-based meat food business operator was convicted by the Dundalk Circuit Court in a case resulting from a multi-agency investigation by Louth Local Authority and the FSAI together with An Garda Síochána into fraudulent and deceptive practices. During the investigation, 135 boxes of meat and poultry products were seized bearing fraudulent labels purporting that the food came from approved food businesses when its traceability could not be established. The judge imposed 150 hours of community service in lieu of 15 months' imprisonment.

### 4.5.4 Food incidents: Alerting the public

A key aspect of liaison with both the food industry and the official agencies is dealing with food incidents. Food incidents occur when a food is either:

- ▶ Suspected of posing a risk to consumers' health
- ▶ Non-compliant with food law.

In either situation, a fast risk management response is required in order to remove unsafe or non-compliant food from the market and alert consumers in cases where a risk to their health has been identified.

The FSAI's Food Incidents team is the national contact point for the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), a network to exchange information between its members – EU Member States, the European Commission and EFSA – on hazards identified in food, feed and food contact materials. The FSAI's Food Incidents team is also the contact point for the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), a global network of national food safety authorities whose secretariat is hosted by the World Health Organization. In 2023, the RASFF dealt with 4,695 notifications. Of these, 92 were notified by Ireland. There were 21 notifications in respect of food which had originated in Ireland, and a total of 208 notifications were related to foods distributed in Ireland.

In 2023, the Food Incidents team dealt with 773 food incidents, to which a response capability was required on a 24/7 basis. This is a decrease when compared with the total number of food incidents in 2022 (847). However, the broad numbers do not reflect the increased complexity of incidents that involved complicated distribution chains, which required the coordination of multi-agency responses and third-country engagement and involvement.

Of the 773 food incidents notified to the FSAI in 2023, 425 were 'full food incidents', the most serious category. One of the key activities of the Food Incidents team is the

management of food-related incidents together with FSAI staff and staff in the inspection and laboratory services, the official agencies, and the affected food businesses in order to ensure the removal of unsafe food from the market and the communication of the associated risk to consumers. A total of 71 public warnings about food being recalled from the market were issued in the form of food alerts (39) and food allergen alerts (32), a decrease overall in comparison with 2022 figures (126).

In 2023, 39 food alerts advising the public not to consume unsafe food were issued. The decrease in the number of alerts in 2023 compared with 2020–2022 was largely due to the fact that no alerts for the substance ethylene oxide were issued in 2023. Ethylene oxide is a banned substance in the EU. Following high levels of non-compliance identified by a Commission pesticides survey, measures were implemented in 2020, and a ban was further strengthened when a 0.1 mg/kg residual limit for ethylene oxide in all food additives was introduced in September 2022. The principal reasons for food alerts in 2023 were the presence of a direct or indirect threat to consumers' health and interests, such as the presence of foreign matter, chemical contaminants or pathogenic microbes such as *Salmonella* or *Listeria*. In 2023, the Food Incidents team managed two significant incidents of public health concern. The first was a large recall of several batches of raw chicken products due to the possible presence of *Salmonella* Typhimurium, and the second was related to a large recall of imported frozen food of animal origin due to inadequate traceability.

In addition to the 39 food alerts issued, the FSAI issued 32 food allergen alerts. Allergen alerts are issued when a food contains one or more of 14 categories of allergens that are legally required to be declared on the label and the food has failed to do so. Three in every 100 people in Ireland have food allergies; therefore, it is important that consumers are notified of any product which contains an undeclared allergen. Subscribers to the Authority's alert system are informed of these alerts by text message.



## 4.6 Dr Wayne Anderson

### Director, Food Science and Standards

**The Food Science and Standards (FSS) functional area provides expert food safety and scientific services for the FSAI. The team focuses on collating and critically evaluating scientific evidence as well as generating data to support risk assessment and underpin technical advice.**

The team also provides Ireland's Focal Point for EFSA, ensuring that Ireland's risk assessment community is connected to the work of EFSA and can engage in EFSA's activities, such as attending scientific colloquia, contributing data and accessing EFSA grants. The FSS functional area has a team of dedicated scientists and administrators who work together to expand its expertise and apply this knowledge in order to protect consumers' health and interests. In addition to risk assessment, its work includes developing compliance tools and drafting technical guidance for the food industry and enforcement officers, providing expert support for food incidents and investigations, conducting direct official controls on certain foods, and providing technical advice to Government Departments regarding the development of food legislation at European and national level.

The FSS functional area ensures that the best scientific advice is available to the FSAI through the management and support of the FSAI Scientific Committee, which comprises of 15 independent scientists appointed by the Minister for Health. It contributes to the wider scientific community through lectures at third-level institutions and by delivering papers at national and international scientific meetings. Its scientists collaborate extensively with EFSA and provide technical input into the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which sets international food safety standards.

#### 4.6.1 Supporting food law enforcement

The official agencies strive for consistent, effective and efficient food law enforcement through their inspection officers and official laboratory staff. The FSS functional area supports this effort through its provision of scientific and technical advice. In 2023, the FSS team coordinated the first Coordinated Control Plan on Contaminants in Food and submitted it to the European Commission in conjunction with official agencies, and provided FSAI input into the HSE's National Chemical Sampling Programmes for 2024 and the DAFM's 2023 sampling plans for veterinary medicines and pesticides. FSS scientists also completed mapping of the complex chemical-related food legislation in order to identify gaps in monitoring and to further improve chemical safety sampling plans into the future.

The participation of FSS scientists in the development of chemical safety legislation at EU level enabled the FSAI to identify four new testing requirements in upcoming legislation, thus helping official laboratories to get a head start on developing methods in preparation for this new legislation. The FSS and Enforcement Policy teams also collaborated on the designation of DAFM laboratories for controls on contaminants in foods in order to support the delivery of the Coordinated Control Plan on Contaminants in Food.

In 2023, the FSS team, in collaboration with the RACB training team, developed a self-serve course for inspectors on the chemical contaminants legislation, with a particular focus on the sampling requirements for contaminants in food. We also developed and delivered training to official agency staff on the control of *Listeria monocytogenes* for the European Commission's Better Training for Safer Food sustained training mission. The FSS team also provided technical advice to the Enforcement Policy team in order to update Guidance Note No. 25, Guidance for the assessment of compliance of legislation applicable to natural mineral waters, spring waters and other water, and progressed work on a new guidance document on environmental monitoring for *Listeria monocytogenes*. In order to help the HSE in the consistency of its food sampling work, the FSS team also updated guidance on sampling and result designation.

FSS team members often provide the technical knowledge to help resolve larger incidents and foodborne disease outbreaks. In 2023, technical expertise for incident support included the recall of food, the provision of novel food advice on the control of foods containing CBD, and the provision of microbiological input into the safety of retail ice and *Cronobacter* contamination of infant formula, as well as the provision of chemical safety input into incidents of food contamination with mineral oils, excess sulphite additives and the issue of nitrous oxide misuse by children. On the foodborne outbreak and incident front, FSS microbiologists provided extensive technical support for an incident of *Salmonella* Typhimurium in the poultry food chain and for a second human outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium in food, as well as follow-up support for the *Clostridium botulinum* outbreak in France during the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

In 2023, the FSS team continued its work performing direct official controls on foods where technical expertise was required. In this context, the FSS team provided technical advice on 8 genetically modified food queries and 223 novel food queries, and provided feedback to the European Commission on 3 traditional food notifications. In the area of foods for specific groups (FSG), the FSS team utilised specialist nutrition and dietetic expertise in order to assess the safety and foods for specific groups legislation compliance of 203 foods for specific medical purposes, 62 infant formula, 33 follow-on formula and 5 total diet replacements. Non-compliances for these foods were identified and addressed with the manufacturers. An audit of compliance of marketing material distributed by three infant formula manufacturers was also completed. In addition, 70 foods for specific groups were

checked for compliance with additives legislation, and 1 health claim dossier was received, processed and passed to the European Commission for assessment.

## 4.6.2 Strengthening science and evidence

In 2023, the FSAI Scientific Committee met four times and reviewed its 5-year work plan, while FSS staff made changes to strengthen the governance arrangements for the Committee. Three new requests for advice were agreed, and work on six draft opinions continued in the various subcommittees. The Scientific Committee signed off on advice: *'Assessment of the safety of "probiotics" in food supplements*, which was published in 2024. Internal guidance was completed by the FSS team on systematic literature searching for risk assessment support. This will help support the work of the Scientific Committee.

FSS scientists produced 240 risk assessments in order to support food safety incidents and investigations in 2023 and agreed new procedures with the Audit, Incidents and Investigations team in order to ensure that only the more complex assessments were handled by the FSS team, which sped up the incident management process. In addition, the FSS team provided extensive input into the development of new risk assessment and risk management procedures for egg production in conjunction with scientists from the DAFM.

FSS scientists maintained FSAI influence on the direction of important food safety research by serving on the steering boards of 11 major national research programmes funded by the DAFM and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), covering topics such as the safety of horticulture foods, the control of mycotoxins, and waterborne infection with Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC). The FSS team also delivered a successful and innovative 'Living Lab' for 50 European regulators as part of its contribution to an EU-funded research project, FoodSafeR, which is aimed at developing tools for emerging risk identification and evaluation. Food surveys were also completed in order to establish consumers' exposure to sulphites and to establish the microbiological safety and quality of ice. Data on zoonoses in Ireland for 2021 and 2022 were published on the FSAI website, and 2023 zoonoses data were submitted to EFSA.

2023 was the second operational year of the national Food Reformulation Task Force within FSS under a service level agreement (SLA) with Healthy Ireland in the DoH. A food label data repository was created and updated in order to provide a source of information on the nutrient content of foods, and an approach to the creation of a branded food database was developed. The FSS team made presentations and participated in the World Health Organization's European Salt Action Network and the Sugar and Calorie Reduction Network. It also contributed to the evidence base through the EU-funded Joint Action Best-ReMaP project and collaborated with *safefood* on research related to food reformulation. The Food Reformulation Task Force published two reports in 2023: *The Accuracy of Nutrition*

*Declarations on the Labels of Pre-Packed Soups, Sauces, and Breads Sampled in 2022 and The Food Reformulation Task Force Progress Report 2022.* More than 110 meetings were held with food businesses and trade bodies in order to encourage progress on food reformulation.

### **4.6.3 Scientific collaboration and technical advice**

The FSS team organises and hosts the EFSA Focal Point for Ireland and makes other significant contributions to the work of EFSA. This continued in 2023 under a new EFSA Focal Point agreement.

Based on the outputs of an earlier survey, the EFSA Focal Point hosted a webinar (Engaging with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)) aimed at principal investigators in Article 36 organisations. The EFSA Focal Point also organised a meeting between the Irish participants in EFSA's Scientific Networks, Management Board and Advisory Forum in order to enhance communication and collaboration between these networks and to identify ways that the Focal Point can support the participants in their various roles within EFSA. More than 30 information requests from EFSA and other Member States were disseminated and responded to and the Focal Point directed approximately 100 direct communications from EFSA to the appropriate bodies in Ireland. The Focal Point was also engaged in seven tailor-made activities which involved collaboration with other Member States on various projects in the areas of knowledge and information management, engagement and partnership, and risk assessment and risk communication.

FSS scientists participated in 4 meetings of the EFSA Advisory Forum contributing scientific advice to EFSA, and 12 EFSA network meetings with EU Member States on subjects such as nanotechnology, microbiological risk assessment, zoonosis data monitoring and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

EFSA also has the European brief for identifying emerging risks, and the FSAI participated in both meetings of the Emerging Risks Exchange Network. In order to support this activity, the FSAI Emerging Risk Screening Group met 3 times in 2023 in order to consider 10 briefing notes on possible signals of emerging risks, and it held an in-house horizon scanning workshop. The FSAI attended the FDI Emerging Risks and Threats Forum on two occasions in 2023 in order to share information on six emerging issues with the food industry.

In 2023, the European Commission started holding its legislation development meetings in person as well as in hybrid format. FSS team members attended 43 expert meetings, including 6 meetings of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed. The team also provided 27 briefing documents to Government Departments, particularly the DoH, on issues leading to votes on the adoption of new EU legislation. The FSS Novel Foods

team assisted the European Commission in its review of the Novel Food status Catalogue, reviewing 75 entries.

On the international stage, face-to-face Codex Alimentarius Commission meetings (where global food standards are agreed) resumed in 2023. The FSS team represented Ireland at the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food and the Codex Committee on Food Additives. FSS scientists also attended the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Party on the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds. An FSS scientist also chaired a Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations foresight meeting on environmental inhibitors in agri-food systems.

#### **4.6.4 Engagement and communication**

FSS scientists deal with many queries from stakeholders both directly and through the FSAI Advice Line. In 2023, they responded to 731 queries; of these, 212 were related to chemical safety matters, 69 to nutrition, 142 to biological safety, 38 to food allergens, 223 to novel foods and 47 to other food technology issues. The FSS team responded to 13 media queries and provided extensive briefings on 2 chemical safety issues related to aspartame and glyphosate.

During 2023, FSS contributed to updated EU guidance for food businesses on carrying out *Listeria monocytogenes* challenge studies for shelf-life validation. FSS scientists also issued guidance on lactose-free labelling and on health claim dossier notification.

There were many engagements in 2023 with the food industry and its trade bodies, including FDI; the FSAI attended the FDI's Regulatory Affairs Committee on four occasions, each time providing briefs on legislation development at EU level, updates on FSAI activities and presentations on specific issues.

FSS scientists are also active in national and international conferences and meetings, where they provide technical food safety and legislative information to a wide range of audiences. In 2023, FSS scientists made four presentations at international meetings on topics such as food safety and sustainability, novel foods, and emerging risks. They also made five presentations at national meetings on topics such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and EFSA funding for research. The FSS team published 3 abstracts and 3 peer-reviewed papers in the nutrition and microbiology fields and continued to support third-level institutions by delivering 16 lectures to both undergraduate and postgraduate students at 7 different universities and technical universities. Four students were mentored by FSS scientists, including three placed in the FSAI, thus ensuring the development of our future regulatory scientists.



# 5.

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## Stakeholder engagement

**Collaboration is one of the Authority’s core values. Only by working with our stakeholders and our international partners can we achieve our goal of consumer protection. The Authority recognises the value and commitment of its national partners and collaborators in delivering a comprehensive system of controls for food safety and authenticity during 2023.**

In addition to the FSAI’s engagement with its regulatory partners, the academic community and consumers, the Authority regularly engages with a number of relevant national and international stakeholders with the aim of maximising the safety and authenticity of Ireland’s food.

In 2023, the Authority’s stakeholders played key roles in disseminating the FSAI’s messages and safeguarding Ireland’s food systems. For example, the Authority continued to maintain its close relationship with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Northern Ireland in 2023. This partnership, enabled through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), allows common issues related to the consistency of enforcement in both jurisdictions to be addressed, in addition to ensuring efficient cooperation in the event of a cross-border food incident. In 2023, a revised MoU and new data sharing agreement were agreed between the Authority and the FSA in Northern Ireland.

The MoU between the Loughs Agency and the Authority outlines the assistance that the Loughs Agency provides to the operation of the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme in Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough. Over the course of 2023, the Authority’s collaboration with *safefood* continued on issues of mutual interest. The Authority also collaborates with FDI on horizon scanning through the Emerging Risks and Threats Forum, the membership of which includes representatives from the FSAI, FDI, and the larger multinational food manufacturers. The Authority also worked with other regulators in Ireland, including the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Food Reformulation Task Force is a new strategic partnership between the FSAI and Healthy Ireland at the DoH. The purpose of the Food Reformulation Task Force is to implement the *Roadmap for Food Product Reformulation in Ireland*. The achievements of the Food Reformulation Task Force are detailed in [\*\*The Food Reformulation Task Force Progress Report 2023\*\*](#).

The Authority is an active contributor on a number of other committees hosted by other organisations, the purposes of which are to raise and maintain standards in the food sector. These organisations include, but are not limited to: Bord Bia, Sport Ireland, Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland and the NSAI. The FSAI continues to be a member of Sustainable Food

Systems Ireland (SFSI), a consortium of five Irish Government organisations that is led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The mission of SFSI is to share Ireland's core agri-food expertise with partner countries overseas in order to help them to build sustainable, safe and efficient value chains in agriculture and food. The Authority is also represented on the Board of the Irish National Accreditation Board.

## 5.1 European engagement

Engagement with our EU partners and legislators continued in 2023 with the FSAI's continued participation in expert groups of the European Commission and European Council, as well as participating as Ireland's representative in the Management Board, Advisory Forum and other groups within EFSA.

The Authority worked with heads of food agencies in other EU Member States to share best practice in enforcement approaches and worked collaboratively to develop guidance in order to support enforcement and contribute to the work of the European Commission. During 2023, members of the Authority participated in European Heads of Food Safety Agencies plenary meetings as well as working groups on food supplements, e-commerce, import controls, private assurance schemes, and sustainable food systems.

## 5.2 Other engagement

In 2020, the FSAI co-founded the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum with colleagues in the Saudi Food and Drug Authority and Food Standards Australia New Zealand. The FSAI hosted the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum's fourth annual meeting in Dublin in 2023. Seventeen regulatory agencies from countries including Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, China, Morocco, Singapore, Germany and the UK gathered to discuss how best to prepare for food safety crises and manage food safety incidents in what is becoming an increasingly complex global food system. Senior officials from the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the Codex Alimentarius Commission also joined the Forum.

The FSAI is the national contact point for INFOSAN, a joint initiative between the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The initiative involves 182 Member States in the routine exchange of information on food safety issues and the sharing of experiences and expertise, and it enables rapid access to information in the event of food safety emergencies.





**The fourth annual meeting of the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum was held in Dublin in 2023.**

The FSAI's Director of FSS is an active member of the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF). The FSAI has a confidentiality agreement with the FDA, which facilitates interactions with our American counterparts. In addition, the Authority continues to host foreign delegations who wish to learn more about the FSAI's strategy and operations.

## 5.3 Industry engagement

The food industry is responsible for the safety of food on the Irish market, whereas the Authority's role is one of oversight and enforcement.

In accordance with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, the FSCC facilitates consultations with a broad group of representatives from the Authority's stakeholders, including consumer representatives, the food industry, inspectorate, and academics representing the food sector. In 2023, the FSCC returned to in-person meetings and examined various topics, including food fraud and emerging food safety risks, with the

support of invited speakers from the European Commission, Teagasc and University College Dublin, as well as FSAI experts. In November 2023, the FSCC held its annual open meeting, titled *When Food Safety Met Sustainability*. This event explored the need to ensure that the food system can meet the ever-changing needs of society while continuing to protect consumers' health in relation to food safety. Meeting attendees heard from speakers from the University of Nottingham and the Codex Alimentarius Commission, as well as from representatives from a range of Irish food companies that are working on sustainability initiatives. The event was held fully in person for the first time since 2019 and was attended by almost 200 people representing the broad range of FSAI stakeholders.

The Authority engages regularly with the food industry in order to make food businesses aware of their responsibilities and increase their compliance with food safety legislation through training and compliance events. In order to enable structured and focused engagement with specific parts of the food sector, the Authority has four industry fora: the Artisan Forum, the Retail Forum, the Food Service Forum and the Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee. The FSAI meets with its industry fora in order to provide the food industry with a platform to discuss issues with, and obtain important information from, the Authority. The meetings allow the Authority to raise any ongoing issues with those working in the industry and create awareness of regulatory and legislative changes.

## **Artisan Forum**

Artisan Forum members are a diverse and dynamic group of artisan, small-scale, or domestic food producers. The Forum focuses on food safety management within production systems, emphasising traditional methods and not necessarily commercial volume. The Forum provides a useful setting through which such producers and regulators can engage, interact, and exchange information and perspectives. The Artisan Forum met once in 2023, but communications continued throughout the year. Forum members have expressed interest in the presence of chemicals in food and the possible impact this might have on human health. The possibility of pesticide labelling was also raised. Members also had fraud concerns regarding honey imported to the EU, and broader 'greenwashing' concerns such as unsubstantiated sustainability claims. An opportunity for some cheese-making issues to be discussed with the dairy inspectorate of the DAFM was also facilitated. The members were also made aware of the opening of Teagasc's BIA Innovator Campus, and the facilities available to members.

## Retail Forum

The Retail Forum includes representatives from both the main supermarket chains and the major symbol groups operating in Ireland. The Forum serves to increase understanding of food legislation, to disseminate food safety advice and to share best practice. The Retail Forum held three virtual meetings in 2023, where the main issues discussed were the Food Reformulation Task Force, UK divergence, wine regulations, food safety culture, sustainability, the war in Ukraine, sulphites, and titanium dioxide.

## Food Service Forum

The Food Service Forum draws its membership from catering businesses, food service businesses and representative organisations. It disseminates food safety advice, shares best practice and improves understanding of relevant food legislation. The Forum continued its valuable partnership during 2023. The main issues discussed were the war in Ukraine, imports and exports, sustainability, and nutrition and health claims.

## Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee

The Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee is the national stakeholder committee for the Irish Shellfish Monitoring Programme. The aim of the programme is to ensure that only safe shellfish are placed on the market. The Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee is chaired by the Authority and includes representatives from a number of stakeholder groups. During 2023, the Committee met four times and discussed a wide range of issues, including sanitary surveys, sample coordination, legislative developments, shellfish safety events and shellfish water quality. The SFPA and the Marine Institute provided operational and scientific updates, while other stakeholders provided user feedback on the operation of the monitoring programmes from their perspectives.



# 6.

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**Corporate social responsibility and  
organisational development**

**The FSAI is committed to developing its team and operating in a socially responsible manner. As a government agency, the FSAI is aware of the impact that its activities can have on its stakeholders, wider society and the environment. This can be seen in the way the Authority operates, and through its vision of ‘Safe and Trustworthy Food for Everyone’. This section contains information on the activities that the Authority undertakes in order to both comply with regulations and give back to stakeholders.**

## 6.1 Minimising environmental impact

The FSAI is dedicated to carrying out its statutory duties in an environmentally friendly manner. The FSAI offices are based in The Exchange building in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) area of Dublin. A hybrid work arrangement has allowed the FSAI to minimise its carbon footprint, as staff continue to work from home for a number of days each week. Our Green Team has promoted the use of public transport and cycling when staff are attending the office. This has allowed the FSAI to work and engage with stakeholders in a way that minimises environmental impact and the Authority’s carbon footprint, thus contributing to Ireland’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The FSAI continues to receive a high rating score from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) as part of its annual legislative energy returns. The FSAI undertook an energy audit in 2023 in order to support the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate to meet the requirements of Regulation 6 in S.I. No. 426/2014 – European Union (Energy Efficiency) Regulations 2014. The outcome of the energy audit was positive, and the Authority’s energy performance indicators remain on target to meet the Government’s 2030 reduction targets in GHG emissions and improvements in energy efficiency.

## 6.2 Knowledge transfer

Each year, the FSAI allocates time to the education of the future generation of food scientists, food safety inspectors and those studying for a career in regulatory agencies by delivering lectures and seminars across Ireland and providing student internships and placements in the FSAI. During 2023, student training was provided through student placement in the FSAI and lectures by staff. Further outreach at third-level institutions included delivering lectures at different universities and technical universities.

## 6.3 Fundraising

The FSAI team believes in the importance of giving back and in 2023, the team organised several fundraising initiatives for charities. In continuation of our long-standing tradition, a collection was also organised for the Cedar House Crosscare Homeless Shelter.

## 6.4 Organisational culture

Continuous improvement of the working environment for the team is an area of focus for the FSAI's Senior Leadership Team. Ensuring that our staff are supported in their roles is achieved through a number of means, one of which is that the Staff Committee and its subcommittees organise and promote initiatives to improve our team members' experience. These initiatives aim to improve inclusivity, recognition and workplace well-being within the FSAI. This committee and its subcommittees are also the official mechanism through which staff can provide feedback to the leadership team.

Ensuring that the Authority has a culture based on its core values, particularly in a blended working model, the **Values Group** continued to promote and embed the FSAI's values into everyday work during 2023. The Group updated and refreshed the FSAI's values framework, reviewing and bringing forward proposals to enhance the Staff Values Recognition Scheme, as well as addressing some of the feedback received in the last staff survey in relation to how the values are lived out in the FSAI.

Ensuring that staff members feel like they belong in the team has also been an area of focus for the Senior Leadership Team and, since the inception of the **Belonging@FSAI** team in 2020, this team has been committed to creating a culture where fairness is promoted, diversity is celebrated, and staff and stakeholders feel valued. This is done by encouraging inclusion in all that the Authority does, celebrating difference and embedding real change into how we do things in order to help the FSAI feel like a place where all our staff belong.

The Belonging@FSAI team is guided in its activities by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty legislation and by the *Our Public Service 2020: Promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* guidance document.

The Belonging@FSAI team, together with the FSAI HR team and supported by the FSAI Board and Senior Leadership Team, has introduced various initiatives in order to succeed in our diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) mission and to comply with the relevant legislation, including, but not limited to, staff and Board inductions and staff training in areas such as unconscious bias.

Some of our 2023 activities involved culture information sessions; highlighting different days such as World Dyslexia Awareness Day and Pride Month; reviewing the findings from an accessibility audit of the FSAI office; Gender decoding within job advertisements and job specifications; and the introduction of a DEIB statement within candidate information booklets.

In addition, our business plan contains a specific objective relating to DEIB, and there are sections on DEIB on both our public website and internal intranet. Through these activities, we hope to embed DEIB and enhance our culture so that DEIB permeates throughout the FSAI, creating an environment that encourages staff to thrive and feel like they belong. In 2024, we will work to merge the Belonging@FSAI team with the Values Group.

The following is a high-level overview of the committees that were in place in the Authority during 2023.

**The Staff Committee** is a representative group of staff from across the FSAI and provides a forum for consultation and communication on topics that support the continual improvement of the Authority. A key objective of the Staff Committee in 2023 was to oversee the implementation of the recommendations from the 2022 all-staff survey. Subcommittees of this committee include the following:

- ▶ **The Health and Safety Committee** continued to deliver upon its mandate during 2023, which included the FSAI Safety Statement update with consideration for blended working arrangements. The Health & Safety Committee Work Plan 2023 objectives were met with the support of a cross-functional area team.
- ▶ **The Staff Well-being Group** aims to support the well-being of our colleagues through organising events and activities that promote both physical and mental well-being, as well as bringing staff together to support one another.
- ▶ **The Social Committee** organises social events for staff, supporting colleagues to connect through social events that serve to enhance employee engagement and support work–life balance.
- ▶ **The Green Team** comes together to educate, inspire and empower employees around sustainability. It identifies and implements solutions in order to help the FSAI operate in a more environmentally sustainable fashion. In 2023, the Green Team focused on hosting the FSAI’s first swap day. This was a successful and fun initiative where staff brought in one item and received an item in return. The team also raised the issue of dealing with surplus food provided for meetings and the need to consider the mindful ordering of food. Even with a hybrid working arrangement, this still causes a problem and we would like to propose a survey in order to source ideas for how to deal with it.

- ▶ **The Working@FSAI** committee was set up at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and was originally focused on supporting the team to deliver on its work programme. In 2023, the committee focused on further developing the blended working model with a commitment to evaluating the model in 2024.
- ▶ **The Innovation Team:** In alignment with Ireland’s broader public service innovation strategy, the Our Public Service 2020 framework, and the FSAI’s own strategic goals, the Authority’s Innovation Team has played a pivotal role in fostering a culture of creativity and continuous improvement. In 2023, the team organised the first all-staff event dedicated to innovation, featuring insightful talks from various government and public sector bodies. This event included a facilitated workshop designed to equip staff with the skills needed in order to drive innovation within the Authority. Additionally, the team launched an Innovation Talks series, aiming to inspire and motivate staff by showcasing successful innovation practices within the public service.



**An all-staff innovation event, Engage, Educate, Evolve: Harnessing an Innovative Culture in How We Protect Consumers, was held in 2023.**

Another highlight from the year was our commitment to innovation in the public service, marked by signing the Public Service Innovation Declaration. This is aligned with and supports the delivery of our commitments under the Our Public Service 2020 framework for development and innovation in Ireland’s public service. All public service organisations are encouraged to opt in and declare their commitment to promoting and developing a culture of innovation. As part of the Declaration, the Authority commits to enabling, supporting and equipping staff to innovate in their roles; cultivating new partnerships; and incorporating diverse views when designing and delivering services.

Through these initiatives, the Innovation Team continues to enhance the FSAI’s commitment to innovation, ensuring that we remain at the forefront of public service excellence.





# 7.

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**Financial statements for the year  
ended 31 December 2023**

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# Governance Statement and Board Members' Report

**For the year ended 31 December 2023**

## Governance

The Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) was established under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. The functions of the Board are set out in Section 31 of the Act. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Health and is responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland are the responsibility of CEO and the senior leadership team. The CEO and the senior leadership team must follow the broad strategic direction set by the Board and must ensure that all Board members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to the entity, and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Board and management of the Authority.

## Board responsibilities

The work and responsibilities of all those associated with the operation of the Board are set out in the Code of Practice for Board members, Chairperson, CEO, and Secretary. The Code also sets out the matters specifically reserved for Board decision. Standing items considered by the Board include:

- ▶ declaration of interests,
- ▶ reports from committees,
- ▶ financial reports/management accounts,
- ▶ performance reports, and
- ▶ reserved matters.

The Food Safety Authority Act, 1998, Section 26 (5), requires the Board of the Authority to prepare financial statements in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Health with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, and to keep all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it.

In preparing these financial statements, the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland is required to:

- ▶ select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- ▶ make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- ▶ prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Authority will continue in operation; and
- ▶ state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Board confirms that it has complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The Board is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Authority and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 26 of the Act. The maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the Food Safety Authority's website is the responsibility of the Board.

The Board is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. There is an on-going evaluation of the performance of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland by reference to its annual business plan and budget. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Board considers that the financial statements of the Authority give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland at 31 December 2023 except for non-compliance with the requirements of FRS 102 in relation to retirement benefit entitlements, as directed by the Minister for Health. The Board approved the signing of this statement and the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 on 17 June 2024.

The Board consists of a Chairperson and 9 ordinary members, all of whom are appointed/re-appointed by the Minister for Health. The members of the Board were appointed for a period of either 3 or 5 years and meet 7 times per annum.

The table below details the appointment period for members serving during the year:

Board members	Role	Date appointed	Latest re appointment	Additional detail
Mr Martin Higgins	Ordinary Member	February 2016	February 2018	Term ended Feb 2023
	Chairperson	February 2018		
Ms Ann Horan	Ordinary Member	June 2021	June 2023	–
	Acting Chairperson	February 2023		
	Chairperson	June 2023		
Ms Mary Cullen	Ordinary Member	June 2016	June 2021	–
Prof. Francis Butler	Ordinary Member	May 2019	–	–
Mr Gerard McCurdy	Ordinary Member	May 2019	May 2022	–
Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan	Ordinary Member	October 2019	October 2022	–
Prof. Martin Cormican	Ordinary Member	June 2021	–	–
Mr Patrick Knight	Ordinary Member	June 2021	–	–
Ms Eilis O'Brien	Ordinary Member	January 2023	–	–
Ms Lisa Manselli	Ordinary Member	January 2023	–	–

During 2023 the Board completed a self-effectiveness survey as required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, which sought to assess the Board's performance, the strength of its enabling processes and structures as well as its obligations under the annex on gender balance, diversity and inclusion. The Board reviewed the resulting report from the survey in 2024.

## Gender Balance in the Board membership

As at 31 December, the Board had five (55.6%) female and four (44.4%) male members, with one position vacant. The Board therefore met the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

The Board has established two sub-committees, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), and the Performance & Development Committee (PDC). During 2023 the terms of reference were updated of the PDC, which was renamed the Performance and Remuneration Committee (PRC) in December 2023.

The ARC comprises three Board members and one independent member. The role of the ARC is to support the Board in relation to its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the organisation. In particular the Committee ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC reports to the Board after each meeting.

The members of the ARC are: Mr Gerry McCurdy (Chair), Dr Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Ms Mary Cullen and Mr Fergal Ó'Briain. In September 2023, Ms Ann Horan, stepped down from the ARC, and Ms Mary Cullen was appointed as a member to the ARC. There were four meetings of the ARC in 2023.

The role of the PRC is to devise and implement an appropriate mechanism to assess the performance of the CEO and, through the CEO, to review the performance of the FSAI Leadership Team. As required, the PRC sets remuneration for the CEO as directed by the DoH, develops the job description, identifies the relevant competencies and ideal candidate profile for the post, agrees the recruitment and search process, and sets a specific timetable. The PRC convenes as required by the Board and reports to the Board after each meeting.

The PRC comprises three Board members. The members of the PRC during 2023 were Ms Ann Horan (Chairperson), Ms Mary Cullen, and Mr Patrick Knight. In January 2024 Ms Mary Cullen stepped down from the PRC and was replaced by Prof. Francis Butler. There were three meetings of the PRC in 2023.

## Schedule of attendance, fees and expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Board and Committee meetings for 2023 is set out in note 4(c) of the Financial Statements.

## Key personnel changes

In January 2023 Ms Eilis O’Brien and Ms Lisa Manselli were both appointed for a 3-year term. Mr Martin Higgins completed his term as Chairperson of the Board in February 2023 and Ms Ann Horan was appointed Acting Chairperson by decision of the Board. Ms Ann Horan was formally appointed Chairperson Designate of the Board by the Minister for Health in June 2023 and following her appearance before the Joint Oireachtas Committee in November 2023 was appointed Chair.

## Disclosures Required by Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the Authority has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (“the Code”), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code:

- ▶ employee short-term benefits breakdown - set out in note 4 (b) to the financial statements,
- ▶ consultancy costs - set out in note 4 (h) to the financial statements,
- ▶ legal costs and settlements - set out in note 4 (h) to the financial statements,
- ▶ travel and subsistence expenditure - set out in note 4 (a) and 4 (c) to the financial statements, and
- ▶ hospitality expenditure - set out in note 4 (f) to the financial statements.

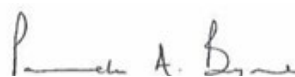
## Statement of Compliance

The Board has adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland operated in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies for 2023.

On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Ms Ann Horan**  
Chairperson  
17 June 2024



**Dr Pamela A Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer  
17 June 2024

# Statement on Internal Control

For the year ended 31 December 2023

## Scope of responsibility

On behalf of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), we acknowledge the Board's responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated. This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

## Purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely way.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, has been in place in the Authority for the year ended 31 December 2023 and has been maintained up to the date at the time of approval of the financial statements. In addition, the Board is provided with further assurance as to the quality of the Authority's internal control as the FSAI is certified to the Quality Management System Standard ISO 9001:2015. This Standard confirms that the Authority operates a set of policies, processes and procedures appropriate for planning and execution of its core business.

## Capacity to handle risk

The FSAI has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising three Board members and one external member, with financial and audit expertise. The ARC met four times in 2023.

The FSAI has an internal audit function as defined in the Board's Charter for Internal Audit. The Authority has outsourced its Internal Audit Function to BDO Ireland. The work of the internal audit function is informed by analysis of the risk to which the body is exposed and annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. The analysis of risk and the internal audit plans have been endorsed by the ARC and approved by the Board. The Internal Auditor provides the Board with reports of internal audit activity.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy that sets out risk management processes and details the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to risk. The policy has been



issued to all staff who are expected to work within the Authority's risk management policies, to alert management on emerging risks and control weaknesses and assume responsibility for risks and controls within their own area of work.

## Risk and control framework

The FSAI has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks. This risk management system includes the FSAI's risk appetite statement, to provide further context relating to identified risks and opportunities.

A risk and opportunities register is in place which identifies the key risks facing the Authority and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is updated by the Senior Leadership Team and presented to the ARC and Board as a standing item. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

The risk and opportunities register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff. We confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- ▶ procedures for all key business processes have been documented,
- ▶ financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability,
- ▶ there is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management,
- ▶ there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems,
- ▶ there are systems in place to safeguard the assets, and
- ▶ control procedures over the use of grant monies and the allocation of funding to outside agencies to ensure adequate control over approval of such monies so as to ensure grant funding has been applied for the purpose intended.

The FSAI makes payments to local authorities in relation to the provision of veterinary services. Annual service contracts are agreed with local authorities. Payments are based on quarterly claims from the local authorities based on activity levels.

## Ongoing monitoring and review

Formal procedures which have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Board, where relevant, in a timely way. We confirm that the following ongoing monitoring systems are in place:

- ▶ key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies,
- ▶ reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned, and
- ▶ there are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual performance and financial reports which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts.

## Procurement

We confirm that the FSAI has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines. Matters arising regarding controls over procurement are highlighted under internal control issues below.

## Review of effectiveness

We confirm that the Authority has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The FSAI's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors and the Audit and Risk Committee which oversees their work and the senior management within the Authority responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework.

We confirm that the Board conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2023 in March 2024.

## Internal Control Issues

### Procurement

In the 2022 statement on internal control the FSAI highlighted seven expired contracts that were not compliant with procurement requirements. The FSAI is committed to procurement compliance and during 2023 put in place actions to resolve the expired contracts, which had previously been procured appropriately. The scheduled procurement will ensure these contracts will be resolved by the end of June 2024. Six of the seven

contracts have been appropriately procured, as of the end of May 2024, with a public tender process underway in relation to the remaining contract.

During 2023 expenditure of €872,000 including VAT (2022: €694,750) was incurred in relation to these seven contracts.

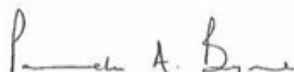
- ▶ Approximately €306,000 relating to two contracts for the provision of ICT staff. The procurement of one of these contracts was completed in May 2024 and the procurement for the second contract will be finalised in June 2024.
- ▶ Approximately €189,000 relates to the provision of legal services. A procurement exercise with the OGP was completed and a new service provider was appointed in September 2023.
- ▶ The Authority has concluded procurement procedures, including the use of OGP frameworks, to resolve the remaining contracts, for which €377,000 was incurred in 2023. New contracts are in place for 2024.

There were no internal control weaknesses identified during 2023 other than those disclosed above.

On behalf of the Board of the FSAI.



**Ms Ann Horan**  
Chairperson  
17 June 2024



**Dr Pamela A Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer  
17 June 2024

# Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas  
Food Safety Authority of Ireland

## Qualified opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2023 as required under the provisions of section 26 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland and comprise

- ▶ the statement of income and expenditure and retained revenue reserves
- ▶ the statement of financial position
- ▶ the statement of cash flows, and
- ▶ the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, except for the non-compliance with the requirements of FRS 102 in relation to retirement benefit entitlements referred to below, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland at 31 December 2023 and of its income and expenditure for 2023 in accordance with FRS 102.

## Basis for qualified opinion on financial statements

In compliance with the directions of the Minister for Health, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland accounts for the costs of retirement benefit entitlements only as they become payable. This does not comply with FRS 102 which requires that the financial statements recognise the full cost of retirement benefit entitlements earned in the period and the accrued liability at the reporting date. The effect of the non-compliance on the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's financial statements for 2023 has not been quantified.

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

## **Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters**

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the annual report, the governance statement and Board members' report, and the statement on internal control. My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

### **Non-compliant procurement**

The statement on internal control discloses that in 2023 the Authority incurred significant expenditure where the procedures followed did not comply with public procurement guidelines. The statement on internal control also sets out steps taken or planned by the Authority to address the weaknesses that gave rise to this.



**Seamus McCarthy**

Comptroller and Auditor General

20 June 2024

## Appendix to the report

### Responsibilities of Board members

As detailed in the governance statement and Board members' report, the Board members are responsible for

- ▶ the preparation of annual financial statements in the form prescribed under section 26 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998
- ▶ ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS 102
- ▶ ensuring the regularity of transactions
- ▶ assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- ▶ such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 26 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998 to audit the financial statements of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- ▶ I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from

fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- ▶ I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- ▶ I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- ▶ I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Food Safety Authority of Ireland to cease to continue as a going concern.
- ▶ I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- ▶ I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- ▶ the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- ▶ the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

## **Reporting on other matters**

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.



# Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
<b>Income</b>			
Oireachtas Grant	2	21,077	19,091
Other Income	3	1,848	2,162
Operating Income		22,925	21,253
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>22,925</b>	<b>21,253</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Administration, Operations & Promotion	4	13,366	11,326
Communications activities	5	373	372
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	6 & 13	590	719
Albanian Project	13	867	1,267
Reformulation Taskforce	14	383	272
Local Authority Veterinary Service	7	7,275	6,962
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>22,854</b>	<b>20,918</b>
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Appropriations		71	335
Transfer from/(to) the Capital Account	8	331	97
Loss on Disposal		(3)	0
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for year after Appropriations</b>		<b>399</b>	<b>432</b>
Balance at 1 January		1,522	1,090
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>1,921</b>	<b>1,522</b>

The Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. The Statement of Cash Flows and notes 1 to 16 form part of these financial statements. On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Ms Ann Horan**  
Chairperson  
17 June 2024



**Dr Pamela A Byrne**  
Chief Executive Officer  
17 June 2024

# Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
<b>Non Current Assets</b>			
Property, Plant and Equipment	6	388	685
Intangible Assets	6 (a)	69	103
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Receivables	9	808	762
Cash and Cash Equivalents		3,165	2,760
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<b>3,973</b>	<b>3,522</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b> (amounts falling due within one year)			
Payables	10	2,052	2,000
Net Current Assets / Liabilities		1,921	1,522
<b>Total Assets less Liabilities before Pensions</b>		<b>2,378</b>	<b>2,310</b>
<b>Representing</b>			
Capital Account	8	457	788
Retained Revenue Reserves		1,921	1,522
		<b>2,378</b>	<b>2,310</b>


The Statement of Cash Flows and notes 1 to 16 form part of these financial statements.

On behalf of the Board of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland:



**Ms Ann Horan**

Chairperson  
17 June 2024



**Dr Pamela A Byrne**

Chief Executive Officer  
17 June 2024

# Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
<b>Cashflow from operating activities</b>			
(Deficit)/Excess Income over Expenditure		71	335
Depreciation and Impairment of Fixed Assets	6 & 13	590	719
(Increase)/Decrease in Receivables	9	(46)	(101)
Increase/(Decrease) in Payables	10	52	(855)
<b>Net Cash Inflow from Operating Activities</b>		<b>667</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Cash Flows from Investing Activities</b>			
Payments to acquire Plant & Equipment	6	(231)	(483)
Payments to acquire Intangible Assets	6 (a)	(31)	(140)
<b>Net Cash Flows from Investing Activities</b>		<b>(262)</b>	<b>(623)</b>
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents		405	(525)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		2,760	3,285
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December</b>		<b>3,165</b>	<b>2,760</b>

# Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2023

## I. Accounting Policies

The basis of accounting and significant accounting policies adopted by Food Safety Authority of Ireland are set out below. They have been applied consistently throughout the year and for the preceding year.

### a) General Information

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland was set up under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998, with a head office at The Exchange, George's Dock, IFSC, Dublin 1, D01 P2V6. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland's primary objectives as set out in Part II of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act are as follows:

To take all reasonable steps to ensure that:

- (a) food produced in the State (whether or not distributed or marketed in the State), and
- (b) food distributed or marketed in the State meets the highest standards of food safety and hygiene reasonably attainable and it shall, in particular, take all reasonable steps to ensure that such food complies:
  - (i). with any food legislation in respect of food safety and hygiene standards, or
  - (ii). in the absence of any such legislation, with the provisions of generally recognised standards or codes of good practice aimed at ensuring the achievement of high standards of food hygiene and food safety.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland is a Public Benefit Entity (PBE).

### b) Statement of Compliance

The financial statements of Food Safety Authority of Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2023 have been prepared in accordance with FRS 102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Ireland issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as modified by the direction of the Minister for Health in relation to superannuation. In compliance with the directions of the Minister for Health, the Authority accounts for the costs of superannuation entitlements only as they become payable (see I (i) below).

This basis of accounting does not comply with FRS 102, which requires such costs to be recognised in the year in which entitlement is earned.

### **c) Basis of Preparation**

The financial statements have been prepared under the accruals method of accounting, except as stated below, and under the historical cost convention in the form approved by the Minister for Health with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform under Section 26(5) of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. The accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's financial statements.

### **d) Capital Funding**

The fixed assets of the FSAI are funded from a combination of capital grants and allocations from current revenue. Funding sourced from grants is transferred to a capital account which is amortised in line with the depreciation of the related assets.

### **e) Revenue**

#### **Oireachtas Grants**

Revenue is generally recognised on an accruals basis; one exception to this is in the case of Oireachtas Grants which are recognised on a cash receipts basis.

#### **Deferred Income**

Project income received in advance is treated as deferred income and reported as a payable falling due within one year. The income is released to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves in line with the expenditure incurred in the reporting period.

#### **Other Revenue**

Other Revenue is recognised on an accruals basis.

### **f) Plant and Equipment**

Plant and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation, adjusted for any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided on all plant and equipment at rates estimated to write off the cost less the estimated residual value of each asset on a straight line basis over their estimated useful lives, as follows:

(i) Leasehold Improvements	15% per annum
(ii) Computer Equipment	33% per annum
(iii) Office Furniture	15% per annum
(iv) Office Equipment	15% per annum
(v) Scientific Equipment	15% per annum
(vi) Motor vehicles	33% per annum

Residual value represents the estimated amount which would currently be obtained from disposal of an asset, after deducting estimated costs of disposal, if the asset were already of an age and in the condition expected at the end of its useful life.

If there is objective evidence of impairment of the value of an asset, an impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves in the year.

Intangible fixed assets are shown at their net book value having been depreciated at 33% on a straight-line basis.

### **g) Receivables**

Receivables are recognised at fair value.

### **h) Operating Leases**

Rental expenditure under operating leases is recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves over the life of the lease. Expenditure is recognised on a straight-line basis over the lease period, except where there are rental increases linked to the expected rate of inflation, in which case these increases are recognised when incurred. Any lease incentives received are recognised over the life of the lease.

### **i) Employee Benefits**

#### Short-term Benefits

Short-term benefits such as holiday pay are recognised as an expense in the year, and benefits that are accrued at year-end are included in the payables figure in the Statement of Financial Position.

**Retirement Benefits**

A superannuation scheme has been approved by the Minister in accordance with Section 39 of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998. The scheme provides for a contributory defined benefit pension scheme for employees. Deductions from salaries are retained and are treated as income by the Authority. The DoH's annual grant to the Authority is net of the deductions retained.

The Public Service pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act, 2012 became law on 28 July 2012 and introduced the new Single Public Scheme ("Single Scheme") which commenced with effect 1 January 2013. All new employees to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, who are new entrants to the Public Sector, on or after 1 January 2013 are members of the Single Scheme. Single Scheme members' contributions are paid over to the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

By direction of the Minister for Health no provision has been made in the Financial Statements for future pension liabilities. Payments under the schemes are charged to the Statement of Income and Expenditure and retained reserves when paid.

**j) Local Authority Veterinary Scheme**

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland provides funding to Local Authorities in relation to the provision of veterinary services. The Authority receives funding from the DoH (as part of its annual determination) in this regard.

Funding received from the DoH and amounts paid to Local Authorities are recognised on cash received and cash paid basis, in line with Section 34 of FRS 102.

**k) Key Estimates and Judgements**

The preparation of these financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities at the reporting date and the amounts reported for income and expenditure during the year. Judgements and estimates are continually evaluated and are based on historical experiences and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of estimation, by definition, means that the actual results may differ from the estimates made. The estimates and assumptions that can have a material effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are set out below:

- (i) Establishing useful lives for depreciation purposes of equipment and leases.

Equipment and leases comprise of a significant portion of the Authority's assets. The annual depreciation charge depends on the estimated useful lives of each type of asset. Given the relative short-term nature of the equipment assets, the estimation of the useful life of these assets is subject to regular review.

Details of the useful economic lives is included in the accounting policies.

(ii) Establishing useful economic lives for amortisation purposes of capital grants

The annual amortisation charge depends primarily on the estimated useful lives of each type of asset. The useful economic lives are subject to regular review. Details of the useful economic lives are included in the accounting policies.

## 2. Oireachtas Grants

The Oireachtas Grants voted to Food Safety Authority of Ireland from Vote 38 Department of Health as shown in the financial statements consist of

	Sub-head	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Grants for current expenditure	E.I.	20,922	18,583
Grant for capital expenditure	L.I.	155	508
<b>Total</b>		<b>21,077</b>	<b>19,091</b>

## 3. Other Income

	Note	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Superannuation Deductions		256	235
Sale of Publications		192	209
Sundry Income		94	166
Reformulation taskforce <sup>1</sup>	14	439	285
Albania CE Fund <sup>2</sup>	13	867	1,267
		<b>1,848</b>	<b>2,162</b>

<sup>1</sup>Funding for the Reformulation Taskforce was provided by the DoH from subhead B.2.

<sup>2</sup>Funding for the Albanian CE Fund was provided by the European Union.



## 4. Administration, Operations & Promotion

	Note	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Remuneration and Other Pay Costs	4(a)	8,900	7,377
Rent, rates, service charges and insurance		1,663	1,544
Research costs		59	93
Legal and consulting fees	4(h)	371	272
IT, telephone and Internet		1,450	1,349
Operating expenditure	4(g)	923	691
		<b>13,366</b>	<b>11,326</b>

### (a) Remuneration and other pay costs

	Note	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Staff Salaries, basic pay <sup>1</sup>		6,631	5,645
Staff salaries, overtime		5	1
Retirement benefit costs		291	240
Retirement lump sum costs		162	157
Employer's contributions to social welfare		697	588
Staff training and development		195	163
Staff travel and subsistence cost -national travel		50	41
Staff travel and subsistence cost -international travel		62	41
Agency staff		735	448
Board members' emoluments	4 (c) & 4 (f)	72	53
		<b>8,900</b>	<b>7,377</b>

<sup>1</sup>The FSAI had 105.5 WTEs at 31 December 2023 (2022: 96.1)

The FSAI paid €153,200 (2022: €118,079) to the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in respect of employee contributions under the single pension scheme.

In 2023 €257,957 was paid to the DoH in respect of additional superannuation contributions (ASC) deducted from staff salaries (2022: €218,278).

**(b) Employee benefits breakdown**

Range of total employee benefits			Number of Employees	
From		To	2023	2022
60,000	-	69,999	18	15
70,000	-	79,999	11	9
80,000	-	89,999	7	4
90,000	-	99,999	8	4
100,000	-	109,999	8	8
110,000	-	119,999	1	1
120,000	-	129,999	4	2
130,000	-	139,999	0	0
140,000	-	149,999	0	0
150,000	-	159,999	0	0
160,000	-	169,999	0	0
170,000	-	179,999	1	1

Note: for the purposes of this disclosure, short term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary, overtime allowances and other payments, made on behalf of the employee, but exclude employers PRSI.

**(c) Board Members' Attendance, Fees and Expenses**

Board Member		Board Fee	Travel Expenses	Meetings Attended	Meetings Attended
		€	€	Board	Audit & Risk
Martin Higgins	Chairperson	1,720	177	1 of 1	
Ann Horan	Chairperson	11,384		7 of 7	2 of 2
Mary Cullen		7,695		7 of 7	2 of 2
Francis Butler		0	67	7 of 7	
Gerard McCurdy		7,695	286	6 of 7	4 of 4
Clíodhna Foley-Nolan		7,695	526	6 of 7	4 of 4
Martin Cormican		0		7 of 7	
Patrick Knight		7,695	220	7 of 7	
Eilís O'Brien		0		6 of 7	
Lisa Manselli		7,408		7 of 7	
		<b>51,292</b>	<b>1,276</b>		

During 2023 7 Board meetings were held (2022: 9).

Three Board members did not receive a Board fee under the One Person One Salary Principle (OPOS), as they are employed by other State organisations.

The Audit and Risk Committee includes one external member. This position is held by Fergal Ó'Briain. Fergal Ó'Briain attended three of four ARC meetings in the year and was not in receipt of a fee under the OPOS principle.

#### (d) Chief Executive Officer Salary and Benefits

	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
Chief Executive Officer, Pamela Byrne	176	172
	<b>176</b>	<b>172</b>

The CEO remuneration package for 2023 was annual basic salary of €176,400 (2022: €172,400) with standard public sector arrangements.

The above salary values do not include the value of retirement benefits earned in the period. The key management personnel (excluding Board members) are members of the FSAI's contributory defined benefit pension scheme.

#### (e) Key management personnel compensation

Key management personnel in the Food Safety Authority of Ireland consist of the CEO, five Directors and members of the Board. Total compensation paid to key management personnel, including Board members' fees and expenses and total CEO remuneration amounted to €820,654 (2022: €758,060)

#### (f) Hospitality Expenditure

	Note	2023	2022
		€'000	€'000
Staff hospitality		6	4
Advisory Committee hospitality		0	0
Client hospitality		26	0
Board hospitality		21	2
		<b>53</b>	<b>6</b>

Client hospitality includes costs of catering for events (training, meetings, etc), which recommenced in person and were previously delivered virtually during the impact of COVID. (Total hospitality costs for 2019, the last comparative year, were €55,000)

In 2023 a voucher for €100 was given to members of the FSAI Scientific Committee, and subcommittees, who work on a voluntary basis. The total value of these vouchers was €6,800 (2022: €6,300).

## (g) Operating Expenditure

	Note	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Recruitment Expenditure		31	76
Stationery and Postage		27	24
Cleaning and Catering		26	13
Repairs and Maintenance		223	234
Audit Fee		15	15
Food Legislation Compliance		106	149
Training - Official Agency Staff		149	134
Food supplement database		138	14
Committee Expenses	4(f)	8	7
Library Supplies		68	73
General Expenditure (including hospitality)	4(f)	132	(48)
		<b>923</b>	<b>691</b>

## (h) Consultancy Costs

Consultancy Costs include fees paid to external parties providing advisory services of any nature.

	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Legal (i)	233	97
Consultancy	138	175
Total consultancy costs	<b>371</b>	<b>272</b>
Legal costs capitalised	0	0
Consultancy costs capitalised	0	0
Consultancy costs charged to income and expenditure	371	272
<b>Total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>272</b>

(i) This refers to general legal advice. No expenditure was incurred in the reporting period in relation to legal costs, settlements and conciliation and arbitration proceedings relating to contracts with third parties.

## 5. Communication activities

	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Public Relations	158	151
Industry Events	103	78
Publications	112	143
	<b>373</b>	<b>372</b>

## 6. Tangible Fixed Assets

Board Member	Motor Vehicles <sup>1</sup>	Computer Equipment <sup>1</sup>	Office Equipment <sup>1</sup>	Office Furniture <sup>1</sup>	Leasehold Improvements	Scientific Equipment	Total
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
<b>Cost</b>							
At 1 January 2023	22	1,678	145	329	2,179	268	4,621
Additions	0	96	0	2	133	0	231
Disposals	(22)	(35)	(2)	(9)			(68)
<b>At 31 December 2023</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,739</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>2,312</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>4,784</b>
<b>Accumulated Depreciation</b>							
At 1 January 2023	22	1,320	126	295	1,931	242	3,936
Charge for the year	0	239	10	31	241	4	525
Depreciation on Disposals	(22)	(35)	(1)	(7)			(65)
<b>At 31 December 2023</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,524</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>2,172</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>4,396</b>
<b>Net Book Value</b>							
<b>At 31 December 2023</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>388</b>
<b>At 31 December 2022</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>685</b>

<sup>1</sup>The assets disclosed above include a motor vehicle, computer equipment, office equipment and office furniture assets, relating to the Albanian project, for which FSAI is receiving the benefit. The original cost of these assets was €36,655 (2022: €36,655). These assets were transferred to the Albanian equivalent of FSAI when the project finished in October 2023. These assets are included in the 2023 disposals figures, above. See note 13 for further information in relation to the project.

**(a) Intangible Fixed Assets**

	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
1 January, Opening Net Book Value	103	34
Additions at Cost	31	140
Less Depreciation Charge for the year	(65)	(71)
31 December, Closing Net Book Value	<b>69</b>	<b>103</b>

Intangible fixed assets consist of software licences which are written off over their useful life.

**7. Local Authority Veterinary Service (LAVS)**

	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
LAVS Payments	<b>7,275</b>	<b>6,962</b>

Payments are made to 25 Local Authorities for the provision of veterinary services, quarterly in arrears. Funding is channelled through the DoH and the FSAI and is included as part of the annual determination.

The obligation to transfer funding to LAVS is only triggered when corresponding funding is received from the DoH.

**8. Capital Account**

	2023	2023	2022	2022
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
At 1 January		788		885
Transfer from/(to) Income and Expenditure and Retained Reserves Account				
Additional funds allocated to acquire Fixed Assets	231		483	
Funded through operations				
Funds allocated to acquire Intangible Assets	31		140	
Amount Released on Disposal	(3)		0	
Amortisation in line with asset depreciation	(590)	(331)	(720)	(97)
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>457</b>		<b>788</b>

## 9. Receivables

	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
Prepayments	808	756
Debtors	0	6
	<b>808</b>	<b>762</b>

## 10. Payables

Amounts falling due within one year

	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
Trade Creditors	359	79
Accruals	114	195
Deferred Rent Accrual *	839	914
Payroll Accruals	271	234
Deferred Albanian income	175	263
Deferred project income	16	16
Tax Creditor - VAT	13	22
Tax Creditor - PAYE/PRSI	227	214
Tax Creditor - PSWT	38	63
	<b>2,052</b>	<b>2,000</b>

\* Under the terms of the lease agreement there was a provision for a rent free period of one year, which occurred in 2018.

FRS 102 requires that this rent free period be recognised over the lifetime of the lease. The Deferred Rent Accrual represents the balance of the rent free period, which will be recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves in future years.

## 11. Operating Leases

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland commenced a 20 year lease for the first floor of the Exchange Building, George's Dock, IFSC, Dublin 1 in October 2017. The lease is subject to rental reviews every 5 years and includes a rent-free year from 1 January 2018. In accordance with FRS 102 lease incentives are released over the life of the lease.

At 31 December 2023 the FSAI had the following future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases:

Lease obligations falling due:	The Exchange €'000
within 1 year	1,192
between years 2 to 5	4,769
after 5 years	10,432

The lease for The Exchange provides for a rent review every 5 years. A review was concluded during 2023, and for which the FSAI sought appropriate advice. The rent review concluded that the annual lease for the FSAI should increase by approximately €61,000 per annum. This increase is reflected in the above lease obligation disclosure and increased the annual effective cost, excluding service charge, of the lease to €1,192,000.

## 12. Board Members' Interests

The Board adopted procedures in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Expenditure and Reform in relation to the disclosures of interests by Board Members and these procedures have been adhered to in the year.

There were no transactions in the year in relation to the Board's activities in which a Board Member had a beneficial interest.

## 13. External Projects - The Food Safety Project, Albania

A consortium of Irish Government agencies and their international partners has successfully tendered for a €5m EU grant to support Albania as a candidate for accession to the European Union, by strengthening its food safety, veterinary and plant health standards. The project covers the period 14 Jan 2019 to 13 Jan 2023. The impact of COVID has resulted in an extension of this contract, on a no cost basis, to 14 October 2023 to ensure the deliverables of the project are achieved. The consortium is led by FSAI and includes Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Sustainable Food Systems Ireland, the Finnish Food Authority, and an Albanian partner, Creative Business Solutions. The FSAI has received cumulative funding of €4.14 million to date to deliver the project with €778,000 of this received in 2023. Cumulative expenditure to 14 October 2023 was €3.967 million and a balance of €175,000 was on hand at year end (note 10). The expenditure incurred in relation to this project is set out below. The final report on this project, outlining the deliverables against the planned actions, must be submitted to the EU in 2024.



	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
Remuneration and Other Pay Costs	220	319
Project travel- national	10	14
Project travel - international	34	59
International Expert Support*	311	617
Rent, rates, service charges and insurance	5	9
Industry events	95	38
Publications	133	131
Depreciation of project assets	0	1
Other	59	79
<b>Albanian Project</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>1,267</b>

\* International Expert Support represents the input of personnel with experience in relevant disciplines that have been engaged to enable the successful delivery of the Albanian project. This includes areas such as phytosanitary, senior legislation, veterinary and organisational development experts that have been identified by the FSAI or the consortium partners.

## 14. Food Reformulation Taskforce

In October 2021 the FSAI signed a service level agreement with the Department of Health (DoH) to establish and operate a Food Reformulation Taskforce (FRT), to deliver on a food reformulation action plan developed by the Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group who are charged with delivery on the Government's Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016-2025. The FRT will be in operation until 31 December 2025 and is expected to cost approximately €2.06 million over the course of the project.

The expenditure incurred during 2023 directly in relation to the project, funded by the DoH is set out below:

	2023	2022
	€'000	€'000
Remuneration and Other Pay Costs	309	226
Project travel	0	5
Other	6	12
Licensing/nutritional information analysis	68	29
	<b>383</b>	<b>272</b>

## **15. Events after the reporting date**

There are no events between the reporting date and the date of approval of these financial statements that require adjustment.

As the FSAI is funded by moneys provided by the Exchequer, through the DoH, the Board considers it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

## **16. Approval of Financial Statements**

The Financial Statements were approved by the Board on 17 June 2024.



# 8.

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## Appendices

## Appendix I Industry fora members

### Artisan Forum, 2023

- ▶ **Dr Mícheál O'Mahony (Chairperson)**, Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI)
- ▶ **Ms Darina Allen**, Slow Food Ireland/Ballymaloe Cookery School
- ▶ **Ms Sally Barnes**, Woodcock Smokery
- ▶ **Mr Eoin Cluskey**, Bread 41
- ▶ **Mr John Brennan**, The Organic Centre
- ▶ **Mr Kevin Brennan**, Teagasc
- ▶ **Mr Michael Gleeson**, Beekeeper
- ▶ **Ms Jeffa Gill**, Durrus Cheese
- ▶ **Ms Simone Kelly**, The Rocket Man Café
- ▶ **Mr Sean Kent**, Poultry Expert
- ▶ **Mr Donal Lehane**, Chair of Community Food Group
- ▶ **Mr David Lang**, Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland
- ▶ **Mr Tom Dinneen**, CÁIS
- ▶ **Ms Mary Regan**, Regan's Organic Farm
- ▶ **Ms Dearbhla Reynolds**, The Cultured Club
- ▶ **Ms Elisabeth Ryan**, Independent Micro Breweries
- ▶ **Mr Hugh Maguire**, Maguires Butchers

### Food Service Forum, 2023

- ▶ **Mr Rob Phillips (Chairperson)**, FSAI
- ▶ **Ms Lana McGinn**, Gather & Gather
- ▶ **Ms Louise Collins**, Eddie Rocket's (IRL) Limited
- ▶ **Mr Pat Crotty**, Vintners' Federation of Ireland
- ▶ **Mr Adrian Cummins**, Restaurants Association of Ireland
- ▶ **Ms Selena Burke**, Aramark
- ▶ **Mr Adam Heyes**, Subway Ireland
- ▶ **Mr Gareth Walsh**, McDonald's

- ▶ **Ms Mary Flynn**, Irish Healthcare Catering Professionals Association
- ▶ **Mr Ronan Walsh**, Irish Hotels Federation
- ▶ **Mr Eoghan McLoughlin**, Irish Prison Service
- ▶ **Ms Manuela Spinelli**, Euro-Toques Ireland
- ▶ **Ms Helen Statham**, SSP
- ▶ **Ms Lynsey Mitchell**, KFC
- ▶ **Ms Rachael Elliott**, Sodexo UK & Ireland

## **Retail Forum, 2023**

- ▶ **Mr Rob Phillips** (Chairperson), FSAI
- ▶ **Ms Lucy O'Connor**, Musgrave Group – SuperValu, Centra, Daybreak
- ▶ **Ms Samira Nicolo**, Retail Ireland/Ibec
- ▶ **Ms Catherine Poole**, Aldi
- ▶ **Ms Tara Buckley**, Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied Trades Association (RGDATA)
- ▶ **Ms Jenni O'Brien**, Avoca
- ▶ **Mr Gareth Coburn**, Sysco
- ▶ **Ms Aileen Nolan**, Dunnes Stores
- ▶ **Ms Elaine Clohosey**, BWG Foods
- ▶ **Mr Jonathan Halls**, Boots
- ▶ **Ms Aoife Noonan**, Lidl Ireland
- ▶ **Mr Mark Gannon**, Circle K
- ▶ **Ms Claire Briody**, Tesco Ireland
- ▶ **Ms Joanne Barry**, Barry Group
- ▶ **Mr Ben McGinn**, Gala Retail
- ▶ **Mr Ash Stretton**, Marks & Spencer

## **Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee, 2023**

- ▶ **Mr David Lyons and Ms Christine King (Chairpersons)**, FSAI
- ▶ **Mr Dave Clarke, Mr Conor Duffy, Dr Sinead Keaveney, Mr Joe Silke and Mr Patrick Costello**, Marine Institute
- ▶ **Ms Patricia Daly, Ms Vicky Lyons, Mr Geoff Robinson and Ms Joanne Gaffney**, Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- ▶ **Dr Sarah Buckley, Dr Gary McCoy, Mr Brian Nolan, Mr Bernard O'Donovan, Dr Micheál O'Mahony and Ms Aileen O'Sullivan**, Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority
- ▶ **Ms Teresa Morrissey, Mr John Harrington, Mr Pat Mulloy, Mr Finian O'Sullivan, Mr Kian Louet-Feisser, Mr Des Moore and Ms Nadia Ferguson**, Irish Shellfish Association and Processing Industry
- ▶ **Ms Valerie Hannon, Ms Kate Harrington, Ms Maeve O'Reilly, Ms Claire Cremin and Ms Marie Feehan**, Irish Water
- ▶ **Mr Paul Hickey**, Health Service Executive
- ▶ **Dr Sarah McLean**, Loughs Agency
- ▶ **Mr Liam Ó'Súilleabháin**, Environmental Protection Agency

## Appendix 2 Scientific Committee: Subcommittee members

### Biological Safety Subcommittee, 2023

- ▶ **Dr Geraldine Duffy (Chair)**, Teagasc
- ▶ **Dr Declan Bolton**, Teagasc
- ▶ **Dr Michael Callanan**, Munster Technological University
- ▶ **Professor Theo de Waal**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Ms Anne Dwan**, Health Service Executive (HSE)
- ▶ **Professor Séamus Fanning**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Professor Cormac Gahan**, University College Cork
- ▶ **Dr Patricia Garvey**, Health Protection Surveillance Centre
- ▶ **Dr Montserrat Gutierrez**, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
- ▶ **Dr Sinead Keaveney**, Marine Institute
- ▶ **Professor Noel McCarthy**, Trinity College Dublin
- ▶ **Professor Grace Mulcahy**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Dr Lois O'Connor**, National Health Protection Office
- ▶ **Dr Helen O'Shea**, Munster Technological University
- ▶ **Professor Fiona Walsh**, Maynooth University

### Chemical Safety Subcommittee, 2023

- ▶ **Dr Andrew Flanagan (Chair)**, Public Analyst's Laboratory, Dublin
- ▶ **Mr Alan Breen**, DAFM
- ▶ **Professor Enda Cummins**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Ms Jenny Fortune**, HSE
- ▶ **Professor Iouri Gounko**, Trinity College Dublin
- ▶ **Ms Rosemary Hayden**, Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB)
- ▶ **Ms Ita Kinahan**, State Laboratory (retired)
- ▶ **Dr Celine Mannion**, DAFM

- ▶ **Dr Declan McKernan**, University of Galway
- ▶ **Associate Professor Tara McMorrow**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Dr Breige McNulty**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Dr Finbarr O'Regan**, DAFM
- ▶ **Professor Fiona Regan**, Dublin City University
- ▶ **Dr Craig Slattery**, University College Dublin

## Public Health Nutrition Subcommittee, 2023

- ▶ **Professor Kevin Cashman (Chair)**, University College Cork
- ▶ **Dr Annemarie Bennett**, Trinity College Dublin
- ▶ **Dr Cathy Breen**, HSE
- ▶ **Professor Lorraine Brennan**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Professor Eileen Gibney**, University College Dublin
- ▶ **Dr Laura Kehoe**, Munster Technological University
- ▶ **Dr Eamon Laird**, Atlantic Technological University
- ▶ **Dr Sinéad McCarthy**, Teagasc
- ▶ **Professor Helene McNulty**, Ulster University
- ▶ **Dr Emeir McSorley**, Ulster University
- ▶ **Professor Anne Molloy**, Trinity College Dublin (retired)
- ▶ **Dr Anne Nugent**, Queen's University Belfast
- ▶ **Dr Lisa Owens**, St James's Hospital
- ▶ **Dr Lisa Ryan**, Atlantic Technological University
- ▶ **Dr Audrey Tierney**, University of Limerick
- ▶ **Dr Janette Walton**, Munster Technological University
- ▶ **Ms Fiona Ward**, Children's Health Ireland (Crumlin)
- ▶ **Professor Mary Ward**, Ulster University



## Ad hoc Subcommittee on Analytical Methods, 2023

- ▶ **Ms Ita Kinahan (Chair)**, State Laboratory (retired)
- ▶ **Dr Martin Danaher**, Teagasc
- ▶ **Dr Conor Graham**, Atlantic Technological University
- ▶ **Dr Montserrat Gutierrez**, DAFM
- ▶ **Professor Alan Kelly**, University College Cork
- ▶ **Professor Kieran Kilcawley**, Teagasc
- ▶ **Mr David Lee**, Public Analyst's Laboratory, Cork
- ▶ **Dr Ed Malone**, State Laboratory
- ▶ **Professor Anne Molloy**, Trinity College Dublin (retired)
- ▶ **Dr Tom O'Callaghan**, University College Cork

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