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Food
Risk Insights

Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd

Issue 19 | March 2026

In Focus

Emerging issues, trends and legislative changes

Welcome to the March 2026 Food Risk Insights from Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd.'s Compliance and Risk Management Team.

Highlights include regulatory updates, recent outbreak investigations and emerging microbiological, chemical and supply chain risks that FBOs should continue to monitor.

We are here to offer expert advice and support; to help you manage the ever-evolving risks faced by food businesses.

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FSAI publishes guidance note on environmental monitoring of *Listeria monocytogenes*

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has issued Guidance (Note 45) on environmental monitoring of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready to eat food operations. This guidance helps businesses meet legal requirements for sampling processing areas and equipment as part of their food safety management system.

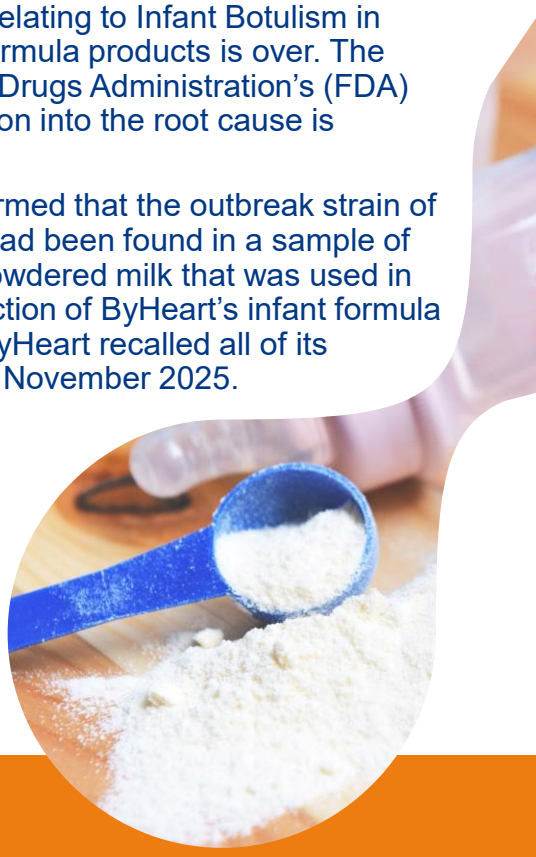
An effective *L. monocytogenes* environmental monitoring programme is designed to detect, investigate, and control potential sources of contamination in the facility, reducing the risk of cross contamination in ready-to-eat (RTE) foods. Controlling *L. monocytogenes* is critical throughout all stages of RTE food production.

The guidance can be found **here**:

Source of Byheart contamination identified

The U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have declared the outbreak relating to Infant Botulism in Byheart formula products is over. The Food and Drugs Administration's (FDA) investigation into the root cause is ongoing.

FDA confirmed that the outbreak strain of botulism had been found in a sample of organic powdered milk that was used in the production of ByHeart's infant formula powder. ByHeart recalled all of its formula in November 2025.



EC reinforces controls on ARA oil

In response to the detection of the toxin cereulide produced by *Bacillus cereus*, in infant formula which caused recalls, the European Commission (EC) has adopted stricter control on consignments of arachidonic acid oil originating in China.

All consignments will have to be presented at Border Control Posts (BCP) of the Member States, where they will be subject to documentary checks, with a 50% frequency on physical and identity checks.

In addition, every consignment will have to be accompanied by laboratory results of analyses and an official certificate, issued by China, stating that the results of sampling and analyses show the absence of cereulide toxin.

The measures are implemented through Commission Regulation (EU) 2026/459, which amends Regulation (EU) 2019/1793.

Following the detection of the toxin, the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) provided a rapid risk assessment on cereulide in infant formula. Establishing an Acute Reference Dose (ARfD) for cereulide in infants at 0.014 g/kg body weight, considering them highly vulnerable. The 2026 risk assessment identified that concentrations >0.054 g/L (infant formula) or >0.1 g/L (follow-on formula) pose potential safety concerns.

Retrospective, testing to determine the extent of the potential contamination in the finished products has indicated that contamination could relate to ARA oil deliveries received as early as the end of 2024.

E. coli outbreak linked with dried fruit

In November 2023, a STEC (O26:H11 stx2a/eae) outbreak affected 40 people, mainly young children in the UK. Whole genome sequencing showed the strain was multidrug resistant and likely originated outside the UK.

Epidemiological investigations indicated the highest exposure likelihood were linked to a dried fruit product, typically sold in multipacks. However, batch matched products could not be tested, preventing targeted microbiological sampling.

Dried fruit can become contaminated if crops contact irrigation or runoff water containing animal faeces. Detecting STEC in food is difficult, therefore the investigation recommends multisource weight of evidence approaches that integrate epidemiological and food chain data to guide public health action.

STEC is the abbreviation for the Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* bacterium. *E. coli* occurs naturally in the intestines of humans and animals and is normally harmless. However, some *E.coli* STEC strains are capable of causing clinical disease are often referred to as EHEC (Enterohemorrhagic *E. coli*). These can damage the kidneys, colon, nervous system, and brain, making them a critical food safety concern across the UK and Europe.

Infant death likely caused by Listeria in raw milk

New Mexico Health Department are warning consumers against consumption of unpasteurised dairy products. A newborn baby has died from a Listeria infection thought likely to have resulted from the pregnant mother's consumption of unpasteurised milk.

This comes against a backdrop of the US Health Secretary's advocacy for raw milk.

Pizza STEC outbreak "still a mystery"

In 2022, 50 cases of Haemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) were associated with branded frozen pizzas in France. The two outbreak strains were isolated from the raw pizza dough, but it was unclear how they could have survived cooking by the consumer.

While this still isn't clear, scientists looking at the issue are considering that consumers may have had difficulty in achieving the cooking as instructed on pack. The thick dough base may not have been fully cooked through.

Consumer behaviours and the limitations of domestic cooking equipment are not always anticipated by food businesses and can result in significant unintended consequences.

The issue of failure of consumers to thoroughly cook products whether deliberate or unintentional (undercooking, improper reheating, or uneven heating) can lead to foodborne illness. This is primarily due to microbial contaminants remaining active if safe temperatures are not reached throughout products for sufficient time.

UK's first ever plan to tackle PFAS 'forever chemicals"

The UK government has launched its first PFAS Plan, outlining how it will better understand PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) sources, reduce their spread, and limit exposure through expanded environmental monitoring, tighter regulation, support for safer alternatives, and potential statutory limits in drinking water.

The plan sets out a range of further measures and interventions, which includes:

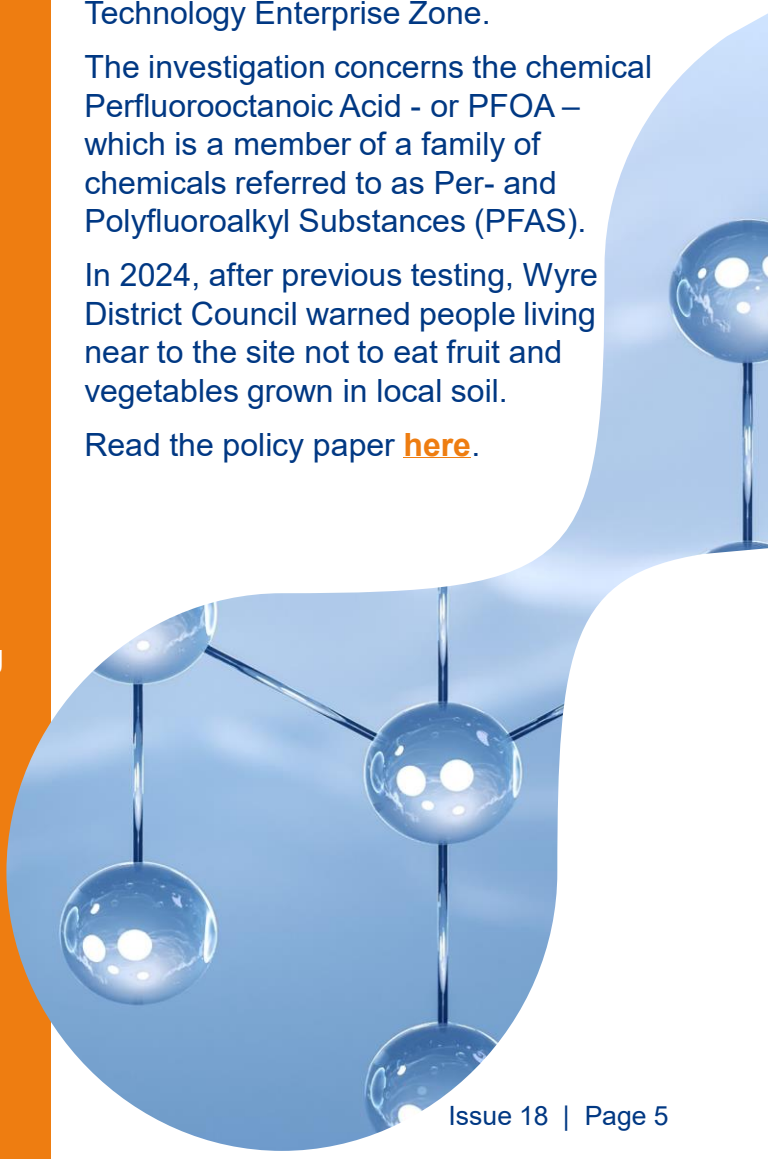
- Developing new guidance for regulators and industries to address legacy PFAS pollution on contaminated land to ensure a consistent and practical approach.
- Consulting on the introduction of a statutory limit for PFAS in England's public supply regulations to improve the condition of the water the nation drinks.
- Carrying out tests on food packaging, like microwave popcorn bags and pizza boxes, to trace the presence of PFAS and support future regulatory action.
- Publishing a new website to raise the public's awareness and understanding of PFAS while also improving transparency of action being taken across government.
- Reducing emissions from industrial sites through new guidance for regulators and site operators on how to improve their handling, monitoring and disposal of PFAS.
- Improving the monitoring of PFAS in soils by supporting the British Geological Survey and initiating new sampling at five locations across England.
- Completing work to consider restrictions on the use of PFAS in firefighting foams.

Recently Wyre Council (Lancashire Coast) advised residents to avoid eating domestically produced eggs or egg laying poultry from within 1km of an industrial site in Thornton-Cleveleys. The precautionary advice is linked to an ongoing investigation into historic contamination within the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone.

The investigation concerns the chemical Perfluorooctanoic Acid - or PFOA – which is a member of a family of chemicals referred to as Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

In 2024, after previous testing, Wyre District Council warned people living near to the site not to eat fruit and vegetables grown in local soil.

Read the policy paper **here**.



Shigella causes more IID than previously thought

The World Health Organization (WHO) based on recent evidence, driven largely by the Global Enteric Multicentre Study (GEMS) and wider use of molecular diagnostics such as qPCR, has reported how Shigella causes a far greater burden of infectious intestinal disease (IID) and related deaths than previously recognised.

Re-evaluation of the data indicates the true burden may be double earlier estimates, confirming Shigella as a major bacterial cause of diarrhoeal disease, particularly among children under five in low- and middle-income countries.

Shigella infection (shigellosis) is a highly contagious bacterial infection that primarily targets the intestine, causing severe diarrhoea, fever, stomach pain.

Common routes of infection:

- Hand-to-mouth transmission: Bacteria can be transferred from the hands to the mouth when contaminated surfaces in shared bathroom facilities, communal toys, and in public changing areas such as those used for washing and cleaning children, are touched.
- Contaminated food: Consuming food that has been prepared by someone infected with shigella.
- Contaminated water: Ingesting water or drinking from sources contaminated with sewage such as unprotected wells and floodwaters.

EFSA risks of plant lectins in food

EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) has concluded that eating undercooked beans poses a health concern due to lectin exposure. The assessment was requested by the European Commission after foodborne illnesses linked to raw or undercooked pulses, a risk that may be increasing as more people choose raw or minimally cooked plant-based foods.

Lectins are natural plant proteins found in legumes, grains and vegetables, helping protect plants from pests. Most lectins are harmless, but those concentrated in raw pulses can cause gastrointestinal and immunological effects.

Consumers are advised to follow these steps to reduce or eliminate harmful lectins and ensure legumes are safe to eat:

- Dried beans: Follow the manufacturer's cooking instructions. If none are provided, soak the beans for at least 12 hours, discard the soaking water, and cook them in fresh water. Boil for a minimum of 30 minutes before eating to destroy lectins.
- Fresh beans: Rinse thoroughly in clean water, then cook or boil for about 10 minutes before consumption.
- Canned or jarred beans: These products are already fully cooked, meaning the lectins have been destroyed. They can be eaten as provided, following any instructions on the label.

Other home cooking methods such as steaming, microwaving or roasting do not reduce lectins as effectively.

EFSA sucralose review

The EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) concluded that sucralose (E955) continues to be safe for its currently authorised uses as a food additive.

However, they could not reach the same conclusion for the new proposed uses assessed, as these may involve several industrial processes requiring prolonged high temperatures.

In addition, they noted that factors such as temperature, cooking times and the amount of sweetener used can also vary widely in home kitchens, meaning that the formation of chlorinated compounds during the preparation of home-made products that require high temperature such as frying and baking with sucralose cannot be excluded.

Therefore, EFSA recommended the issue of potential formation of chlorinated compounds, during domestic cooking, using sucralose be considered and discussed.

Mycotoxin risk in plant-based products

Testing of 212 plant-based meat alternatives (PMBA) and plant-based beverages (PBB) sold in the UK found that every product contained at least one mycotoxin, many showing multiple contaminants.

The study frequently found higher levels especially of detected emerging Fusarium and Alternaria toxins in meat alternatives, while beverages commonly contained enniatins and beauvericin.

Although the measured concentrations were low the widespread occurrence suggests that combined exposure could still pose health risks, suggesting expansion of mycotoxin monitoring to include raw primary commodities used in PBMAs and PBBs.

FSA metals survey

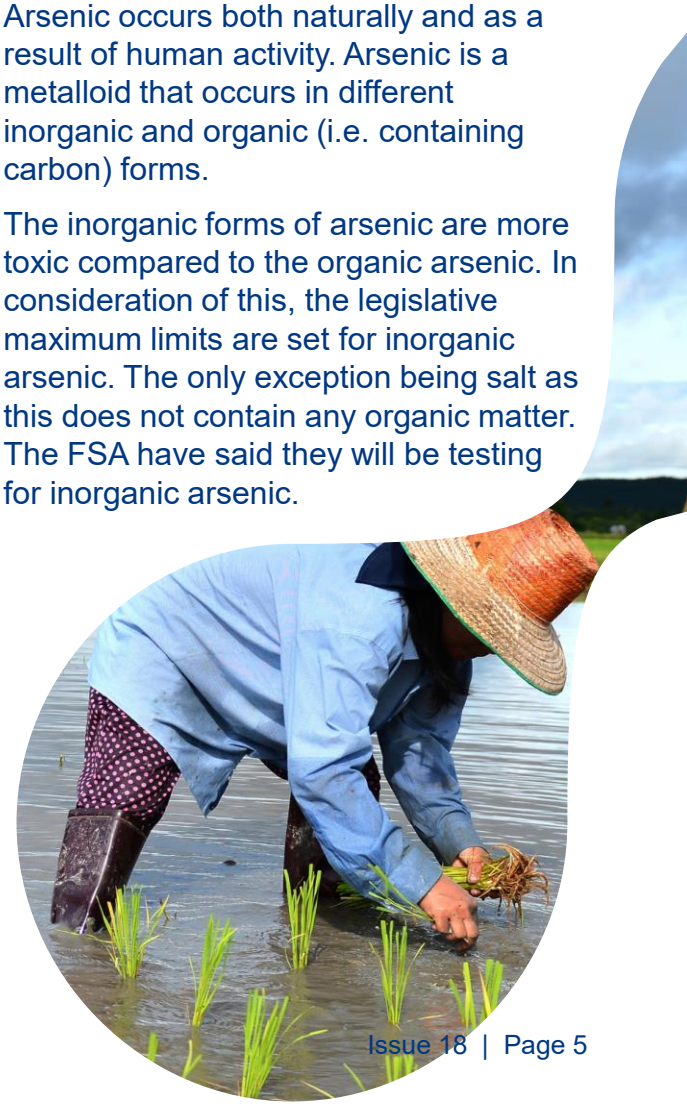
The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is planning some targeted surveillance on products from Thailand, Myanmar & Vietnam. This is in response to information on heavy metal pollution in the Mekong river.

Surveillance will include both an initial rapid surveillance as well as a longer-term plan to capture seasonality and weather effects. Sampling is expected to target rice and prawns and possibly tilapia in future plans, though any commodities exposed to the river water could be of concern.

The metals of concern are Arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury, nickel & manganese.

Arsenic occurs both naturally and as a result of human activity. Arsenic is a metalloid that occurs in different inorganic and organic (i.e. containing carbon) forms.

The inorganic forms of arsenic are more toxic compared to the organic arsenic. In consideration of this, the legislative maximum limits are set for inorganic arsenic. The only exception being salt as this does not contain any organic matter. The FSA have said they will be testing for inorganic arsenic.



⚠ EU increases official controls

The European Union may temporarily increase official controls on specific food products from certain countries. The latest Regulation raises controls for some countries and reduces them for others where the risk has declined.

The countries for which official controls have increased on certain products are: **Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Rwanda, Thailand, and Türkiye.**

Added:

- Strawberries from Egypt for pesticide residues

Increased testing:

- Pistachios, mixtures and products produced from pistachios from Türkiye for aflatoxins
- Pistachios, mixtures and products produced from pistachios originating from the USA and dispatched to the EU from Türkiye for aflatoxins
- Seem beans and helmet beans (*Lablab purpureus*) from Bangladesh for pesticide residues
- Palm oil as a packed product for direct human consumption (not in bulk) from Côte d'Ivoire for Sudan dyes
- Peppers of the genus Capsicum (other than sweet) from Rwanda for pesticide residues
- Peppers of the genus Capsicum (other than sweet) from Thailand for pesticide residues
- Sesamum seeds from Türkiye for *Salmonella*.

The countries for which official controls have decreased on certain products are: Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Malaysia, and Türkiye.

A full, updated list of products subject to increased official controls is available in the Regulation's Annexes here:

FSA highlights importance of safe handling of raw pet food

The FSA (Food Standards Agency) conducted a survey of 380 raw dog and cat food products bought from retail stores and online between March 2023 and February 2024:

- 35% contained concerning bacteria including *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and *E. coli*
- 29% failed to meet UK legal safety standards

⚠ Strict regulations apply to pet food production. The FSA is working with local authorities to remind feed businesses of their obligations to ensure pet food safety, and to reinforce guidance for pet owners on the safe handling of raw pet food.

Young children, pregnant women, older adults and people with weakened immune systems are more vulnerable to serious illness and should take particular care when handling, storing or preparing raw pet food.

FSA supports trade in recycled plastics for food packaging

The UK government has confirmed that the FSA (Food Standards Agency) will act as the competent authority under EU regulations for recycled plastic materials intended for use in food packaging.

This will enable UK based plastic recyclers to continue supplying recycled plastic to the EU market.

Retailer fined over £500k for food safety offences

A major retailer has been fined for repeatedly displaying out-of-date food items for sale at a store. The company pleaded guilty to five offences. Trading Standards found that the store was continuing to sell food items past their use-by date, failing to respond to warnings from inspections earlier in the year.

Three non-compliant chilled food products for sale during a follow-up visit, consisting of nine individual items, were collectively 91 days past their use-by date.

In 2024 officers found 32 out-of-date food items for sale, spanning eleven different chilled products and totalling 581 days past their use-by date.

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Man jailed over half a million-pound meat theft

Following an investigation by the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) of the Food Standards Agency, a man has been sentenced after admitting to handling stolen goods as part of a wider fraud involving the distribution of more than half a million pounds worth of poultry.

The NFCU gathered evidence after being alerted to a series of offences in which fraudsters posed as legitimate UK food businesses to obtain food deliveries from overseas suppliers and one UK-based company.

The scheme involved cloning details from McDonald's franchises to steal consignments of chicken and turkey. A total of 16.8 metric tonnes of stolen poultry was recovered, but the product later had to be downgraded to pet food because its traceability could not be assured.

The NFCU has highlighted the need for awareness to this issue noting an increase in distribution fraud (company impersonation) targeting food businesses. This type of fraud involves criminals impersonating legitimate, existing businesses, often by creating fake websites, email addresses and invoices to steal food products.

Market Data

Storm Marta causes severe damage in Spain

The Regional Council estimates that about 20% of the Andalusian agricultural production has been lost. Berry, vegetable, avocado, and citrus fruit supply are all affected.

Company fined after *Salmonella* outbreak

A major food safety case has concluded after a *Salmonella* outbreak was traced to pork scratchings. The company has been fined £153,000, with more than £300,000 in additional costs. Over 500 *Salmonella* cases were linked to the contamination between 2021 and 2023.

Investigators found that, before remedial works, food safety standards at the factory were inadequate. The use of pressure washers and a drainage system that flowed from raw to cooked areas created a high risk of cross contamination.

The company voluntarily closed the site, carried out a deep clean and major remedial work, and recalled products with best before dates up to February 2022. The factory subsequently re-opened with agreement from environmental health officers.

March in brief | Food safety risks and regulatory shifts

In this issue we hear about the recent regulatory updates and outbreak investigations which highlight a range of microbiological, chemical and supply chain risks that food business operators should continue to monitor.

New guidance from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland emphasises the importance of robust environmental monitoring for *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat food production environments. Effective environmental sampling programmes help detect contamination sources early and support stronger hygiene and food safety management systems.

Several incidents involving infant formula ingredients have also prompted regulatory action. The European Commission has strengthened import controls on arachidonic acid (ARA) oil following the detection of the toxin cereulide, while investigations in the United States have linked botulism contamination in infant formula to powdered milk used in production.

These cases underline the importance of supplier assurance and ingredient verification.

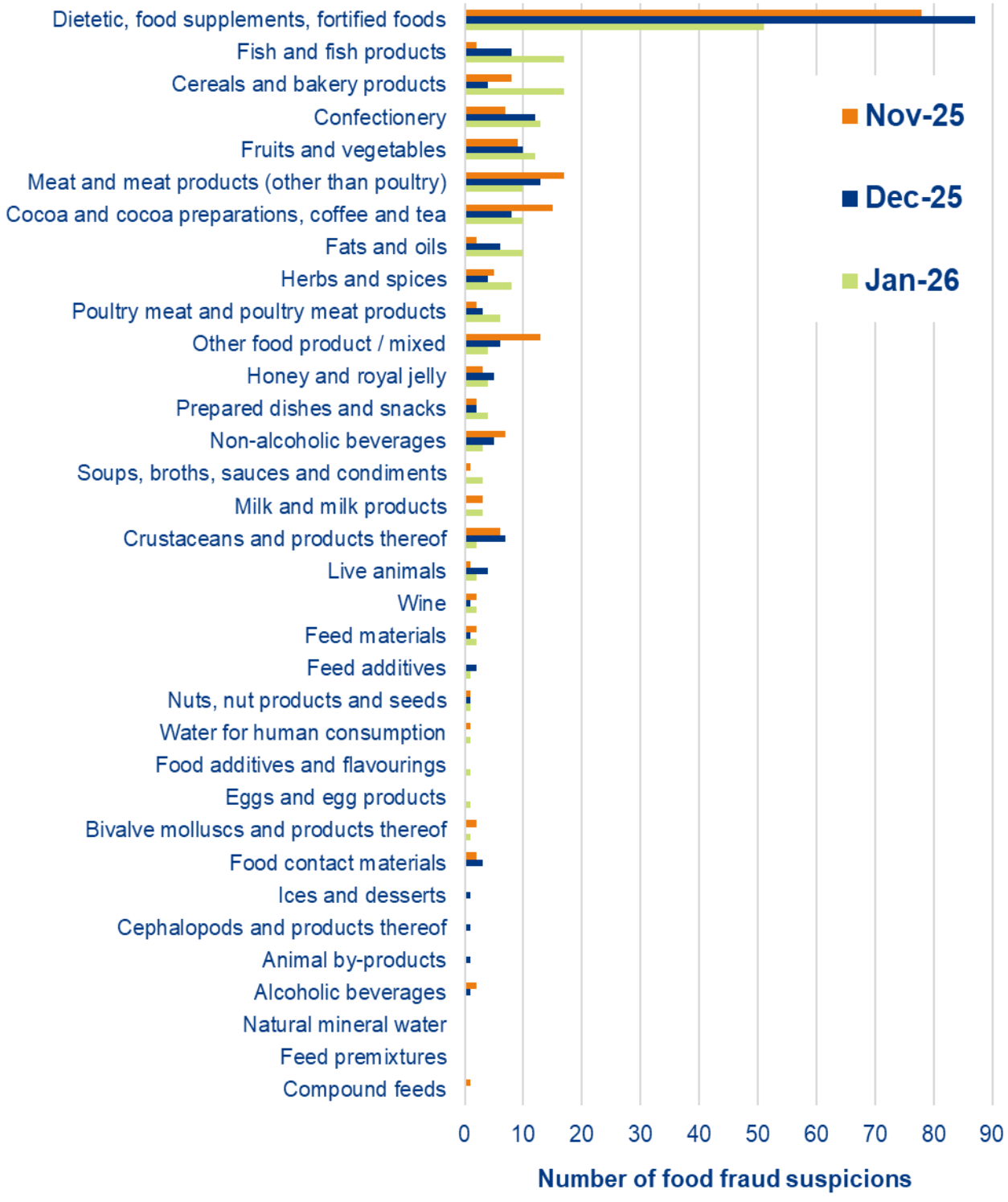
Other emerging topics include mycotoxins in plant-based foods, lectins in undercooked pulses, and the potential formation of chlorinated compounds when sucralose is used at high cooking temperatures. Regulators are also increasing attention on environmental contaminants, with the UK government publishing its first national plan to address PFAS (“forever chemicals”).

Together these developments reinforce the importance of proactive risk management across the supply chain.

Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd, supports food businesses with accredited microbiological and chemical testing, environmental monitoring programmes, and technical consultancy to help identify emerging risks, verify controls and demonstrate due diligence.

RASFF latest quarter's report

Summary of Food Fraud Suspicions



Source: https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/acn/ffn-monthly_en

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Food Risk Insights

The Eurofins Compliance and Risk Management Team can work with you to identify and mitigate risks within your business, whether they be microbiological, contaminants, allergens, pesticides, authenticity (food fraud) or risks to your supply chain such as price changes or climate fluctuations.

We are here to work with you to protect your customers, brand and reputation.

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