



Risk Insights **Food Newsletter**

Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd
Issue 13 | September 2025



In Focus

Emerging issues, trends and legislative changes

- National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) Actions
- Isopropyl detected in counterfeit vodka
- Bacterial outbreaks
- FSA & FSS call for acrylamide data
- Food fraud
- US antibiotic-free meat
- EC introduces stricter checks for *Salmonella*
- Market data

Welcome to the September 2025 food risk insights from the Eurofins Compliance and Risk Management Team which includes details of several bacterial outbreaks, food fraud and calls for acrylamide data.

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



risk@ftuki.eurofins.com

National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) actions

In July 2025, the Food Standards Agency's National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) secured a confiscation order of £31,250.51 following a conviction for the illegal slaughter, manufacture and distribution of "smokies" unskinned sheep or goat carcasses singed in non-approved premises, posing serious food safety risks across the UK.

Following investigations, a man has pleaded guilty to handling stolen goods in connection with a broader poultry distribution fraud involving a significant quantity of goods. NFCU had compiled evidence of a series of offences where fraudsters impersonated legitimate food businesses in the UK.

Another NFCU operation investigating the distribution and sale of basmati rice in counterfeit packaging has resulted in the arrest of four people. Authorities seized large quantities of counterfeit premium brand basmati rice and investigations are ongoing.

In another investigation four men have been given custodial sentences for

diverting meat unfit for human consumption back into the human food chain.

One was sentenced to 42 months in prison and disqualified from being a company director for six years after being found guilty of conspiracy to defraud by placing unsafe food on the market. His manager received a 24-month suspended sentence, 200 hours of unpaid work, and also pleaded guilty to a separate conspiracy offence.

Two others were each sentenced to 35 months in prison and handed indefinite criminal behaviour orders barring them from the food industry, following multiple offences including trading unfit meat and operating unapproved premises.

A fourth defendant received a six-month suspended sentence, 150 hours of unpaid work, and was ordered to pay £5,000 in costs for related regulatory breaches.

The convictions followed a complex investigation sparked by the discovery of nearly two tonnes of illegal meat at an unregistered, unhygienic cutting plant in London. The meat, originally intended for pet food or disposal, had been illicitly diverted back into the human food chain.

Other prosecutions

Two wholesalers have been sentenced for selling non-halal chicken as halal, also food hygiene offences and breaching insolvency law. One defendant was sentenced to 4 years and 8 months another received a suspended sentence and 150 hours of community service.

The investigation revealed extremely poor food hygiene standards, including evidence of poultry being defrosted and refrozen, and chicken that was two years past its sell-by date. Investigators also found failures to maintain accurate temperature records, signs of pest activity at the premises, and unlabelled meat being transported in dirty, unrefrigerated vehicles unsuitable for food transport.

While severe sentences can act as a deterrent, food related crimes are increasingly attractive to criminals, partly because the penalties tend to be less severe and the profit to be made. The rise of the Italian mafia is often linked to the Sicilian lemon export trade in the 1870s. In fact, the profit from producing and selling fraudulent olive oil is said to be three times higher than from smuggling cocaine. It's no surprise that criminals and organised crime have turned to food fraud.

EFSA updated risk assessment of fluoride in food and drinking water

✚ The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently announced its consumer risk assessment for fluoride.

While the EFSA concluded that there is no major health risk to the general population, they noted that the EU's legal drinking water limit (1.5 mg/L) might not be sufficiently protective for all exposure scenarios. The risk assessment highlights potential risks for children aged 4-8 in areas with very high fluoride concentrations and calls for continued research into fluoride's effects on the developing nervous system.

New safe intake levels were established for vulnerable groups:

- Pregnant women; 3.3 mg/day, a safe level based on potential effects on the developing nervous system of the foetus.
- Infants (under 1 year); 1.0 mg/day
- Toddlers (1–3 years); 1.6 mg/day
- Children (4–8 years); 2.0 mg/day, this level is based on dental fluorosis (tooth discoloration) being the most sensitive adverse effect for this age group



Isopropyl detected in counterfeit vodka

⚠ On 25 July 2025, Food Standards Scotland (FSS) issued a public health warning after counterfeit “half bottles” of Glen’s Vodka were seized and found to contain isopropyl alcohol, a toxic chemical dangerous even in small amounts.

Consumption of isopropyl alcohol can cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, vomiting, dizziness, headaches, confusion, slow breathing, and in the most severe cases, coma or death. The scale of distribution remains unclear.

Food regulation update for Jersey (Channel Islands)

👁 Jersey is updating its food regulations by seeking public feedback on secondary legislation to enact the Food Law (Jersey 2023). The previous version was from 1966.

These updates, expected to be debated in the State Assembly by early 2026, aim to improve consumer safety. The law will introduce modern, evidence-based requirements for labelling food allergens, enhance food safety and hygiene, and modernise business licensing with a risk-based framework, while aligning with UK and EU Standards.

The consultation on these key changes closes on 9 October 2025.

French *Yersinia* outbreak traced to raw milk cheese

⚠ In early 2024, French health authorities detected a cluster of *Yersinia enterocolitica* infections leading to an investigation uncovering 175 confirmed cases occurring between January and August 2024.

Epidemiological tracing linked the outbreak to a producer of unpasteurised soft goat's milk cheese, with matching strains found in both the cheese and environmental samples from the dairy and supplying goat farm. The affected cheese had been distributed across 29 countries, prompting a recall and alerts to several EU nations. Although factory inspections revealed no hygiene breaches, further sampling identified *Yersinia* in specific cheese batches and a farm environment swab.

After decontamination and the removal of milk from the infected farm, combined with enhanced microbiological testing, the manufacturer resumed production using temporary pasteurisation steps. They were eventually cleared to restart raw milk operations once safety was confirmed.

Issues with pistachio nuts

⚠ After earlier concerns this year around cost and availability of supply, issues with pistachio nuts continue. There have been reports of a large *salmonella* outbreak in North America, with infected individuals having consumed pistachios or pistachio-containing products such as Dubai-style chocolate.

In addition, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has issued further alerts about Dubai-style chocolate products containing peanuts and other undeclared nuts (including almond, cashew, and walnut) in place of pistachios.

Irish event spotlight's role of AI in food safety

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) convened an open meeting earlier this year titled "AI in Food Safety: Innovation, Risks, and Opportunities", drawing over 220 participants including regulators, academia, industry representatives, and consumer groups.

The conference explored how AI technologies such as machine learning, predictive modelling, and machine vision are being deployed across the food supply chain for traceability, quality control inspections, and outbreak forecasting. While FSAI CEO Dr Pamela Byrne described AI as a "powerful tool" with "incredible opportunities," she also stressed inherent risks that need careful management. Panellists discussed challenges including the scarcity of standardised, high-quality data, privacy concerns, potential liability issues, workforce training, and the absence of robust regulatory frameworks.

The event emphasised the importance of phased, responsible deployment of AI with safeguards to build public trust and protect food safety standards as the technology evolves.

First batch of Scottish vanilla

😊 Aberdeenshire agritech pioneer Vanilla Farms has successfully produced Scotland's first ever batch of domestically cultivated vanilla at the ONE SeedPod innovation hub. Using advanced, totally controlled indoor farming and proprietary curing techniques, the company is aiming to revolutionise a market traditionally reliant on imports. The batch is expected to be available soon and marks a significant step for Scotland's food and drink industry.

Netherlands *salmonella*

 Scientists are raising the alarm over a sharp and sustained rise in *Salmonella* Enteritidis infections in the Netherlands linked to the egg laying hen industry.

Reported human cases have shown a steady increase:

- 2017 to 2019: annual average of 281 cases
- 2023: 427 cases
- 2024: 401 cases
- First half of 2024: 180 cases
- First half of 2025: 209 cases

This uptick coincides with a significant 2.5-fold increase in *Salmonella* positive laying hen flocks. Investigators traced the surge to a large outbreak in 2023 that stemmed from inadequately treated eggshells being used in poultry feed, leading to widespread contamination.

Following this, most human cases in 2024 and 2025 have occurred in many small, diverse clusters, complicating efforts to pinpoint infection sources.

A response team has been established to coordinate control strategies, including increased testing and faster removal of infected flocks. However, the underlying causes, such as potentially waning vaccine-induced immunity in ageing hens, remain under investigation.

Irish listeriosis outbreak

A National Outbreak Control Team, led by the National Health Protection Office of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and involving the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), regional public health services, and national reference laboratories, is investigating a widespread listeriosis outbreak in Ireland.

As of 22 July 2025, there were nine confirmed cases, including one adult who has died, though no further details can be disclosed for confidentiality reasons. A voluntary precautionary recall of ready-to-heat meals was initiated due to their suspected link to the outbreak with hundreds of products removed from supermarkets across the island of Ireland. The food supplier linked to the outbreak has now resumed production.

The incident underscores the persistent difficulty of depending on consumers to reheat meals correctly and raises important questions about whether stricter manufacturing practices or regulatory oversight are needed for foods that require reheating or cooking.

Although *Listeria* is usually eliminated through proper cooking and does not produce heat resistant toxins, manufacturers need to consider the possibility that some consumers may not follow heating instructions adequately, or instructions are unclear or in extreme cases ineffective.

 Manufacturers may want to reflect on what measures are in place to ensure products are free from the pathogens before reaching consumers. The risk may be further exacerbated if consumers try small amounts of unheated food for tasting or pick at parts like toppings.

Confirmed infant botulism from peanut butter

A confirmed case of infant botulism linked to peanut butter occurred in the United Kingdom in May 2024. The six-month-old infant was fed peanut butter starting at six months of age, in line with national clinical guidance (first issued in 2018) aimed at reducing the risk of peanut allergy. *Clostridium botulinum* type A was detected in both the infant's faeces and the peanut butter via PCR and culture. Whole-genome sequencing confirmed that the strains were identical, implicating the peanut butter as the source of infection.

The infant was treated with human-derived Botulism Immune Globulin Intravenous (BIG-IV) and made a good recovery.

Nuts can become contaminated with *Clostridium botulinum* (*Cl. Botulinum*) spores either at the agricultural source or during processing.

Infant botulism is very rare in the UK. Disease progression is typically slow, as it is caused by *in-vivo* sporulation and toxin production.

Botulinum spores are heat resistant and commonly found in the environment. Many processing controls, such as applying heat to food, can reduce pathogens. Normal thorough cooking will kill *Cl. botulinum* bacteria but not its spores. To destroy the spores of *Cl. botulinum*, a sterilisation process equivalent to 121 °C for 3 minutes is required. The botulinum toxin itself is inactivated (denatured) rapidly at temperatures above 80 °C.

However, as increasing numbers of carers follow recommendations to introduce nuts, honey and seeds early into infants' diets, more babies may be exposed to foods that carry bacterial spores, potentially presenting an under recognised risk of botulism.

Latest Eurosurveillance addendum to the original research

Food Standards Agency & Food Standards Scotland call for acrylamide data

The UK Food Standards Agency (FSA), working jointly with Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has launched a call for data on acrylamide levels in food to better understand the risks posed by dietary exposure and to inform future policy decisions.

They are requesting data from industry, researchers, trade organisations, and academia. This includes both typical and high levels of acrylamide occurrence, as

well as information on effective mitigation strategies and any challenges faced.

This consultation aims to collect a broad and representative dataset on acrylamide levels, ensuring that any future regulatory measures are evidence-based, proportionate, and achievable. The deadline for data submissions is 30 November 2025.



EU updates list of “high risk” countries for financial due diligence

✚ The European Union (EU) has updated its list of high-risk third countries under [Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2025/1184](#), identifying jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies in anti-money laundering and/or counter-terrorism financing controls.

Enhanced due diligence checks for new and existing suppliers, including food businesses, is an essential fraud mitigation measure. The level of regulatory oversight in any country, alongside broader cultural attitudes toward bribery and corruption, informs the risk scoring.

FSA extends support for Food Safety Research

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has renewed its £650,000 funding commitment co-supported by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) to extend the operational life of the Food Safety Research Network (FSRN) for another three years. Hosted by the Quadram

Institute, the FSRN brings together nearly 500 experts across 290 organisations from sectors including research, industry, and policy. Its mission is to proactively identify and address emerging food safety threats, spanning microbial hazards in ready-to-eat foods, novel proteins, vertical farming, climate change impacts, and evolving home food practices.

The initiative supports the translation of research insights into practical, evidence driven regulatory actions to help safeguard public health.

Cinnamon fraud

A recent research paper reported the results of a study analysing 104 cinnamon samples purchased from retailers in EU countries.

✚ The study found that 66.3% of samples either failed to meet international quality standards, were not compliant with European food safety legislation, showed signs of potential fraud, or contained levels of coumarin high enough to pose a risk to children. Other issues identified included elevated ash and sulphur content as well as high levels of certain metals.

Cooking oil fraud

In a major food safety scandal in Vietnam, authorities uncovered a large-scale fraud involving the illegal sale of animal feed oil as cooking oil for human consumption. Over a three-year period, companies repackaged tens of thousands of tonnes of low-grade oil, meant solely for animal use, and distributed it to restaurants, street vendors, and industrial kitchens.

These incidents have triggered widespread public outrage and prompted the Ministry of Industry and Trade to initiate nationwide inspections of food producers, particularly smaller and

unregulated facilities. The scandal has raised serious concerns about food safety enforcement and consumer protection in Vietnam.

In Pakistan the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) conducted a raid at an illegal oil processing facility located in Lahore. During the operation, they seized and discarded 10,080 litres of hazardous oil, which had been derived from animal fat and waste classed as unfit for human consumption. The facility was operating without the required licences and failed to use methanol dye, which is mandated to mark such oil for non-edible applications like biodiesel or soap production.

European Commission issues updated inspection rates and conditions for food imports

✚ The European Commission (EC) has introduced stricter checks for Salmonella in tahini and halva imported from Syria, as part of updated import control measures. These changes are based on findings from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), along with data from document reviews, identity verification, and physical inspections carried out by EU member states during the second half of 2024.

Other measures include mandatory pyrrolizidine alkaloid testing on 50% of cumin seed consignments, and aflatoxin or ochratoxin A inspections on 30% of dried figs and spice mixes. New pesticide residue checks have also been introduced: granadilla and passion fruit from Colombia face 20% controls, vine leaves from Egypt 50%, and bottle gourd from India and mangoes from Egypt 20% each. Drumsticks and yardlong beans from India now require official certificates plus identity and physical inspection.

Meanwhile, inspection rates for grapefruit exports from Turkey have been reduced to 10% in recognition of improved compliance.

US antibiotic-free meat

Consumers in the UK and elsewhere often consider antibiotic-free meat a healthier and more ethical choice and are willing to pay higher prices for it. With the US introducing tariffs and making new trade deals, meat from the US may become more readily available. However, investigations in the United States have uncovered widespread mislabelling. In 2023, tests by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found antibiotic residues in 20% of beef marketed as "Raised Without Antibiotics" (RWA), with similar findings (15%) reported in 2022. Major meat producers, were implicated.

Despite clear evidence of misrepresentation, the USDA has not enforced penalties or strengthened its oversight, continuing to rely on producer self-reporting. Smaller brands have also been found using RWA labels without providing transparent testing or verification. As a result, consumers are often paying premium prices for meat that does not meet antibiotic-free standards.

In the US, antibiotics are commonly used in livestock to prevent disease, boost growth, and increase feed efficiency practices that are banned or heavily restricted in many other countries due to concerns over antibiotic resistance. In 2020, 69% of medically important antibiotics in the US were used in meat production. Although only 20% of countries still allow antibiotics for growth promotion, loopholes in labelling and feed regulations mean undeclared antibiotic use remains a risk worldwide.

✚ Misleading "antibiotic free" claims are a growing global issue wherever premium labelling is left unchecked.

Market data watch

Beef

Beef prices are currently increasing due to a combination of factors including rising farmgate prices, reduced supply, and strong demand. The cost of beef has been significantly impacted by factors like drought, high feed costs, and disruptions to the supply chain.

Eggs

Egg prices in the EU are rising. This increase is driven by higher production costs, and seasonal demand. Eggs involved in processing are particularly affected. Bird flu outbreaks have also had an effect, although this effect is more localised.

Apricots

In spring 2025, severe storms struck northeastern Spain. In some zones, up to 50% of apricot production was lost, severely affecting fruit set and yields. Overall, fruit growers across the Ebro Valley region reported between 30% and 80% losses in apricots, peaches, cherries, and apples, highlighting the growing threat of climate volatility to the stone fruit sector.

Rice

Major rice growing regions in Japan are facing severe drought and an unprecedented heatwave, putting the country's rice production at serious risk. Rice prices were already up by 50% compared to a year ago, largely due to poor weather conditions in earlier seasons. Now, the U.S. Department of Agriculture projects that Japan's rice harvest for 2025 will hit its lowest level since 2003. This shortage raises concerns about potential fraud in the rice supply chain, such as foreign rice being falsely labelled and sold as Japanese.

Orange juice

Though orange juice prices have eased recently, there is concern about the high tariffs the US has placed on Brazil (the world's largest exporter of orange juice), and the effect on global supply. Brazilian juice is being diverted from its usual US markets to other countries, potentially accompanied by fraudulent claims about its origin or quality.

Italian hazelnuts

Hazelnut production in Italy's Campania region has been severely impacted by climate change, with recent harvests falling well below average. Once the world's second largest hazelnut producer, Italy has now been overtaken by Chile and Türkiye. The sharp decline in this season's output raises the risk of fraud, with lower quality or imported hazelnuts potentially being falsely marketed as high-end Italian produce.

Broccoli

Amid an exceptionally dry and harsh growing season, UK farmers are warning of a looming broccoli shortage. Brassica yields, particularly for broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbages, are down by more than 50% in some areas. Farmers are also struggling to maintain production while facing elevated irrigation and energy costs, painting a stark picture of the pressures on British agriculture.

Market data watch continued...

Climate

Europe has been identified as a key area of concern this summer, with prolonged periods of extreme heat and dryness during spring and summer placing significant strain on crops. Crop stress is being reported as moderate to severe across much of the continent. Compounding the issue, soil moisture levels, vital for healthy crop growth, have fallen to their lowest point in 22 years.

In contrast, the United States has experienced severe flooding due to heavy rainfall, affecting several high-risk areas. While damaging, these events have been relatively localised. Overall, the increased rainfall has actually benefited large-scale farming in central parts of the country by supporting crop development.

Meanwhile, conditions in East Asia have been mixed.

Although the full impact of this extreme summer weather may not be immediate, it is expected to reduce ingredient availability, drive up prices, and pose risks to global food security.

September in brief | Food safety risks and regulatory shifts

From major food crime convictions to tightening regulatory focus and emerging global health risks, this month's insights highlight key challenges shaping the future of food safety and compliance:

- **Food crime enforcement;** UK convictions for diverting unsafe meat back into the food chain underline the risks of fraud and the importance of vigilance in traceability systems.
- **Counterfeit and fraudulent products;** incidents reported globally, including adulterated vodka, illegal cooking oil, and fraudulent cinnamon and rice products in Europe.
- **Emerging public health concerns;** a confirmed UK case of infant botulism linked to peanut butter and a listeriosis outbreak in Ireland raise fresh questions about consumer protection and outbreak response.
- **Scientific and regulatory developments;** EFSA's new assessment of fluoride, the FSA/FSS call for acrylamide data, and EU import controls on high-risk products signal increasing regulatory demands.

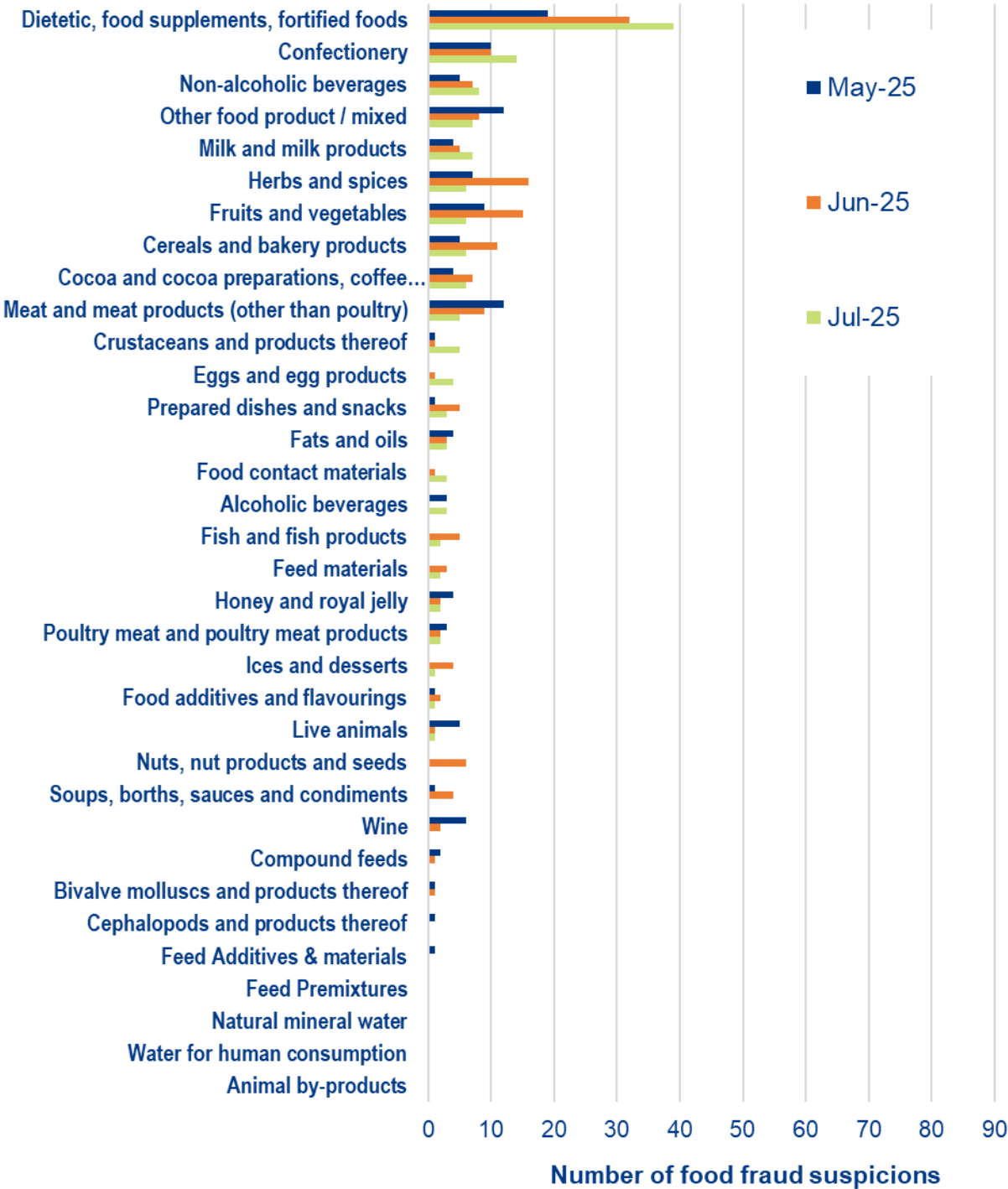
- **Market and climate risks;** volatile weather patterns, soaring input costs, and shifting trade flows continue to impact beef, rice, nuts, and vegetable supplies, driving price pressures and raising food security concerns.

At Eurofins Food Testing UK, we help you anticipate and respond to these evolving risks with accredited microbiological, chemical, and authenticity testing, supply chain fraud detection, and expert consultancy across food safety, labelling, and regulatory compliance.



RASFF latest quarter's report

Summary of Food Fraud Suspicions



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



Risk Insights Food Newsletter

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.



eurofins.ie/food-feed-testing



irelandsales@ftuki.eurofins.com



+(353) 01 431 1306