Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Imported food inspection data: January to December 2019

Imported Food Inspection Scheme

Cataloguing data

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Introduction

Foods imported into Australia are subject to the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to address biosecurity concerns and the *Imported Food Control Act 1992* (IFC Act) for compliance with Australian food standards and requirements for food safety. Under the IFC Act, importers are legally responsible for ensuring the foods they import comply with the standards that apply to their products and do not pose a risk to human health.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment monitors the compliance and safety of imported food at the border through the Imported Food Inspection Scheme (IFIS), a risk-based border inspection program. Foods are referred for inspection and testing under the IFIS based on whether they have been classified as risk or surveillance foods. The rate of inspection is lowered or tightened depending on a history of compliance.

Monthly failing food reports are published on the department's website listing imported foods that have failed analytical testing under the IFIS in a particular month. This annual report provides summary data from imported food inspections conducted under the IFIS from 1 January to 31 December 2019.

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1 Imported Food Inspection Scheme

The *Imported Food Control Act 1992* provides for the department to administer the Imported Food Inspection Scheme (IFIS), a risk-based border inspection scheme of imported foods. Under this scheme, we monitor importers' compliance with sourcing food that meets Australia's food standards and food safety requirements. Importers are responsible for ensuring that imported food complies with the IFC Act and does not pose a risk to human health.

The Imported Food Control Regulations 2019 set out how the IFIS operates including the rates that foods are referred for inspection. For the operation of the IFIS, foods are either classified as risk food and are scheduled in the Imported Food Control Order 2019 (Order) or are surveillance or compliance agreement food.

Food is classified as risk food if it is considered to pose a medium to high risk to human health. Food that is not classified as risk food is classified as surveillance food unless it is compliance agreement food. Compliance agreement food is food that is imported by a business under a Food Import Compliance Agreement (FICA). FICAs offer food importers an alternative regulatory arrangement to inspection and testing of their products under the IFIS by recognising an importer's existing documented food safety management system. Foods that are imported under a compliance agreement are not referred to the IFIS.

Orders to classify food as risk food in the Order are made by the Minister based on advice from Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that the food has the potential to pose a medium to high risk to public health. FSANZ is an independent statutory authority that develops and maintains the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. Another function of FSANZ is to develop assessment policies in relation to food imported into Australia.

Food classified as risk food is initially referred for inspection and analysis at a rate of 100% of consignments. This inspection rate is reduced to 25% following 5 consecutive passes and may be reduced to 5% of consignments after a further 20 consecutive passes. Surveillance food is referred for inspection and analysis at an initial rate of 5% of consignments.

When imported food fails inspection we undertake follow-up action such as treatment of the food to bring it into compliance, destruction or export. Subsequent imports of the same food (same product, producer and country of origin) are subject to inspection at the rate of 100% of consignments until a history of compliance is demonstrated.

We use electronic profiles in the Department of Home Affairs' Integrated Cargo System (ICS) to identify foods of interest and appropriate rates of referral. Once food is referred, our systems apply relevant tests and inspection rates based on the risk the food may pose and, for some food, the compliance history of the food producer.

The tests applied to risk and surveillance food are published on our website and listed at Appendix A.

2 Imported Food Inspection Scheme inspection and testing summary

From 1 January to 31 December 2019, the compliance rate for all food inspected was 98.4%.

During this period:

- 22,635 entries of imported food were referred for inspection or analysis
- 42,889 lines of imported food were inspected. Of these lines
  - 22% were risk food
  - 72.7% were surveillance food
  - 5.3% were surveillance food subject to a Holding Order
- 132,002 tests (including label and visual checks) were conducted, comprising
  - 54,486 label and composition assessments
  - 25,084 analytical tests
  - 52,432 other tests.

For detailed analysis of data see Results of inspection and testing.

See the Glossary for terms used in this document.

3 Results of inspection and testing

The results of inspection and testing from January to December 2019 include:

- compliance rates against all tests conducted
- labelling compliance
- analytical testing data
- results by commodity group.

3.1 Compliance rates against all tests conducted

In 2019, 98.4% of all imported foods inspected under the IFIS complied with the test applied (Table 1).

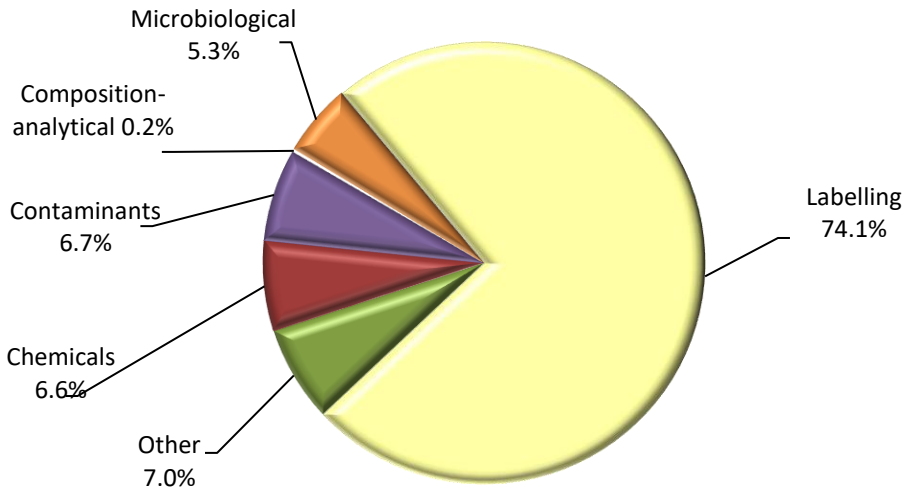
Table 1 All tests, product compliance rates, 2019

Test group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Analytical	25,084	24,692	392	98.4
Labelling	54,486	52,945	1,541	97.2
Other	52,432	52,286	146	99.7
Total	**132,002**	**129,923**	**2,079**	**98.4**

Source: AIMS database

Figure 1 summarises the reasons for non-compliant results (n=2,079) based on test type. Non-compliant labelling accounted for most non-compliance (74.1%).

Figure 1 Non-compliant test results, by test type, 2019



Source: AIMS database

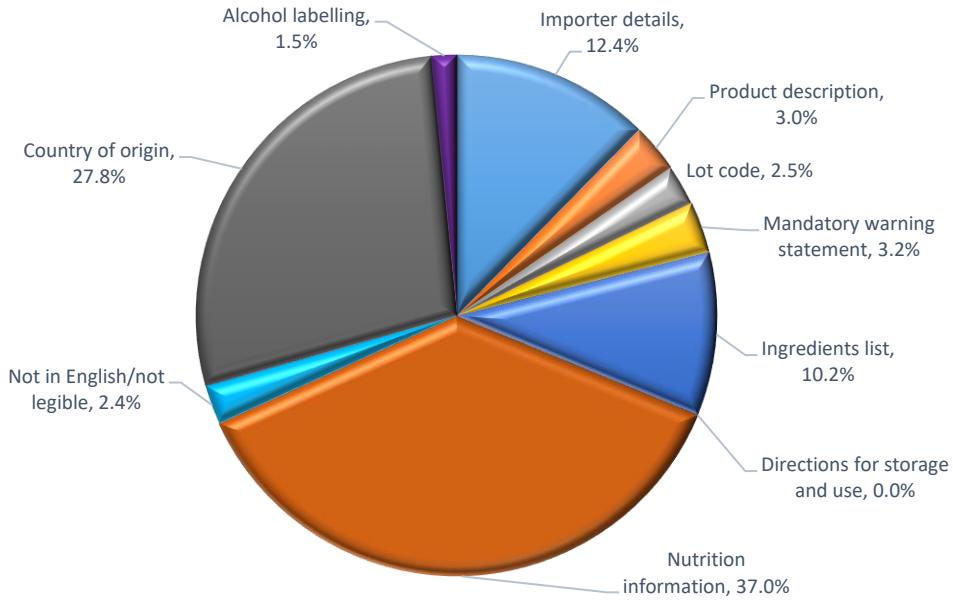
3.2 Labelling compliance

In 2019, most non-compliance under the IFIS was for labels that did not comply with Australian food standards. Figure 2 summarises the reasons for non-compliant labelling. There were two main reasons for non-compliance:

- 37% of labels lacked or listed either incomplete or incorrect nutritional details
- 27.8% of labels did not comply with country of origin requirements.

A lack of importer details and having a non-compliant ingredient list were the next main reasons for label non-compliance (12.4% and 10.2%, respectively).

Figure 2 Non-compliant labelling, by information type, 2019



Source: AIMS database

3.3 Analytical testing data

Analytical tests are grouped into 4 main types: chemical, composition (analytical assessment), contaminant and microbiological (Table 2). Within each category different tests are applied depending on the food type.

The number of lines of food referred for inspection under IFIS and the number of tests applied to food may differ. This is because food subject to inspection is sampled and analysed based on the number of:

- batches and lots within each batch of food on the line referred for inspection
- test types applied to each sample of that food taken during inspection.

For example, a line of cooked and processed meat product may be referred for inspection under the IFIS. The line contains 2 batches of the product, each with 1 lot. An officer will take 1 sample from each batch and apply the test relevant to this food. The tests applied to cooked and

processed meat products are for *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Salmonella*. As a result, 2 samples have been taken from this 1 line of imported food with 2 microbiological tests applied to each sample. This would be reported as 1 line, with 4 separate test results.

Table 2 shows that, of the 25,084 analytical tests applied in 2019, there was a 98.4% compliance rate. Only 392 tests (1.6%) were non-compliant. The tests applied for each category are detailed in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 2 Analytical test, compliance rates, 2019

Test type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Chemical	7,034	6,897	137	98.1
Composition	70	65	5	92.9
Contaminant	8,256	8,116	140	98.3
Microbiological	9,724	9,614	110	98.9
Total	**25,084**	**24,692**	**392**	**98.4**

Source: AIMS database

Table 3 Chemical test, product compliance rates, 2019

Chemical	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Cannabidiol	Hemp seed and hemp seed products	5	5	0	100
Cephalosporins	Meat	1,161	1,161	0	100
Fluoroquinolones	Meat	1,591	1,581	10	99.4
	Farmed fish and prawns				
Fruit and vegetable residue screen	Fruit and vegetables	2,378	2,261	117	95.1
Malachite green	Farmed fish	313	310	3	99
Nitrofurans	Farmed prawns	98	93	5	94.9
Quinolones	Farmed fish	322	320	2	99.4
Total THC	Hemp seed and hemp seed product	5	5	0	100
Virginiamycin	Meat	1,161	1,161	0	100
Total	**-**	**7,034**	**6,897**	**137**	**98.1**

Source: AIMS database

Table 4 Composition analytical test, product compliance rates, 2019

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Allergen – Dairy	Coconut drinks and coconut powders	16	14	2	87.5
C4 adulteration	Honey	18	15	3	83.3
Moisture content	Honey	18	18	0	100
Reducing sugar content	Honey	18	18	0	100
Total	**–**	**70**	**65**	**5**	**92.9**

Source: AIMS database

Table 5 Contaminant test, product compliance rates, 2019

Contaminant	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Aflatoxins	Nuts	926	894	32	96.5
Arsenic total	Cereal grains, cereal flours and processed cereals	1,204	1,198	6	99.5
Carbon monoxide	Tuna and barramundi fillets	52	42	10	80.8
Domoic acid	Bivalve molluscs	550	550	0	100
Erucic acid	Edible plant oils	456	455	1	99.8
Histamine	Fish	2,644	2,594	50	98.1
Hydrocyanic acid	Cassava chips	87	76	11	87.4
Inorganic arsenic	Seaweed (Hijiki)	3	3	0	100
Iodine	Seaweed (brown algae)	133	111	22	83.5
Lead	Cereal grains, cereal flours, processed cereals, canned and preserved fruit	1,544	1,536	8	99.5
PSP toxin	Bivalve molluscs	429	429	0	100
Tin	Canned fruit	228	228	0	100
Total	**–**	**8,256**	**8,116**	**140**	**98.3**

Source: AIMS database

Table 6 Microbiological test, product compliance rates, 2019

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Bacillus cereus	Bean curd, tofu	77	72	5	93.5
Coagulase-positive staphylococci	Cooked crustaceans	730	727	3	99.6
Escherichia coli	Beef products, water, seafood, cheese, fruit and vegetables	636	628	8	98.7
Listeria monocytogenes	Cheese, ready-to-eat seafood, processed meats	2,519	2,503	16	99.4
Listeria monocytogenes-enumerated	Cheese, RTE finfish, slow-cured ham	1,092	1,090	2	99.8
Salmonella	Processed meats, seafood, dried coconut, dried paprika, pepper, capsicum and chilli, sesame seeds, cheese	3,483	3,447	36	99
Standard plate count	Cooked crustaceans	720	683	37	94.9
Vibrio cholerae	Cooked prawns	466	464	2	99.6
Vibrio alginolyticus	Cooked prawns	1	0	1	0
Total	–	**9,724**	**9,614**	**110**	**98.9**

Source: AIMS database

3.4 Results by commodity groups

Table 7 provides the number of tests applied to particular food commodity groups. The results indicate the commodities that are most often tested but are not indicative of the volume of trade in particular commodities. Several factors determine the frequency of inspections:

- commodity groups that contain more risk food or are imported more frequently will have a higher representation under the inspection activity
- the rate of inspection and analysis of food identified as 'failing food' is increased to 100% until compliance has been demonstrated.

Appendix A provides an overview of the analytical tests applied to the commodity groups and Appendix B lists the tariff codes associated with each commodity grouping.

The commodity group 'other' represents the largest group tested as it captures a range of tariff codes that includes many processed foods including cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Table 7 Inspection and test data, by commodity group, 2019

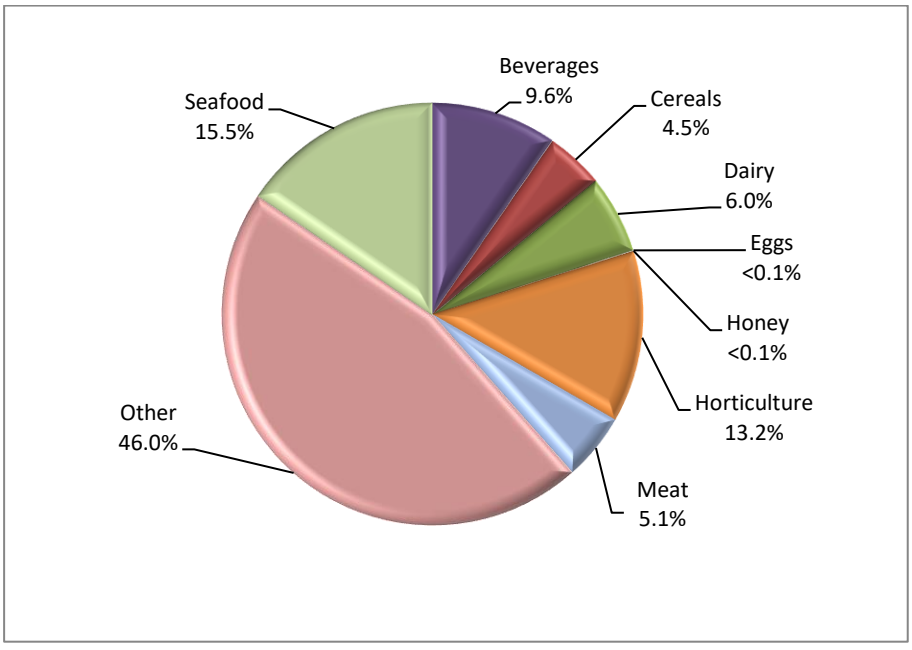
Commodity group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Beverages	12,692	12,481	211	98.3
Cereals, flours and milled products	5,912	5,812	100	98.3
Dairy	7,859	7,798	61	99.2
Eggs	50	49	1	98
Honey	92	86	6	93.5
Horticulture	17,402	17,126	276	98.4
Meat	6,767	6,762	5	99.9
Other (incl. processed food)	60,758	59,627	1,131	98.1
Seafood	20,470	20,182	288	98.6
Total	**132,002**	**129,923**	**2,079**	**98.4**

Source: AIMS database

3.4.1 Test data, by commodity groups

Figure 3 shows, excluding the 'other' category, that seafood was the commodity subject to the most testing (15.5%) in 2019. This commodity includes fresh, chilled, frozen and processed seafood products. This was followed by horticulture (including fresh and processed fruit and vegetables) (13.2%).

Figure 3 Percentage of tests applied, by commodity group, 2019



3.5 Other test data

In addition to labelling and analytical testing, other testing applied from January to December 2019 included composition assessments, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) government certification checks and visual assessments.

3.5.1 Composition assessments

These assessments check the labels for additives or ingredients that are not permitted. Of the 54,486 assessments conducted in 2019, 132 labels were found to be non-compliant with Australian food requirements.

3.5.2 Bovine spongiform encephalopathy certificate checks

Food containing beef is inspected to ensure it is covered by the appropriate government certification, consistent with Australia's BSE policy. A fail is recorded when the food containing beef is not covered by the appropriate government certification. In 2019, of the 672 certificate checks conducted, 670 (99.7%) were covered by the appropriate government certification, 2 (0.3%) of the certificate checks conducted were non-compliant (Table 8).

Table 8 Bovine spongiform encephalopathy certificate check, compliance rates, 2019

Test type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
BSE government certificate	672	670	2	99.7
Total	672	670	2	99.7

Source: AIMS database

3.5.3 Visual assessments

At each inspection, food is visually assessed to determine whether it is unsafe or unsuitable (for example, it contains foreign objects or shows signs of deterioration). In 2019, of the 51,362 visual assessments conducted, only 11 were non-compliant (Table 9).

Table 9 Visual assessment, compliance rates, 2019

Type of test	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Visual	51,362	51,351	11	99.97
Total	51,362	51,351	11	99.97

Source: AIMS database

3.5.4 Results, by country of origin

Under the IFIS, food is inspected irrespective of the country of export. The exception is where a food has previously failed inspection. Future consignments of that food from the producer in the particular country are inspected and analysed at a 100% rate of inspection and analysis until a history of compliance is re-established for the producer of the food.

The number of inspections by country of origin is provided in Table 10. Note that the countries where importers frequently source food will have more lines referred and therefore have a higher representation in inspection data.

Table 10 Number of inspections, by country of origin, 2019

Country of origin	Lines inspected (no.)	Lines inspected (%)
China	5,334	12.4
Italy	3,199	7.5
India	3,192	7.4
Thailand	3,103	7.2
Japan	2,969	6.9
United States	2,517	5.9
Korea, Republic of	2,181	5.1
France	1,634	3.8
Taiwan	1,562	3.6
Malaysia	1,507	3.5
Other	15,691	36.6
Total	**42,889**	**100**

Source: AIMS database

From 1 January to 31 December 2019:

- food from China, Italy and India was subject to the most inspections
- 63.4% of food inspections were conducted on food from 10 countries; the remaining 36.6% concerned food from 134 countries.

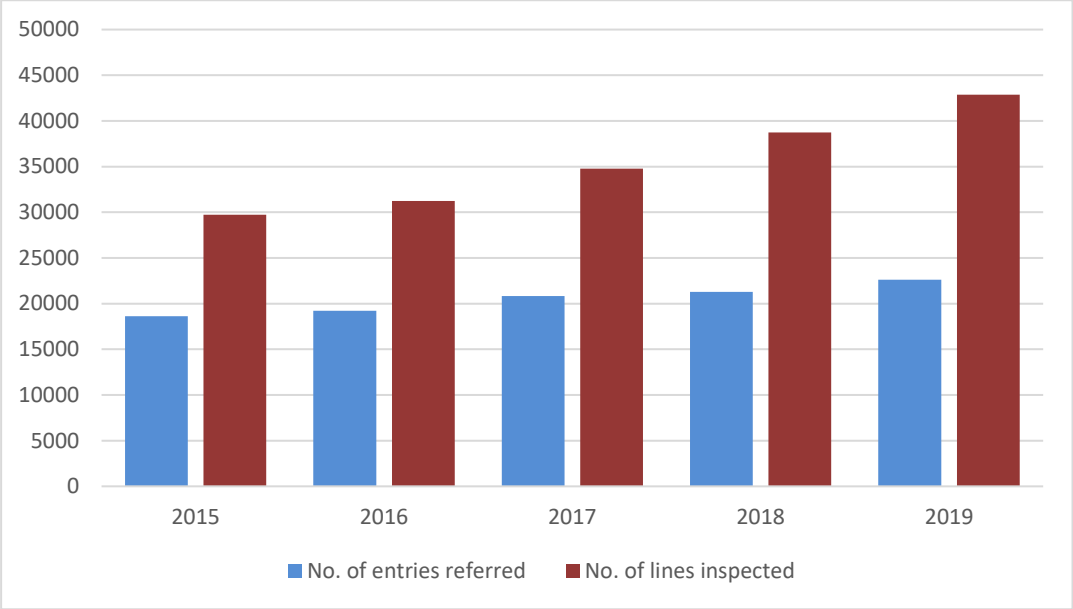
A significant proportion of food imports are from New Zealand. However, most food from New Zealand is not subject to the *Imported Food Control Act 1992* because it is covered by the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement between Australia and New Zealand. Under the arrangement, food produced by or imported into either country that meets one country's food standards may be legally sold in the other country.

3.6 Comparing inspection data reports since 2015

We have published IFIS data reports since 2006. Initially, reports were published every 6 months. Since 2017 we have published the reports annually.

Figure 4 summarises the number of food entries and lines inspected for each calendar year since 2015. The number of entries referred and lines inspected have increased largely as a result of an increase in the volume of food imported.

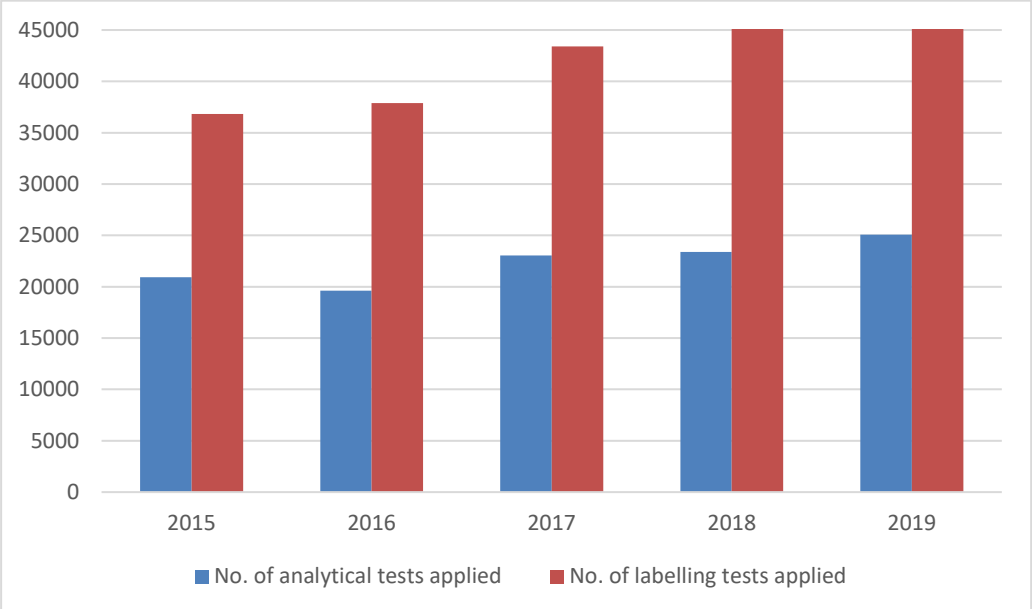
Figure 4 Inspection activity, January 2015 to December 2019



Source: AIMS database

Figure 5 summarises the number of tests applied at inspection in each calendar year. The increase in the proportion of labelling tests applied reflects an increase in the volume of food imported (we check the labelling of all food referred to IFIS).

Figure 5 Tests conducted, January 2015 to December 2019



Source: AIMS database

Appendix A: Analytical tests applied to food

Table A1 Analytical tests applied to food, 2019

Food group	Risk or surveillance test	Analytical test
Coconut milk drinks	Surveillance	Beta-lactoglobulin
		Casein
		Total milk
Dairy products	Risk	*Listeria monocytogenes*
	Surveillance	*Listeria monocytogenes* (enumerated)
		Salmonella
Edible plant oils	Surveillance	Erucic acid
Fruit and vegetables	Surveillance	Fruit and vegetable residue screen
		E. coli (ready-to-eat frozen berries only)
		Hepatitis A (ready-to-eat frozen berries only)
		E. coli (sweet/sugar snap peas, fresh baby corn, fresh chillies, sun-dried and semi-dried tomatoes)
Fruit – canned and preserved	Surveillance	Lead
		Tin (canned only)
Fruit juices	Surveillance	Fruit and vegetable residue screen
Herbs and spices	Risk	*Salmonella*
	Surveillance	*Salmonella* (dried and powdered herbs)
Honey	Surveillance	C4 Adulteration
		Moisture content
		Reducing sugar content
Meat	Risk	Government certification for bovine spongiform encephalopathy
		Coagulase-positive staphylococci
		E. coli
		Listeria monocytogenes
		Salmonella
	Surveillance	*Listeria monocytogenes (enumerated)*
		E. coli
		Salmonella
		Cephalosporins
		Fluoroquinolones
		Virginiamycin
Nuts and nut products	Risk	*Salmonella* (coconut)
		Aflatoxin
	Surveillance	*Salmonella* (chilled or frozen shredded coconut)
Seafood	Risk	Histamine
		Listeria monocytogenes
		Coagulase-positive staphylococci
		E. coli

Food group	Risk or surveillance test	Analytical test
		Salmonella
		Standard plate count
		Paralytic shellfish poison (PSP)
		Domoic acid
		Vibrio cholerae
	Surveillance	Fluoroquinolones
		Malachite green
		Nitrofurans
		Quinolones
		Carbon monoxide (tuna and barramundi fillets)
Plant-based products	Risk	*Salmonella* (sesame seed and dried coconut)
		Inorganic arsenic (hijiki seaweed)
		Iodine (seaweed (brown algae)
		Hydrocyanic acid (cassava chips)
	Surveillance	Fruit and vegetable residue screen
		Bacillus cereus (tofu, soy bean curd or soy milk curd)
		Arsenic total (cereal grains, ready-to-eat cereal flours and processed cereals)
		Cannabidiol, total THC (hemp seed and hemp seed products)

Appendix B: Tariff codes applied to food commodity groups

Table B1 Tariff codes applied to food commodity groups

Commodity group	Tariff code
Beverages	2009
	2201 to 2208
Cereals	1001 to 1008
	1101 to 1109
Dairy	0401 to 0406
Eggs	0407 to 0408
Honey	0409
Horticulture	0701 to 0714
	0801 to 0814
	0904 to 0910
	1201 to 1208
	1210 to 1212
	1801 to 1802
Meat	0201 to 0212
	0504
	1601 to1602
Seafood	0302 to 0307
	1603 to 1605
Other (including processed food)	0410
	0901 to 0903
	1301 to 1302
	1501 to 1504
	1506 to 1517
	1520 to 1521
	1701 to 1704
	1803 to 1806
	1901 to 1905
	2001 to 2008
	2101 to 2106
	2209
	2501
	3501 to 3503
	3505
	3507

Glossary

Term	Definition
AIMS	Computer system that receives data on imported goods from the Integrated Cargo System (ICS) and processes entries for imported food and biosecurity purposes.
Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code	Details food standards applicable to food for human consumption in Australia. See the Food standards code.
batch	Food of a particular kind made or packed in a distinct manner that may include one or more lots.
entry	Department of Home Affairs electronic document generated using the ICS. An entry may contain one or more lines or food.
food	Under section 3 of the Imported Food Control Act 1992, (1) Food includes (a) any substance or thing of a kind used, capable of being used, or represented as being for use, for human consumption (whether it is live, raw, prepared or partly prepared); and (b) any substance or thing of a kind used, capable of being used, or represented as being for use, as an ingredient or additive in a substance or thing referred to in paragraph (a); and (c) any substance used in preparing a substance or thing referred to in paragraph (a); and (d) chewing gum or an ingredient or additive in chewing gum, or any substance used in preparing chewing gum; and (e) any substance or thing declared to be a food under a declaration in force under section 6 of the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991*. (It does not matter whether the substance, thing or chewing gum is in a condition fit for human consumption.) (2) However, food does not include a therapeutic good within the meaning of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.* (3) To avoid doubt, food may include live animals and plants.
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand is a bi-national government agency responsible for developing food standards and administering the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. FSANZ conducts the food risk assessment and advises the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment on food that poses a medium or high risk to public health.
holding order	An order made under section 15 of the *Imported Food Control Act 1992* that increases the rate of inspection of a surveillance food that has failed an imported food inspection. This targets the specific food from the specific producer in a specific country at a rate of 100% of consignments.
ICS	Integrated Cargo System, a computer system managed by the Department of Home Affairs.
Imported Food Inspection Scheme	IFIS was established under the Imported Food Control Regulations 1993. It provides for inspection of food at the border to assess importer compliance with sourcing food that does not pose a risk to human health and meets Australian food standards.
inspection	Includes inspection (visual and label assessment) or inspection and analysis (samples taken and sent for analysis) as required.
line	Items of food being imported are recorded in the ICS as lines within the import entry. An import entry may consist of one line or many lines of products.
lot	A quantity of a food prepared or packed under the same conditions (ordinarily from a particular preparation or packing unit and during a particular time, ordinarily not exceeding 24 hours).
lot code	A unique code that identifies a lot (quantity of food) and can be used for recall purposes if necessary.

Term	Definition
risk food	Food that is classified as risk food in the Imported Food Control Order 2019. This kind of food is referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 100% of consignments. The rate is reduced in accordance with a history of compliance.
surveillance food	All other food not classified as risk food. This kind of food is referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 5% of consignments.