



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Imported food inspection data: January to December 2021

Imported Food Inspection Scheme



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Introduction

Foods imported into Australia are subject to the:

- *Biosecurity Act 2015* – which manages biosecurity threats to plant, animals and human health in Australia and its external territories
- *Imported Food Control Act 1992* (IFC Act) – which manages food safety risks to protect human health.

Under the IFC Act, importers are legally responsible for ensuring the foods they import comply with Australia's food standards and do not pose a risk to human health.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 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 decreased or increased depending on a history of compliance.

Every month, we publish a [list of failed foods](#) on our website. These are imported foods that have failed analytical testing under the IFIS.

This annual report provides summary data from imported food inspections conducted under the IFIS from 1 January to 31 December 2021.

Imported Food Inspection Scheme

Legislation

The *Imported Food Control Act 1992* (IFC Act) provides for the department to administer the Imported Food Inspection Scheme (IFIS), a risk-based border inspection scheme for imported foods. Under this scheme, we monitor food imported into Australia for compliance with Australia's food standards and food safety requirements. Importers are responsible for ensuring that imported food complies with the IFC Act.

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

Food classification

The minister classifies food as risk food in the Order. This is based on advice from Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that the food has the potential to pose a medium or high risk to public health. FSANZ is an independent statutory authority that develops and maintains the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. FSANZ also provides risk advice on food imported into Australia.

Food that is not classified as risk food is surveillance food unless it is compliance agreement food. Compliance agreement food 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. Under this arrangement, the department audits an importer's existing documented food safety management system. Foods that are imported under a compliance agreement are not referred to the IFIS.

Inspection rates

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 food and surveillance food](#) are published on our website and listed at [Appendix A](#).

IFIS inspection and testing summary

From 1 January to 31 December 2021, the compliance rate for all food inspected was 98.2%.

During this period:

- 22,317 entries of imported food were referred and subject to inspection or analysis
- 45,667 lines of these entries were inspected. Of these lines
 - 23.8% were risk food
 - 69.4% were surveillance food
 - 6.8% were surveillance food subject to a Holding Order
- 135,111 tests (including label and visual checks) were conducted on the food, comprising
 - 57,184 label and composition assessments
 - 22,257 analytical tests
 - 55,670 other tests.

For detailed analysis of data see [Results of inspection and testing](#).

Results of inspection and testing

The results of inspection and testing from January to December 2021 cover:

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

Compliance rates against all tests conducted

In 2021, 98.2% of all imported foods inspected under the IFIS complied with the test applied (Table 1).

Table 1 All tests, product compliance rates, 2021

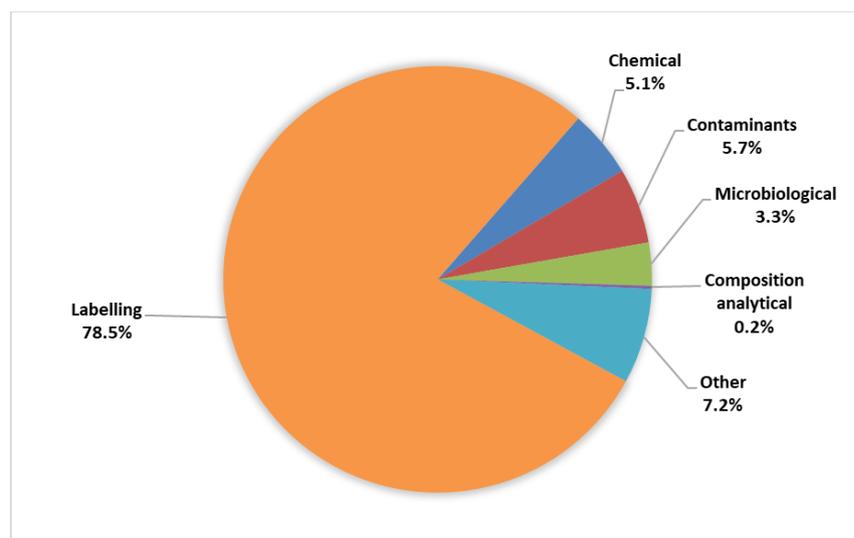
Test group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Analytical	22,257	21,901	356	98.4
Labelling	57,184	55,236	1,948	96.6
Other ^a	55,670	55,491	179	99.7
Total	135,111	132,628	2,483	98.2

^a Includes tests such as certification checks (BSE certification, raw milk cheese certification), composition and visual assessment.

Source: AIMS database

In 2021 non-compliant labelling accounted for most non-compliance (78.5%). Figure 1 summarises the reasons for non-compliant results (n=2,483).

Figure 1 Non-compliant test results, by test type, 2021



Other includes tests such as certification checks (BSE certification, raw milk cheese certification), composition and visual assessment.

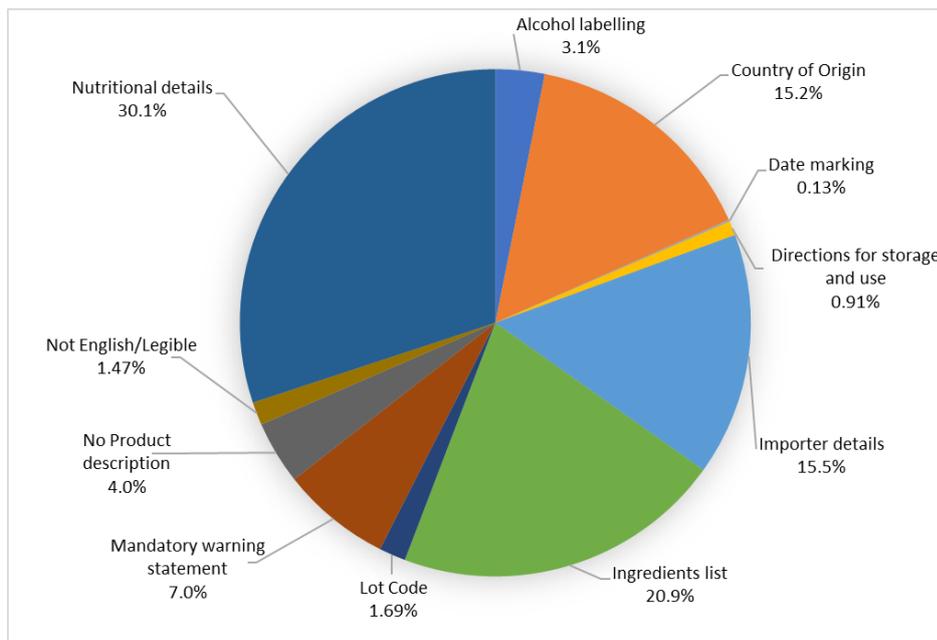
Source: AIMS database

Labelling compliance

In 2021 most non-compliance under the IFIS was for labels that did not comply with Australian food standards (Figure 2). Most notably:

- 30.1% of labels lacked or listed either incomplete or incorrect nutritional details
- 20.9% of labels lacked or listed either incomplete or incorrect ingredient lists
- 15.5% of labels lacked or listed incorrect importer details
- 15.2% of labels were non-compliant with country of origin labelling requirements.

Figure 2 Non-compliant labelling, by information type, 2021



Source: AIMS database

Analytical testing

Analytical tests (Table 2) are grouped into 4 main types:

- 1) chemical
- 2) composition (analytical assessment)
- 3) contaminant
- 4) microbiological.

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 are 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 22,257 analytical tests applied in 2021, 98.4% were compliant. Only 356 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 tests, compliance rates, 2021

Test type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Chemical	5,205	5,078	127	97.6
Composition	133	127	6	95.5
Contaminant	8,798	8,656	142	98.4
Microbiological	8,121	8,040	81	99
Total	22,257	21,901	356	98.4

Source: AIMS database

Table 3 Chemical tests, product compliance rates, 2021

Chemical	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Cannabidiol	Hemp seed and hemp seed products	10	10	–	100
Cephalosporins	Meat	766	766	–	100
Fluoroquinolones	Meat; Farmed fish and prawns	1,183	1,157	26	97.8
Fruit and vegetable residue screen	Fruit and vegetables	1,821	1,726	95	94.8
Malachite green	Farmed fish	272	272	–	100
Nitrofurans	Farmed prawns	108	102	6	94.4
Quinolones	Farmed fish	269	269	–	100
Total THC	Hemp seed and hemp seed product	10	10	–	100
Virginiamycin	Meat	766	766	–	100
Total	–	5,205	5,078	127	97.6

Source: AIMS database

Table 4 Composition analytical test, product compliance rates, 2021

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Allergen – Dairy	Coconut drinks and coconut powders	24	22	2	91.7
C4 adulteration	Honey	37	34	3	91.9
Moisture content	Honey	36	35	1	97.2
Reducing sugar content	Honey	36	36	–	100
Total	–	133	127	6	95.5

Source: AIMS database

Table 5 Contaminant tests, product compliance rates, 2021

Contaminant	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Aflatoxins	Nuts	1,527	1,478	49	96.8
Arsenic total	Cereal grains, cereal flours and processed cereals	1,060	1,060	–	100
Domoic acid	Bivalve molluscs	565	565	–	100
Erucic acid	Edible plant oils	445	445	–	100
Histamine	Fish	2,692	2,656	36	98.7
Hydrocyanic acid	Cassava chips	137	111	26	81
Inorganic arsenic	Seaweed (hijiki)	5	4	1	80
Iodine	Seaweed (brown algae)	204	180	24	88.2
Lead	Cereal grains, cereal flours, processed cereals, fresh and frozen vegetables	1,739	1,733	6	99.7
PSP toxin	Bivalve molluscs	424	424	–	100
Total	–	8,798	8,656	142	98.4

Source: AIMS database

Table 6 Microbiological test, product compliance rates, 2021

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	Bean curd, tofu	121	115	6	95
<i>Cronobacter</i>	Infant formula (0 to 6 months)	7	7	–	100
<i>Coagulase-positive staphylococci</i>	Cooked crustaceans	2	2	–	100
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Beef products, seafood, cheese, fruit and vegetables	731	726	5	99.3
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Cheese, ready-to-eat seafood, processed meats	2,275	2,268	7	99.7
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (enumerated)	Cheese, RTE finfish, slow-cured ham	882	882	–	100
Salmonella	Processed meats, seafood, dried coconut, dried paprika, pepper, capsicum and chilli, sesame seeds, cheese, infant formula	3,660	3,598	62	98.3
Vibrio cholerae	Cooked prawns	443	442	1	99.8
Total	–	8,121	8,040	81	99.0

Source: AIMS database

Results by commodity group

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.

Commodity groups that contain more risk food or are imported more frequently will have a higher representation under the inspection activity.

[Appendix A](#) provides an overview of the analytical tests applied to the commodity groups.

The commodity group ‘other’ represents the largest group tested because it captures a range of tariff codes. These include many processed foods such as cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Table 7 Inspection and test data, by commodity group, 2021

Commodity group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Beverages	13,649	13,325	324	97.6
Cereals, flours and milled products	5,498	5,429	69	98.7
Dairy	6,407	6,370	37	99.4
Eggs	39	37	2	94.9
Honey	185	181	4	97.8

Commodity group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Horticulture	20,043	19,706	337	98.3
Meat	5,064	5,047	17	99.7
Other (incl. processed food) ^a	65,818	64,345	1,473	97.8
Seafood	18,408	18,188	220	98.8
Total	135,111	132,628	2,483	98.2

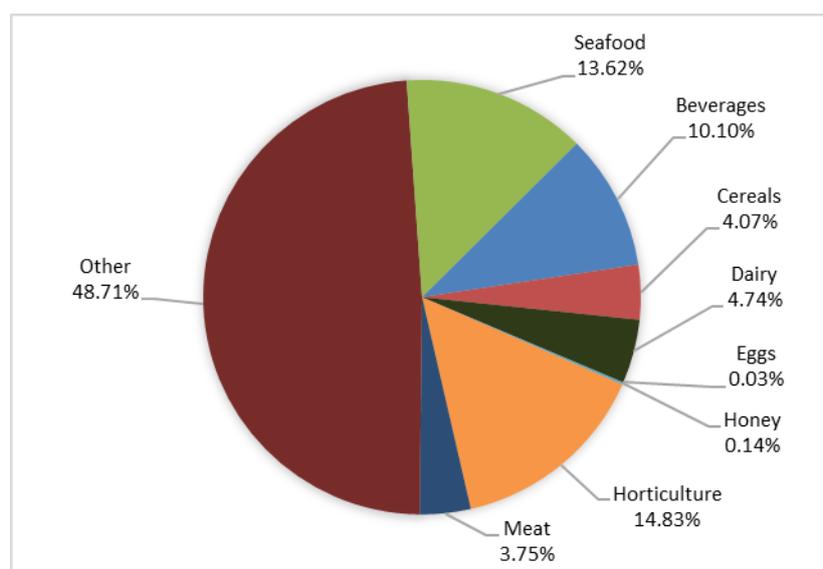
^a Captures a range of tariff codes, including processed foods such as cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Source: AIMS database

Test data, by commodity group

Figure 3 shows (excluding the 'other' category) that horticulture was the commodity subject to the most testing (14.8%) in 2021. This commodity includes fresh and processed fruit and vegetables. Seafood (fresh, chilled, frozen and processed seafood products) was also subject to high levels of testing (13.6%).

Figure 3 Percentage of tests applied, by commodity group, 2021



Other captures a range of tariff codes, including processed foods such as cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Source: AIMS database

Other test data

In addition to labelling and analytical testing, other testing applied from January to December 2021 included composition assessments, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) government certificate checks and visual assessments.

Composition assessments

These assessments check the labels for additives or ingredients that are not permitted. Of the 57,184 assessments conducted in 2021, 134 labels were found to be non-compliant with Australian food standards.

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy certificate checks

Food containing beef is inspected to ensure it is covered by the appropriate government certification. A fail is recorded when a food containing beef is not covered by the appropriate government certification. In 2021, of the 984 certificate checks conducted, 973 (98.9%) were covered by the appropriate government certification. Only 11 (1.1%) of the certificate checks conducted found non-compliance.

Visual assessments

At each inspection, food is visually assessed for obvious signs of damage, deterioration or contamination (for example, evidence of foreign objects, spoilage or infestation). In 2021, of the 54,306 visual assessments conducted, only 33 (0.06%) were non-compliant.

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 8. Note that the countries where importers frequently source food will have more lines referred and therefore have a higher representation in inspection data.

Table 8 Number of inspections, by country of origin, 2021

Country of origin	Lines inspected (no.)	Lines inspected (%)
China	5,646	12.4
India	3,779	8.3
Japan	3,663	8.0
Italy	3,092	6.8
Thailand	2,853	6.2
Korea, Republic of	2,564	5.6
United States	1,976	4.3
France	1,849	4.0
Taiwan	1,643	3.6
Vietnam	1,592	3.5
Other	17,010	37.2
Total	45,667	100

Source: AIMS database

From 1 January to 31 December 2021:

- food from China, India and Japan were subject to the most inspections
- 62.8% of food inspections were conducted on food from 10 countries; the remaining 37.2% concerned food from 134 countries.

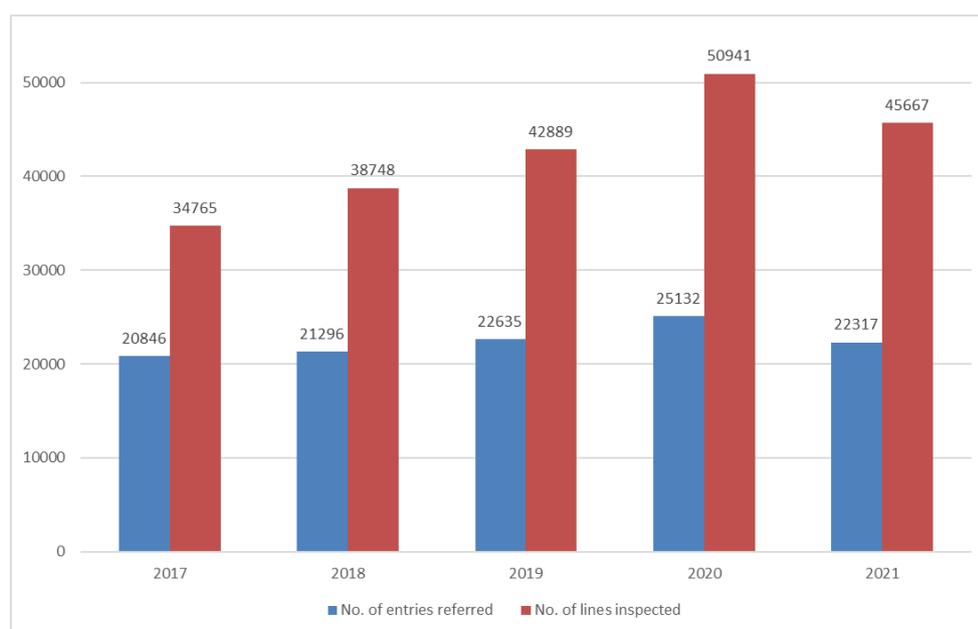
A significant proportion of food imports are from New Zealand, but very few are subject to the IFC Act. The Act exempts food imported from New Zealand unless the Order indicates that it applies. Currently, the Order specifies that beef, beef products, ready-to-eat cassava chips and brown seaweed are foods to which the Act applies. The exemption in the Act for food imported from New Zealand was included following the signing of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement between Australia and New Zealand. Under the arrangement, goods produced by or imported into either country that meets one country’s legal requirements may be legally sold in the other country.

Comparing inspection data reports since 2017

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

From 2017 to 2020 the number of entries referred increased by 21%, and the number of lines inspected by 47%. However, from 2020 to 2021 the number of entries referred decreased by 11% and the number of lines inspected by 10% (Figure 4).

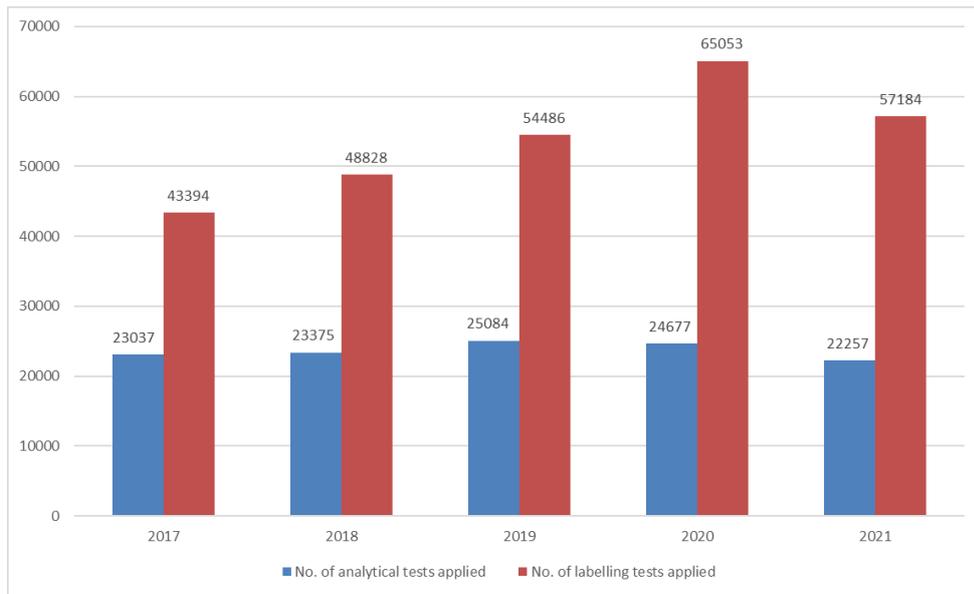
Figure 4 Inspection activity, January 2017 to December 2021



Source: AIMS database

From 2017 to 2020 analytical testing applied under the IFIS increased by 7% and labelling testing by 50%. However, from 2020 to 2021 analytical testing decreased by 10% and labelling testing decreased by 12% (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Tests conducted, January 2017 to December 2021



Source: AIMS database

Appendix A: Analytical tests applied to food

Table A1 Analytical tests applied to food, 2021

Food group	Analytical test
Coconut milk drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beta-lactoglobulin • Casein • Total milk
Dairy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (enumerated) • <i>Salmonella</i>
Edible plant oils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erucic acid
Fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetable residue screen • <i>E. coli</i> (ready to eat berries, pomegranate arils, sweet/sugar snap peas, fresh baby corn, fresh chillies, dried dates, frozen spinach, sun-dried and semi-dried tomatoes) • Lead (fresh and frozen vegetables)
Fruit juices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetable residue screen
Herbs and spices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Salmonella</i> (pepper and paprika, dried and powdered herbs)
Infant formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Salmonella</i> • <i>Cronobacter</i> (0 to 6 months)
Honey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C4 Adulteration • Moisture content • Reducing sugar content
Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government certification for bovine spongiform encephalopathy • <i>E. coli</i> • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (enumerated) • Cephalosporins • Fluoroquinolones • Virginiamycin • <i>Salmonella</i>
Nuts and nut products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aflatoxin (peanut and pistachio products) • <i>Salmonella</i> (chilled or frozen shredded coconut)
Seafood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Histamine • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> • Coagulase-positive staphylococci • <i>E. coli</i> • <i>Salmonella</i> • Paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) • Domoic acid • <i>Vibrio cholerae</i> • Fluoroquinolones • Malachite green

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Food group	Analytical test
Plant-based products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="523 237 687 266">• Nitrofurans <li data-bbox="523 273 687 302">• Quinolones <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="523 320 831 349">• <i>Salmonella</i> (sesame seed) <li data-bbox="523 356 916 385">• Inorganic arsenic (hijiki seaweed) <li data-bbox="523 392 895 421">• Iodine (seaweed – brown algae) <li data-bbox="523 427 906 456">• Hydrocyanic acid (cassava chips) <li data-bbox="523 463 922 492">• Fruit and vegetable residue screen <li data-bbox="523 499 1098 528">• <i>Bacillus cereus</i> (tofu, soybean curd or soy milk curd) <li data-bbox="523 535 1214 600">• Arsenic total, lead (cereal grains, ready-to-eat cereal flours and processed cereals) <li data-bbox="523 607 1187 636">• Cannabidiol, total THC (hemp seed and hemp seed products)

Glossary

Term	Definition
Agriculture Import Management System (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.
compliance agreement food	Food imported 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. This involves the department auditing an importer's existing documented food safety management system.
entry	Department of Home Affairs electronic document generated using the ICS. An entry may contain one or more lines of 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 <i>Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991</i> . (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 <i>Therapeutic Goods Act 1989</i> . (3) To avoid doubt, food may include live animals and plants.
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand is an Australian government authority responsible for developing food standards for Australia and New Zealand. FSANZ also advises the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on food that poses a medium or high risk to public health.
holding order	An order made under section 15 of the <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992</i> 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 for the movement of cargo into and out of Australia.
Imported Food Inspection Scheme	IFIS is established under the Imported Food Control Regulations 2019. It provides for the inspection of food at the border to monitor for safety and compliance with Australia's 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 or more lines of products.

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Term	Definition
	Lines are referred to the IFIS through electronic profiling within the ICS. Tests are applied to lines where required, based on the tariff code identifying the food.
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.
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 or compliance agreement food. This kind of food is referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 5% of consignments.