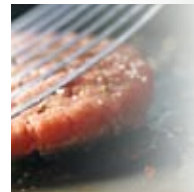
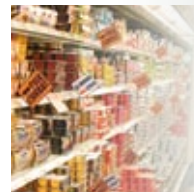
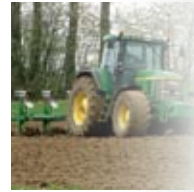


our task is to preserve  
the safety of the food chain  
and the quality of food  
in order to protect the health  
of humans, animals and plants.



the belgian food safety agency in 2007

# facts & figures

2007

federal agency for the safety of the food chain (fasfc)



.be



# facts and figures

the belgian federal agency for the safety of the food chain in 2007

federal agency for the safety of the food chain

# Colofon

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Sources should be cited when using quotes

This report also exists in French, Dutch and German.

A full report containing all activities of the FASFC in 2007 is available on [www.afsca.be](http://www.afsca.be) (in French and in Dutch).

Printed on FSC compliant paper

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# Introduction

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I am very pleased to present an executive summary of the activities carried out in 2007 by the Belgian Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC). With their inspections, samplings or analyses they carry every day, 1.300 motivated members of staff protect the consumers in our country, but also people who, all over the world, rely on the high quality of Belgian products.

The policy of the FASFC aims to encourage the business sectors to write self-checking guides, and to promote the implementation of those guides by the operators via economic incentives (bonus-malus system on their yearly contribution to the Agency).

The results should become marked in the next 3 years. In the meantime, our efforts are concentrating to a large extent on the businesses close to the consumer (distribution, restaurants...); the primary and the processing sectors are already largely involved in quality management.

You will find a more detailed report of our activities on the website of the FASFC, in French and in Dutch. However, this executive summary in 4 languages (English, German, French and Dutch) gives the reader a substantial survey of the results of our inspections in 2007.

I hope you will enjoy reading this report!



Gil Houins  
Chief executive officer



# Table of contents

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Introduction	5
Table of contents	6
The fasfc in a nutshell	8
From Farm to Fork	8
Structure of the FASFC	10
FASFC management	14
The FASFC and you	16
2007 in figures	18
Noteworthy facts of 2007	24
How not to spoil your summer camp	24
Sector guides on self-checking	26
The FASFC smiley	27
Setting up a Financial service	28
Inspection by the Russian Federation ( <i>Rosselkhoznadzor</i> )	28
Protocol of cooperation with Customs & Excise	29
Evaluation of the activities of the Advisory Committee	30
Study day of the Scientific Committee	31

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# Table of contents

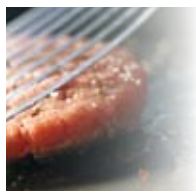
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Accomplishing the tasks	32
From programming to inspection	32
Programming controls	34
Planning controls	36
Conducting controls	37
Performing analyses	40
Establishments operating in the food chain	41
The FASFC in action	44
Plants and plant products	44
Animals	48
Animal diseases	50
Food processing and distribution	60
Foodborne outbreaks	68
Fighting fraud	70
Fighting forbidden substances	71
Controls during transport	72
Specific campaigns	72

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# The fasfc in a nutshell

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## From Farm to Fork

Our task is to preserve the safety of the food chain and the quality of food in order to protect the health of humans, animals and plants.

The Belgian federal agency for the safety of the food chain (FASFC) is a federal executive agency with authority over the whole Belgian territory. It lays down the operational standards applicable to businesses and integrates all official control and inspection services for the food chain. In accordance with the Federal law of 4 February 2000, the FASFC is responsible for laying down, implementing and enforcing measures related to the analysis and the management of risks that may affect the health of consumers.

2007

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# The fasfc in a nutshell

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The major tasks of the FASFC are:

- 1° controlling, testing and inspecting foodstuffs and raw materials thereof at all stages of the food chain
- 2° controlling and inspecting the production, the processing, the storing, the transporting, the marketing, the importing/exporting of products as well as the locations where these activities take place
- 3° issuing, suspending or withdrawing approvals and authorisations required to exercise certain activities in the food chain
- 4° integrating and designing identification and tracing systems allowing foods and their raw materials to be followed through the food chain and controlling these systems
- 5° gathering, classifying, managing, filing and distributing all information related to its task
- 6° working out and implementing a policy of prevention, awareness-raising and information, in consultation with Communities and Regions
- 7° supervising the application of legal provisions by all components of the food chain, from agricultural input (fertilisers, feed, plant protection products) to consumer level.



# The fasfc in a nutshell

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## Structure of the FASFC

The FASFC is built on four directorates general (DG): DG of control policy, control, laboratories and corporate services. Some services come under the direct authority of the Chief Executive officer. The organization chart of the FASFC can be found on the next page.

# The fasfc in a nutshell

## Chief executive officer

Secretariat of the advisory committee  
Internal audit, quality, prevention and protection at work  
Communication and contact point  
Prevention and management of crisis

## Control policy

Protection of plants, safety of plants and feed  
Animal health and safety of animal products  
Food: processing and distribution  
International affairs  
Databases and tracing  
Secretariat of the scientific committee

## Control

**Central services**  
Primary production – Processing  
Distribution – Approvals  
Import & Export, notifications  
**Inspection services**  
National unit of implementation and control  
11 provincial control units (PCUs)  
National investigation unit

## Laboratories

Central services  
FASFC laboratories  
Gent  
Tervuren  
Melle  
Liège  
Gembloux

## Corporate services

Staff & organisation  
Financial service and budget  
ICT  
Logistics and sale  
Legal service

# The fasfc in a nutshell

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## Control Policy

The Control Policy administration evaluates the risks that may affect the safety of the food chain. It is in charge of laying down operational regulations and drawing up the control, sampling and analysis programmes. Furthermore, this administration is also in charge of setting up consultations with business sectors and with national and international authorities, in particular with the European Commission

This department is also responsible for international relations, the development of tracing and identification systems, the creation of databases and the secretariat of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC.

## Control

The control programmes that were drawn up by the Control Policy administration are translated into control plans by the central services of the Control administration. On the spot controls and audits are conducted by the 11 Provincial Control Units (PCUs).

This DG is also in charge of issuing approvals and authorisations as well as certificates, import checks and conducting co-ordinated investigations to fight fraud.

# The fasfc in a nutshell

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## Laboratories

The laboratories department coordinates and performs the analyses laid down in the control programmes. To this end, the FASFC has 5 ISO 17.025 accredited laboratories that are part of the FASFC and it also regularly calls upon the services of some fifty external laboratories. The main requirements to be met with a view to approval by the FASFC are accreditation and high quality analytical results. This laboratory network is provided scientific and technical support by the national reference laboratories that are specialised in well-defined scopes and are designated by the FASFC.

## Corporate services

No organisation can work effectively without adequate logistic and administrative support. That is why the FASFC has made provision for a well-developed corporate services administration including the following services: staff & organisation, financing, budget, logistics and sale, ICT and a legal service.

## Services of the Chief Executive Officer

Communication, the crisis prevention and management cell, the ombudsman service and the internal audit service are some of the services that come under the direct authority of the Chief Executive Officer.



# The fasfc in a nutshell

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## FASFC management

Gil Houins,  
Chief executive officer

Herman Diricks,  
director general Control Policy

Jean-Marie Dochy,  
director general Control

Geert De Poorter,  
director general Laboratories

Véronique Berthot,  
director general Corporate services



## The fasfc in a nutshell

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In September 2008 the central administration and the PCU of Brussels moved to the Food Safety Center on the corner of boulevard du Jardin Botanique and rue Royale in Brussels.

# The FASFC and you

## Central Administration



- 1 CA Botanique - Food Safety Center  
Bd du Jardin Botanique 55 - 1000 Brussels  
T 02/211 82 11 – F 02/211 82 00 – [www.afsca.be](http://www.afsca.be)  
Contact point for consumers: 0800 13 550  
[pointdecontact@afsca.be](mailto:pointdecontact@afsca.be)

## Provincial Control Units (PCUs)



- 2 PCU Antwerpen  
Italiëlei 124 bus 92, 2000 Antwerpen  
T 03/202 27 11 – F 03/202 28 11  
[Info.ANT@favv.be](mailto:Info.ANT@favv.be)



- 3 PCU Brussels  
CA Botanique - Food Safety Center  
Bd du Jardin Botanique 55 - 1000 Bruxelles  
T 02/211 92 00 – F 02/211 91 80 – [Info.BRU@afsca.be](mailto:Info.BRU@afsca.be)



- 4 PCU Hainaut  
Avenue Thomas Edison 3, 7000 Mons  
T 065/40 62 11 – F 065/40 62 10  
[Info.HAI@afsca.be](mailto:Info.HAI@afsca.be)



- 5 PCU Limburg  
Kempische Steenweg 297 bus 4, 3500 Hasselt  
T 011/26 39 84 – F 011/26 39 85  
[Info.LIM@favv.be](mailto:Info.LIM@favv.be)



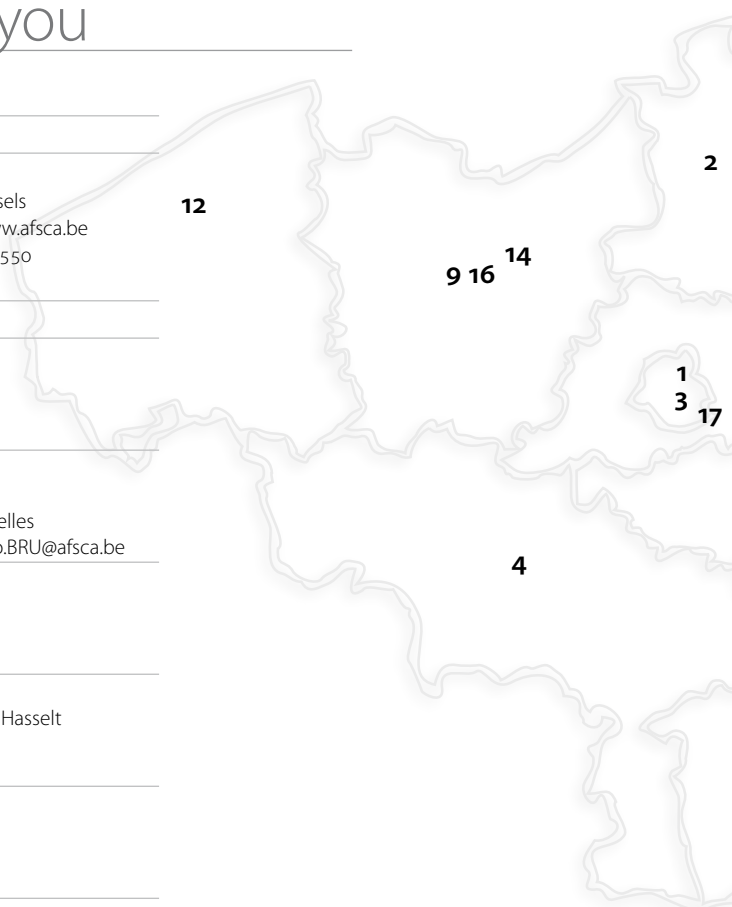
- 6 PCU Liège  
Bd Frère-Orban 25, 4000 Liège  
T 04/224 59 00 – F 04/224 59 01  
[Info.LIE@afsca.be](mailto:Info.LIE@afsca.be)



- 7 PCU Luxembourg  
Rue du Vicinal 1 – 2<sup>ème</sup> étage, 6800 Libramont  
T 061/21 00 60 – F 061/21 00 79  
[Info.LUX@afsca.be](mailto:Info.LUX@afsca.be)

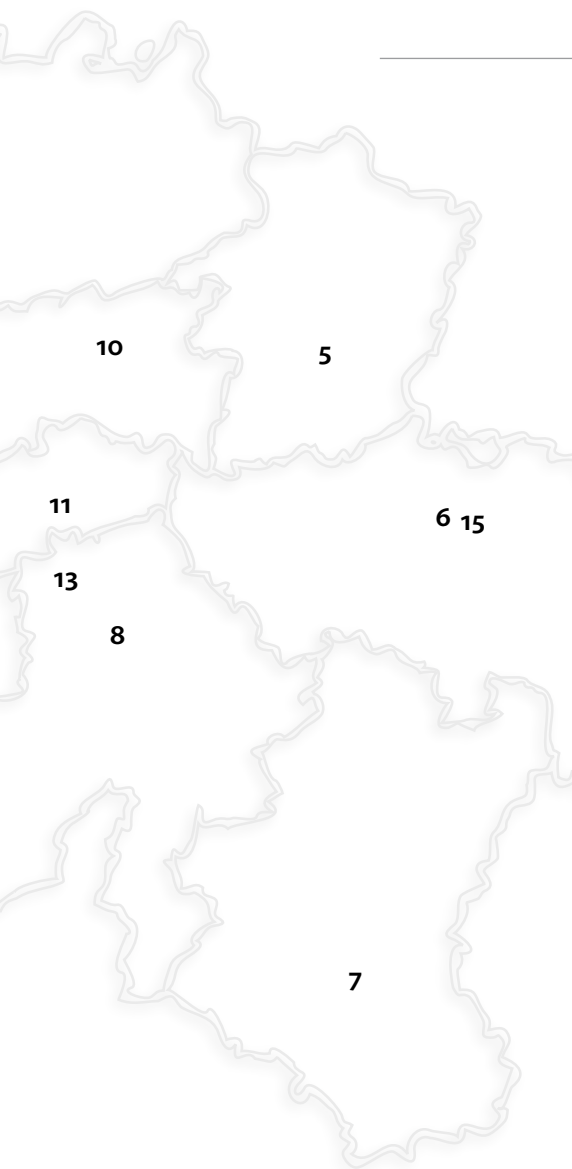


- 8 PCU Namur  
Chaussée de Hannut 40, 5004 Bouge  
T 081/20 62 00 – F 081/20 62 02  
[Info.NAM@afsca.be](mailto:Info.NAM@afsca.be)

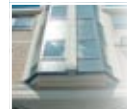




# The FASFC and you



9	PCU Oost-Vlaanderen Zuiderpoort, blok B, 10 <sup>ème</sup> étage Gaston Crommenlaan 6/1000, 9000 Gent T 09/210 13 00 – F 09/210 13 20 – Info.OVL@favv.be
10	PCU Vlaams-Brabant Greenhill campus, Interleuvenlaan 15 – Blok E, 3001 Leuven T 016/39 01 11 – F 016/39 01 05 – Info.VBR@favv.be
11	PCU Brabant wallon Espace Coeur de Ville 1, 2 <sup>ème</sup> étage, 1340 Ottignies T 010/42 13 40 – F 010/42 13 80 Info.BRW@afscs.be
12	PCU West-Vlaanderen Koning Albert I laan 122, 8200 Brugge T 050/30 37 10 – F 050/30 37 12 Info.WVL@favv.be
<b>Laboratories of the FASFC</b>	
13	Gembloux Chaussée de Namur 22, 5030 Gembloux T 081/61 19 27 – F 081/61 45 77
14	Gentbrugge Braemkasteelstraat 59, 9050 Gentbrugge T 09/210 21 00 – F 09/210 21 01
15	Liège Rue Louis Boumal 5, 4000 Liège T 04/252 01 58 – F 04/252 22 96
16	Melle Brusselsesteenweg 370a, 9090 Melle T 09 272 31 00 – F 09/272 31 01
17	Tervuren Leuvensesteenweg 17, 3080 Tervuren T 02/769 23 12 – F 02/769 23 30



# 2007 in figures

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18



## Staff of the FASFC

Persons employed	1.275
Whose persons in inspection services	773
FTE*	1.148
% permanent staff	62 %
+ veterinarians with assignment**	762

\* full-time equivalent

\*\* independent veterinarians fulfilling special assignments



## Communication

Press releases	118
Press releases on the withdrawal of products	31,4 %
Trade fairs and exhibitions	16
Visits to the website <a href="http://www.afsca.be">www.afsca.be</a>	637.472



## Contact point for consumers

Questions	6.145
Complaints	2.170
Complaints on hygiene and tobacco regulation	60,1 %

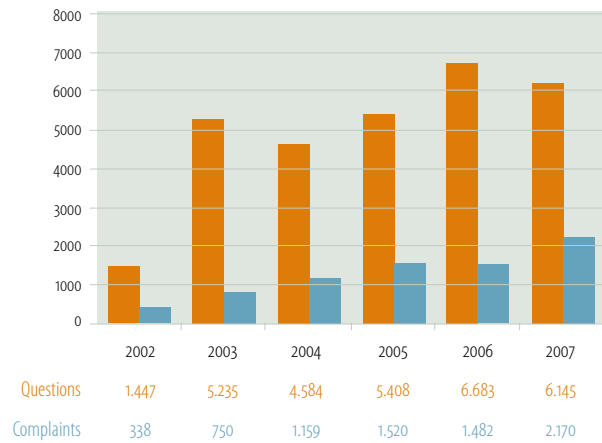


2007

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# 2007 in figures

## Questions asked and complaints made to the contact point



## Mediation service for business operators

Complaints	164
Complaints on financing system	56,7 %
Complaints on regulation	23,8 %
Complaints on the behaviour of the control officers	3,7 %

## Laboratories

Laboratories of the FASFC	5
Reference laboratories	11
Approved laboratories	52

# 2007 in figures

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## Budget of the FASFC: revenue

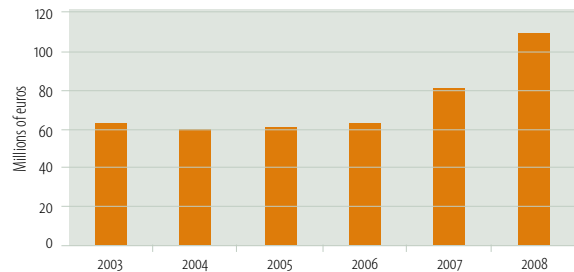
Public funding*	85.397.000 €
Contributions	23.904.000 €
Rebtributions	35.474.000 €
Interventions of the European Union	2.571.000 €
Miscellaneous	7.103.000 €
Total revenue	154.449.000 €

\* Allocation from the federal budget

## Budget of the FASFC: expenditure

Total expenditure	154.232.000 €
-------------------	---------------

## Public funding



# 2007

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# 2007 in figures

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## Advisory Committee

Members	37
Plenary meetings	9

## Scientific Committee

Members	20
Opinions	38

## Controls

Sampling (changes*)	65.411 (+30 %)
Inspection missions (changes*)	88.076 (+23 %)

\* in comparison with 2006

## Intra-Community checks on live animals

<b>Outgoing consignments</b>	
Certificates drawn up	27.427
Live animals	79.778.489
<b>Incoming consignments</b>	
Certificates checked	45.724
Live animals	439.025.141

## 2007 in figures

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### Import checks (third countries)

	Consignments	Rejected
Live animals	2.225	0,9 %
Animal products for human consumption	25.411	0,7 %
Animal products not for human consumption	3.079	1,6%
Food of animal origin	226	2,2%
Feed	2.869	0,1%
Plants and plant products	19.481	0,4%

### Export checks (third countries)

Certificates drawn up	157.581
-----------------------	---------

### Action taken in consequence of non-compliance

Official reports of non-compliance / fines	2.424
Amount of administrative fines	1.280.846€
Withdrawals & refusals of approvals or authorisations	6

## 2007 in figures

RASFF (rapid alert system): breakdown of the 96 notifications of Belgian origin by type of hazard

		Checks in Belgium	Import checks
Chemical hazards	Heavy metals	6	7
	Residues of veterinary medicinal products	4	7
	Pesticide residues	7	2
	Mycotoxins	4	6
	Migration	6	0
	Industrial contaminants (PCB and dioxins)	5	0
	Food colouring and food additives	1	0
	Chemical contaminants	1	1
Biological hazards	Pathogens and altering agents	16	12
	Marine biotoxins	1	0
Other hazards	Documentary non-compliance	0	1
	Illegal import	0	4
	Foreign bodies	2	0
	Non-authorised food supplement	1	0
	Abnormal organoleptic results	1	0
	Non-notified allergen	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>56</b>	<b>40</b>

# Noteworthy facts of 2007

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## How not to spoil your summer camp

### Food safety at summer camps

Each year, thousands of youngsters go on a summer camp. For some years now, the FASFC has drawn the public's attention to the importance of food hygiene and to preserve the cold chain. Conditions in camp kitchens are not often ideal for food safety, which is why it is hardly worth saying that particular attention should be given to kitchen hygiene. Accidents can easily occur and one should bear in mind that many young "victims" fall prey to food poisoning.

2007

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## Noteworthy facts of 2007

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Given the incidents that occurred in recent years, the FASFC decided in 2007 to launch an information campaign. Every youth movement organising summer camps received an information pack containing:

- the FASFC leaflet « Camp d'été pourri ? Non merci ! » (Summer camp spoiled, no thank you!) including useful tips on hygiene and on preserving and preparing food at camp locations
- an accompanying letter for the leaders
- a kitchen roll holder with tips on hygiene and preservation of foods.

We were able to count on a high level of commitment from the authorities and the youth movements for this campaign, especially in Flanders. Over 3.000 information packs were distributed. The FASFC would like to both repeat and intensify this information and awareness-raising campaign in coming years.

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# Noteworthy facts of 2007

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## Sector guides on self-checking

To help business operators to implement self-checking within their business, the various sectors of the agri-foodstuffs industry are free to draw up self-checking guides that may be submitted for approval to the FASFC. It is of the utmost importance to the FASFC that these guides be clear, didactical and easy to use by all operators including the very small businesses.

These guides must be based upon a hazard analysis and deal with subjects such as hygiene practices, HACCP, tracing and obligatory notification. The sector guides for primary production deal with hygiene rules, keeping records, tracing and obligatory notification.

When a particular sector has a guide, businesses in that sector are entitled to apply for the certification of their self-checking system by a certification body.

*Number of businesses having a sector guide based validated self-checking system*

at the end of 2006	15
at the end of 2007	3.305

In 2008, an information service will be set up staffed by control officers with a broad practical experience that will guide businesses in their implementation of self-checking. Small and medium-sized enterprises and catering businesses (pubs, restaurants, hotels...) will be the first target sectors of this initiative.

# Noteworthy facts of 2007

## The FASFC smiley

An incentive for implementing a self-checking system

The basic idea of the smiley is to inform consumers by means of a distinctive mark of the presence of a validated self-checking system. In addition to the bonus-malus system, the smiley is an incentive for businesses supplying directly to consumers (business to consumer). It is entirely up to businesses to decide whether they affix the smiley or not.



The FASFC consulted business sectors, consumers' organisations and a panel of citizens. Reinforced by their opinions, the FASFC worked out the smiley concept and presented it to the press on 24 April 2007.

Horeca (establishments which prepare and serve food and beverages) was the first sector to adhere to the system. This sector, which counts some tens of thousands of businesses, had asked for an incentive to accelerate the implementation of self-checking and the certification thereof. At a later stage, other sectors will be given the opportunity to adhere to the concept.

When a business operator wishes to adhere to the concept, he must have his self-checking system audited by a certification body. The self-checking system should be based upon the sector guide that has been validated by the FASFC.

The first smileys were issued in January 2008.

# Noteworthy facts of 2007

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## Setting up a Financial service

The implementation of the new financing system made it necessary to set up an operational department specifically charged with collecting the contributions and fees due by businesses with activities in the food chain. The department's activities include:

- managing the process from declaration to invoicing and dealing with litigations in collaboration with the legal service
- dealing with questions, requests for information and complaints from business operators
- keeping in touch with sub-contractors in charge of the administrative management of contributions and the call centre.

In 2007, some 126.000 invoices were sent out representing an amount of 25,2 million euros in contributions and some 33.900 invoices were sent out representing an amount of 38,2 million euros in fees.

Further information on contributions and fees as well as an elaborated list of FAQ is available on the FASFC website.

## Inspection by the Russian Federation (*Rosselkhoznadzor*)

In August and November-December 2007 the Russian Agency *Rosselkhoznadzor* carried out inspections in the Belgian businesses that wished to export deboned beef to the Russian Federation. A certain number of corrective measures had to be taken to ensure their safe export.

## Noteworthy facts of 2007

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In November-December Ros-selkhoz nadzor also carried out a full audit of the veterinary services of the FASFC and of the Federal Public Service for Public Health, Safety of the Food Chain and Environment. Much attention was given to the control of animal diseases, crisis management, laboratories and official controls in the distinct segments of the food chain.

Subsequent to this audit, Ros-selkhoz nadzor and the FASFC signed a cooperation agreement and set up a bilateral working group for discussing veterinary issues.



### Protocol of cooperation with Customs & Excise

On 13 March 2007, the FASFC and the Customs and Excise Administration signed a protocol of cooperation, which allows both contracting parties to act more efficiently and to improve their services to businesses.

The FASFC and Customs have certain goals in common in the field of food safety and security of society. The cooperation protocol is intended to improve the co-ordination of import and export checks on live animals and products thereof, food, feed, plants and plant products, animal by-products and any other product that comes under the authority of the FASFC.

## Noteworthy facts of 2007

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It is therefore logical that the International Affairs department of the FASFC initiated the concrete implementation of this protocol. In addition, a co-ordination cell was set up with representatives of both authorities. This cell continuously evaluates the implementation of the protocol as well as the results obtained. Particular attention is also given to the thorough training of staff members and to the exchange of expert knowledge. Improved cooperation with regard to collecting fees is also being looked into.

### Evaluation of the activities of the Advisory Committee

The activities of the Advisory Committee of the FASFC are evaluated on the basis of the standing orders and of performance indicators. This evaluation takes place on a six-month or yearly basis and contributes to improving the functioning of the Committee.

It shows that the FASFC can count on the effective cooperation of the members of the Advisory Committee, on a high attendance rate at meetings and on the correct application of the standing orders. However, the flow of information from the FASFC to the basis (i.e. the members of trade organisations) could be further improved.



*Gil Houins, FASFC Chief executive officer and  
Noël Colpin, Customs & Excise Executive*

# Noteworthy facts of 2007

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## Study day of the Scientific Committee

On 23 November 2007 the Scientific Committee of the FASFC held a study day on the scientific utilization of databases for evaluating food safety risks.

The three main subjects were:

- gathering data (viewpoint of the EFSA) and developing database management systems
- available databases for evaluating risks in the Belgian context (database on food consumption, databases of the FASFC and of the business sectors)
- examples of case studies of risk evaluation starting from FASFC data.

The case studies related to the availability of data for conducting a study on the exposure to *Listeria monocytogenes* in smoked salmon, the evalu-

ation of the exposure of consumers to pesticide residues, the microbiological surveillance of carcasses and meat and, finally, the estimation of the exposure of consumers to cadmium in a particular area. Notwithstanding the qualitative and quantitative limits of the available data, some interesting conclusions could be drawn from the quantitative risk evaluations. In this context, the inherent uncertainty was always taken into account.

The presentations given in this study day are available on the FASFC's website.

# Accomplishing the tasks

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## From programming to inspection

The FASFC continuously oversees that the processes and the products that ensue from them comply with the requirements laid down in regulations. Inspection of equipment and hygiene measures implemented on the premises, checks of the actual implementation of self-checking and tracing systems, checks of labels and the sampling of products for analysis are some of the ways in which the safety and the quality of products of the food chain may be guaranteed.

The main process of the FASFC is cyclical and consists of 3 stages:

1. Each year, the FASFC drafts a control programme based upon a risk assessment. This programme is composed of 2 parts: sampling and inspection.

2007

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# Accomplishing the tasks

2. The integrated control programme is then translated into a planning of all control activities that sets the targets per province, down to sector level.
3. the provincial control units (PCU) carry out the controls (inspection and sampling) and report their findings. The laboratories report the results of the analyses.

The information received in relation to the obligatory notification, the European Rapid Alert System (RASFF), complaints, findings, inspection reports and results of analyses is used to make risk assessments and requires a regular, sometimes immediate, adjustment of the programme to maximise risk management. In this respect, the expertise of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC is of vital importance.

Three directorate generals (DG) are involved in this process:

- DG Control Policy defines the policy and the control programmes
- DG Control translates the annual programme into control plans that are to be carried out by the PCU (provinces)
- DG Laboratories co-ordinates and performs the analyses provided for in the control programmes.



The core process of the FASFC

# Accomplishing the tasks

---

## Programming controls

Each year, DG Control Policy drafts a control programme composed of 2 main parts: sampling and inspection.

The frequency of inspections is determined by means of objective risk-related criteria. What aspects should be inspected depends upon both the regulatory requirements and the general safety impact. For example, it should be mentioned that controls related to hygiene are relatively more numerous than controls on labels.

Equally, the number of analyses is determined on the basis of the risk-related harmful effects (toxicity or economic impact related to contaminants and to diseases) and on the exposure of consumers. Thus, products are controlled more often and more thoroughly since the risk for consumers is greater. The sampling of products is mainly targeted and based upon previous controls, consumer survey information (market basket...)

and upon recommendations made by various authorities (Scientific Committee, European Commission...).

In each case, the control programmes take into account the number of inspections and analyses laid down in regulations.

This process is far from being static. It changes constantly and every expert involved must be able to react in the proper manner, both competently and efficiently.

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# Accomplishing the tasks

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## Integrated multi-annual national control plan for Belgium

The integrated multi-annual national control plan (MANCP) is the result of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls. It includes a complete overview of the organisation and the management of controls related to feed and food, as well as requirements related to animal health and animal welfare.

Thanks to this multi-annual approach, a wider range of products and matrices can be covered and all the businesses can be inspected without exceeding the testing capacity or the budget of the FASFC. The programming methodology has been described in a scientific publication that is available on the website of the FASFC.

The MANCP and the respective adjustments made to it are submitted each year to the European Commission and will be made available on the website of the FASFC.

# Accomplishing the tasks

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## Planning controls

DG Control translates the annual control programme into provincial control plans. Within the PCUs the controls are allocated to the sectors of primary production (farms...), processing (plants, milling houses, breweries...) and distribution (shops, horeca, markets...).

### Alpha

The Alpha project aims at computerising the central process of programming, planning, conducting and reporting of controls and analyses.

In 2007, the Alpha project dealt mainly with rationalising and computerising the samples taken. As from 1 January 2008, the programming, planning and reporting will be practically entirely computerised.

To that end a database was set up containing over 900 sampling matrices and over 2.300 analyzing parameters. All computer applications involved (Alpha for drawing up the control programme and the control plan, FoodNet for actually carrying out the inspection missions and FoodLIMS for reporting the results of analyses) use this unique database.

These computer applications have been developed to achieve unique data recording; once data has been recorded, it is not necessary to record it in other applications. This approach results in a lower risk of errors and is timesaving.

# Accomplishing the tasks

## Conducting controls

The execution of the control plan is the task of the provincial control units (PCUs). They record the control data (inspections, samples...) in a central computer system (FoodNet).

In addition to the controls planned, the PCUs perform additional controls, in particular following positive or doubtful test results, a complaint or within a context of epidemiological investigation, fraud....

## The charter of control officers

The FASFC adopted a code of conduct for control officers. The charter lays down their rights and their duties. Mutual respect, equity, professional behaviour and integrity are the basic principles of the code. Control officers who visit a business are to introduce themselves and explain what controls they will perform and for what purpose. Control activities may, if need be, be deferred in the occurrence of exceptional family circumstances.

The equal treatment of all persons controlled and discretion with respect to the facts and the information gathered during these controls are also very important principles. Finally, necessary precautions must be taken to avoid the introduction of diseases or any other hazard during controls that may harm the establishment where the control takes place.

The text of the charter is available on the website of the FASFC ([www.afsca.be](http://www.afsca.be)).



## Accomplishing the tasks

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The FASFC uses checklists to perform inspections. These checklists contribute to make controls as uniform and as objective as possible. They are made available to business operators (on the website of the FASFC and when controls take place) so as to guarantee transparency and the supply of information. The checklists were written on the basis of legal provisions.

In order to increase the uniformity and the transparency of the interpretation of checklists, a new option was added to the lists in the course of 2007. According to the importance of each question, the scores can be appraised by means of distinct appraisal levels:

- compliant (value 0)
- minor non-compliance (value 1 to 3)
- major non-compliance (value 10 or 10 plus).

Adding up the distinct appraisals results in an overall score: favourable, favourable with remarks or unfavourable. As a rule, a warning or an official report is issued when the result is unfavourable.



# Accomplishing the tasks

*Types of inspections conducted in 2007*

<b>Items controlled</b>	<b>Number</b>
Infrastructure, installation and hygiene	28.014
Infrastructure and installation (prior to approval)	551
Tracing (identification and registration included)	15.823
Smoking ban	11.979
Animal welfare	7.480
Packaging and labelling (marketing standards included)	6.029
Obligatory notification	6.047
Self-checking system	5.960
Medicinal products and guidance	3.174
Waste management	2.992
Plant health – physical check	2.773
Plant health – administrative check	193
Epidemiological surveillance	2.733
Transport	3.966
Animal health	1.942
Pesticides	921
Packaging material	828
Other aspects	810
<b>Total</b>	<b>102.215</b>

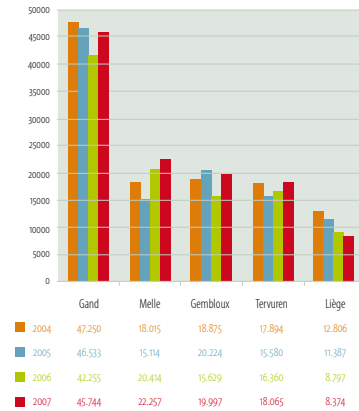
# Accomplishing the tasks

## Performing analyses

FoodLIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) is the new computer application of the Laboratories DG. Developed in 2007, it allows efficient management of the analyses performed by laboratories that work with the FASFC, while complying with the quality requirements laid down in ISO 17.025.

FoodLIMS follows the information from dispatching up to the laboratories and allows the laboratories to enter right away the results of the tests performed for the FASFC. The system facilitates recording and validation of results (choice of working language, follow-up of samples, determining the analyses allocated to each laboratory, follow-up and verification of the invoicing of analyses).

FoodLIMS can also be used for managing the activities and the missions of the staff of the FASFC laboratories.



*Evolution of the number of analyses of FASFC laboratories*

## FASFC laboratory in Tervuren

On 1 January 2007, the Federal Laboratory for the Safety of the Food Chain in Tervuren (FLVVT) became the national reference laboratory (NRL) for the detection of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in food and feed using the Calux method, as well as for the detection of animal protein in feed. The FLVVT was chosen because of its excellent expert technical knowledge. It should be said that when the dioxin incident occurred in 2006, all the samples were indeed tested within a very short term. The FLVVT is also the first Belgian laboratory with an accreditation for the Calux method.



# Accomplishing the tasks

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## Establishments operating in the food chain

In Belgium, all businesses and all business operators active in the food chain must be known by the FASFC and therefore be registered. In addition, some activities require an authorisation or an approval, in addition to registration.

In order to reduce administrative duties for business to a strict minimum, the FASFC closely co-operates with other public authorities such as the “Banque carrefour des entreprises”

### BOOD-on-WEB: how to check the registration of a business

The FASFC developed Bood-on-web, a web application for both consumers and business operators which makes it possible to find out if a business operator is registered, i.e. controlled by the FASFC, by entering either his VAT number, his name or his address.

## Accomplishing the tasks

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Businesses that require an approval are, e.g., businesses with activities in the meat sector, the dairy sector or the egg products sector and manufacturers of compound fertilisers or pesticides. Following an application for approval, there is always an inspection on the businesses' premises, whose aim is to check whether the business meets the legal requirements regarding infrastructure and equipment.

Businesses that are already active in the meat, milk and egg processing sector must undergo an investigation intended to establish whether they comply with the new European regulations (hygiene regulations) and to decide whether a new approval may be issued (re-approval).



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# Accomplishing the tasks

## Databases and tracing: Beltrace

Beltrace is a computer application in which data on the transport, the slaughtering and the inspection of animals slaughtered in Belgium are recorded. With this application, the abattoirs are connected on-line to the central database. This results in an exclusive encoding and in the availability of extra data to both the abattoirs and the FASFC. The abattoirs can retrieve information that will allow them to change the order of slaughtering, and veterinarians will be in a position to carry out skilled inspections in compliance with the Belgian and the European requirements.

These encodings replace or simplify some administrative operations that are related to the process of slaughtering and inspection, or that are necessary for reporting, assessing risks and invoicing. They also allow the electronic transfer of many data to other applications and to other authorities.

A whole new application was put into use in all Belgian abattoirs in November 2007. This application gives support to the users outside of office hours.

# The FASFC in action

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## Plants and plant products

### PSTVd and potatoes

A viroid is the smallest plant pathogen, even smaller than a virus. The Potato Spindle Tuber Viroid (PSTVd) can affect many plant species of the Solanaceae family and lead to extremely large losses of production in potato and tomato crops. Until recently, this viroid appeared only sporadically in Europe. In Belgium, the first occurrence was established in 2006 in a greenhouse tomato crop. The site of the outbreak was destroyed.

2007

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# The FASFC in action

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Following the detection of PSTVd in ornamental plants in the Netherlands, extra control measures were taken in the European Union as from mid 2007. From that moment, a plant passport certifying that they are free from PSTVd or that they come from PSTVd free mother plants must accompany ornamental plants. Tests must also be performed on the other host plants. When there is a contamination, the batch affected by the viroid is destroyed and all the other batches of host plants that are present are sampled. Specific hygiene measures are put in force on the farm where the contamination was found.

67 out of the 248 samples that were taken in Belgian businesses were found to be positive. Most of the samples had been taken from ornamental plants.

## Plants, pesticides & mycotoxins

Pesticides for agricultural use include plant protection products (insecticides, fungicides, herbicides used to protect crops against harmful organisms and to destroy undesired plants) and all other pesticides that are likely to be used in agriculture. The Federal Public Service for Public Health must approve these products before they can be marketed, kept in possession or used in Belgium.

In 2007, 239 inspections were carried out on 126 businesses marketing pesticides for agricultural use; 57 % of these inspections showed satisfactory results. Offences mostly related to the possession or the marketing of products that were no longer approved as well as to non-compliant labelling. Non-approved products are seized and then destroyed.

## The FASFC in action

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On the other hand, 793 inspections were carried out among 771 users of pesticides for use in agriculture; 68 % of these inspections showed compliant results. Offences mostly related to the possession of pesticides that were no longer approved and to the keeping of spray records.

### Control on pesticide residues

Pesticides used on fruit, vegetable and cereal crops may leave residues to which consumers may be exposed. Maximum residue limits (MRL) for pesticides on and in food have been laid down in regulations. These limits make it possible to check if pesticides have been used in a judicious way and to protect the health of consumers.

In 2007, 50 samples of cereals and 1.757 samples of fruit and vegetables were taken on the Belgian market to be tested on the presence of some 350 different pesticides; 93 % of the samples were compliant (no residues found or legal MRL not exceeded).

The MRL was exceeded more often in fruits and vegetables imported from third countries.

Origin of the samples	Non-compliant
Belgium	5,8 %
Other member states of the EU	6,4 %
Third countries	11,3 %

Exceeding the MRL does not necessarily endanger the health of consumers. This fact however denotes that a pesticide has been used in the wrong way. If exceeding the MRL involves a potential risk for consumers, measures are taken to avoid consumption of the food in question (withdrawal from the market and recall addressed to consumers). An inspection takes place on the premises of the person in charge of the food to establish why the MRL was exceeded.

# The FASFC in action

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## Controls on mycotoxins

Mycotoxins are substances that are produced by fungi growing on raw materials of plant origin during the crop season or during storage. Some of these mycotoxins have non-negligible effects on the health of humans or animals.

Deoxynivalenol (DON), also known as vomitoxin, is a mycotoxin that should be given increasing attention. The fungi producing DON grow in areas with a wet and temperate climate, especially when rain falls during the flowering season. Products that are sensitive to contamination are barley, wheat, maize and oats. Ingesting DON causes nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, dizziness and headaches.

Applying good agricultural practices reduces contamination. The FASFC informed traders and processors of the measures that must be taken when contamination occurs and of the rules on notification.

In 2007, all control results were compliant for DON. However, an investigation was carried out at a Belgian business that produces tortilla crisps from maize flour, following an alert via the RASFF system: 120 samples were taken by the FASFC and the business involved also performed some analyses. Management took measures (related to the selection of raw materials) in order to reduce the risk of contamination.

# The FASFC in action

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## Animals

### Food Chain Information

European legislation compels live-stock farmers to supply information to abattoir operators on each animal or group of animals that they send to the abattoir. This information, which is known as “food chain information”, allows abattoir operators and FASFC control officers to improve the targeting of their efforts and to take the necessary precautions when slaughtering or inspecting animals.

The stockbreeder must keep records of this information. The food chain information pertains to the health status of the animals of the farm and includes records on:

- drugs or other treatments given to the animals
- diseases, test results (e.g. Salmonella)
- results of the inspection of animals of that farm slaughtered earlier
- information regarding production
- practical information (e.g. name and address of the veterinarian of the farm).

The requirements pertaining to food chain information apply to poultry (since 1 January 2006) and to pigs (since 31 December 2007). They will be applicable to horses and calves as from 31 December 2008 and to all other sectors as from 31 December 2009.



# The FASFC in action

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## Hunters involved in food safety

Since 1 September 2007, all pieces from carcasses of game must be accompanied by a “qualified person’s declaration”, a qualified person being a hunter who followed a specific training programme. This declaration includes information on the health and the behaviour of the game when still alive, on possible environmental contaminations and on the visual inspection of the freshly shot and gutted game. If all information is undoubtedly compliant, the hunter may pass the game on to a private person or an approved game-handling establishment. If not, the game can only be sent to an approved establishment where the official veterinarian will make a final decision after inspection.

The training course and the exam for qualified persons was set up by the *ASBL wallonne du Royal Saint Hubert Club de Belgique*, the *Hubertusvereniging Vlaanderen*, the *Instituut voor Jachtopleiding* and the *Hochwildringe Hohes Venn-Eifel und Süd Eifel*. A team of veterinarians gave the courses which were highly appreciated by the participants and which even served as an example to other Member States of the European Union. In 2007, approximately 4.500 hunters (one out of every five Belgian hunters) attended the course and passed the exam. The FASFC is very satisfied with the responsible and co-operative attitude of the hunters.



# The FASFC in action

## Animal diseases

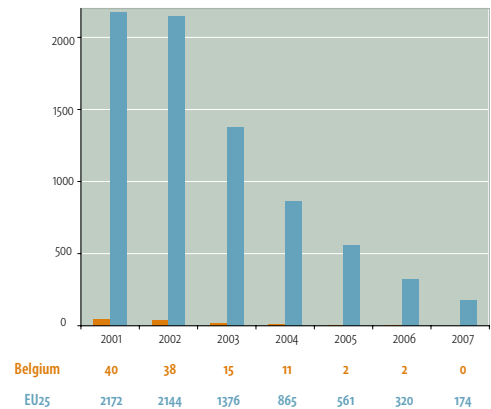
### Mad cow disease

In July 2005, the European Commission launched the BSE Roadmap for transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE), such as BSE in cattle (mad cow disease) and scrapie in sheep and goats. Thanks to very stringent measures to reduce risks within the European Union, the number of BSE positive cases has strongly declined in recent years. Given this positive trend, it is now possible to change a whole set of TSE measures currently in force without compromising the level of food safety or consumer protection.

One of the goals of the roadmap was to allow the OIE or the major trade partners to rank the Member States according to the BSE risk they present.

Trade requirements intended to offer sufficient guarantees on human and animal health protection were laid down for each risk category. A provisional ranking was established in June 2007.

Another goal was to provide active surveillance of sheep and goats. Intensive surveillance was halted in July 2007 since no new BSE cases had been detected.



Number of BSE cases

# The FASFC in action

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Discussions were also initiated on the following issues:

- relaxation of the active surveillance of bovine animals
- raising the age limit for removing the backbone as specified risk material
- allowing the use of fishmeal in feed of unweaned ruminants.

It is obvious that the measures taken until now have been effective. In Belgium, no BSE case was detected in 2007 although 356.808 analyses were performed.

## Avian influenza

The H5N1 avian influenza virus may also cause health problems in humans. Compared to 2006 this virus was given significantly less attention by the press in 2007, although the situation hardly improved. Belgium was spared, but in places all over Europe (Germany, United Kingdom, France, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Russian Federation and Turkey) and worldwide, evidence of avian influenza was found in poultry and wild birds. In large areas of Asia and Africa the H5N1 avian influenza virus has become endemic.

It is important to remain alert as far as the other avian influenza virus types (H5 and H7) are concerned. These types are slightly pathogenic and are often found in wild water birds (ducks, swans, geese, gulls). They do not cause any problems in wild birds or in humans but they may change into highly pathogenic viruses when they hit domesticated poultry.

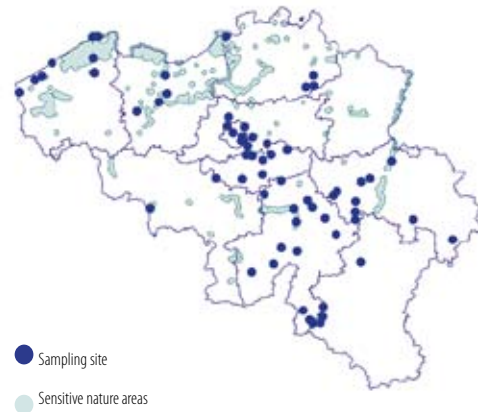
## The FASFC in action

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In 2007, as in the years before, the FASFC took preventive measures with a view to rapid detection of any possible introduction of avian influenza in poultry flocks and to assess the risk that wild birds may present to domesticated poultry. It set up several monitoring programmes:

- active monitoring of wild birds: more than 4.450 samples (oro-pharyngeal and cloacal samples, possibly also serum samples) taken from 2.815 birds were analysed
- suspect mortality of wild birds: 29 analyses related to 230 birds (most of them swans and ducks) were performed (104 files in 2006)
- serological monitoring of poultry: 7.800 animals were sampled in 722 holdings
- passive surveillance of poultry: reporting of 761 clinical cases in which avian influenza was suspected.

No H5N1 was established in 2007



*Active monitoring locations in 2007*

## The FASFC in action

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### Rabies in an imported dog

Rabies is found mainly in carnivores and in bats, but it may also hit humans and other mammals through contact with the saliva of contaminated animals. Rabies is always fatal when symptoms appear. A treatment can only have any effect when it is given immediately after infection.

In Europe, rabies usually only hits wild carnivores and several species of bats whereas in Africa, Asia and South America, this disease is widespread among local animal species and stray dogs are a major reservoir of rabies virus.

Belgium obtained the rabies free status in 2001; not one indigenous case of rabies was found in the last 10 years. Yet the risk of re-introduction of the disease is real.

In late October 2007, a case of "imported" rabies was confirmed in a young dog in Beersel (Flemish Brabant). This dog did not have the required

health documents required and had not undergone any control when it was imported from Morocco in July 2007. Morocco is a country where rabies prevails regularly and where vaccination is not compulsory. Because of the absence of rabies in Belgium and the absence of contact with other animals that might have been contaminated, the authorities were able to conclude that the puppy had been contaminated in Morocco.

As soon as rabies was confirmed, the FASFC and the regional authorities (health inspection services of the Flemish Region) started an investigation to trace as quickly as possible all persons and animals that had had contact with the puppy. The local authorities set up a large-scale information campaign intended for the population of Beersel and its 6 neighbouring municipalities.

## The FASFC in action

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All persons having had direct contact with the infected dog were given precautionary treatment and put under the supervision of the Pasteur Institute; the animals that had had contact with the rabid dog were placed under the supervision of FASFC for 6 months. Fortunately, no new case of contamination was diagnosed.



### Bluetongue

Bluetongue is a virus disease in ruminants that is transmitted by a stinging insect of the *Culicoides* species. The economic and zootechnical losses caused by this disease are very important in the business sectors involved, but bluetongue has no impact on human health. In Europe, this disease has been known since the 1950s, but it was only limited to some countries of the Mediterranean area.

In Belgium, the bluetongue virus (serotype 8) was detected for the first time in August 2006. From August to December 2006, 695 cases were confirmed on Belgian territory. By mid July 2007, the disease reappeared on a sheep farm and spread to cover the whole of Belgium in 2 weeks' time. In 2007, the incidence and the mortality in sheep were significantly higher than in 2006. Compared to the same period in 2006, mortality among sheep and bovine animals had increased by 25.000 and 13.000 animals respectively in 2007.

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# The FASFC in action

In 2007, 6.870 confirmed cases of bluetongue were recorded in Belgium, i.e. nearly 10 times more than in 2006. In the neighbouring countries, a similar development could be seen and the virus systematically spread towards the frontiers of the contaminated areas, covering a surface 4 times larger than in 2006.

The virus reached Scandinavia, the Alps and the south of Europe. By the end of 2007, more than 48.000 farms with sheep and bovine animals in Europe were officially registered as contaminated by serotype 8 of bluetongue.



*Number of farms contaminated in 2006 and in 2007*

# The FASFC in action

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The available control measures (restrictions on movements of animals, disinfestation...) proved insufficient against the spread of the disease in Belgium and in the neighbouring countries. Hence, vaccination appears to be the only alternative that will reduce clinical signs and prevalence of this disease and that will make eradication of the disease possible in the medium run. Vaccination will be compulsory from 2008.



## Skins of slaughtering animals

European regulations emphasize the importance of clean skins/fleeces at slaughter. Several organisms may in fact be present in the intestines, the excrements and the skin of healthy animals. Some of them may cause foodborne infections in humans (such as *E. coli* O157, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*).

Skins are a possible source of carcass contamination during slaughtering. The more the skin is dirty and wet, the greater the risk of carcass contamination and the greater the risk to human health.

Following consultation of the branch organisations involved, a circular letter was released in 2006 to draw the attention of the different operators (stockbreeders, transporters, abattoir operators) to their respective responsibilities in this matter. The animals were divided into distinct categories and the circular letter included



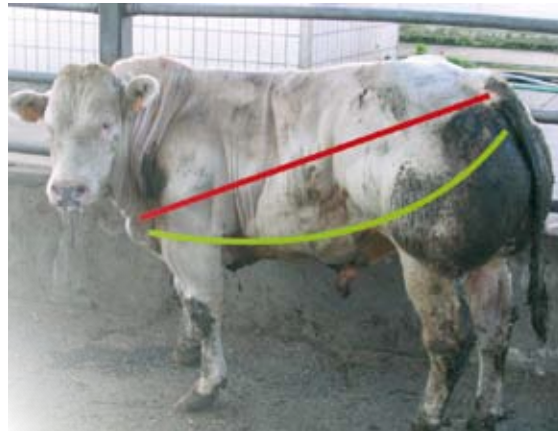
## The FASFC in action

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photographs, which made it possible to decide which animals could be slaughtered.

No sanctions were applied in the transitional period (until 31/3/2007). After that date, the transport and the slaughtering of category 3 animals (with extremely dirty skins) was forbidden.

The FASFC also set up an information campaign (brochures, information at agricultural trade fairs). This campaign will be continued in 2008. The branch organisations have been strongly advised to enter into mutual agreements. A protocol was signed on 12 March 2008.



# The FASFC in action

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## Control of Salmonella in pigs and laying hens

On 28 June 2007, the second stage of the salmonella control in pigs and laying hens officially started.

Analysis of serum samples taken from pigs makes it possible to determine the Salmonella status of farms that fatten domestic pigs for slaughter.

In 2007, the « Salmonella risk farm » status was given to 236 farms. The farm veterinarian must inspect these farms and an action plan must be implemented to avoid the occurrence and the spread of Salmonella.

6 Salmonella surveys have to be conducted during the lifetime of each laying hen. Laying hens must also be vaccinated.

## Incident related to environmental PCBs and dioxins

In July 2007, a sample of fat from a bovine animal taken at an abattoir within the context of the control plan exceeded the dioxin and PCB limit. The animal came from a mixed farming holding located near the Antwerp port (Stabroek).

All animal products (milk included) of this farm were immediately blocked. The FASFC carried out an investigation into the origin of the contamination and took samples of commercial feed, grass silage and milk. The Flemish Region, and more particularly the VMM (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij, the Flemish Environmental authority) took soil samples.

# The FASFC in action

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It was supposed that the temporarily high contents could be explained by a transient pollution of the air that contaminated crops that were later fed to the animals as silage. Although such pollution does not occur regularly, incidents of this kind can always happen in the surroundings of industrial areas. This is why the control programmes of the FASFC are particularly relevant.

In 2007, abnormally high contents of PCBs and dioxins due to environmental contamination were also found in milk and fat of cattle of a farm in Hennuyères. The animal products of the farm were blocked and, finally, the animals were destroyed.



## Controls on marine biotoxins

Bivalve molluscs (oysters, mussels, great scallops) depend on phytoplankton for food. They filter the plankton in the water. Some types of phytoplankton produce natural toxins that are not toxic to shellfish but may tend to accumulate in animals. These toxins resist normal cooking. In humans, consumption of such shellfish may cause paralysis (Paralytic Shellfish Poison), diarrhoea (Diarrhetic Shellfish Poison) or amnesia (Amnesic Shellfish poison).

In 2007, 112 samples were taken of bivalve molluscs in the Belgian production area, on fish markets and in wholesale businesses. All samples were compliant, except two:

- 1 oyster sample showed an excessive DSP content
- 1 scallop sample showed an ASP that exceeded the regulatory standard value.

# The FASFC in action

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## Food processing and distribution

### Food processing

This sector covers the processing of products of plant origin, meat and products of animal origin, fishery products, dairy products and egg products.

2.889 inspections were carried out in the food-processing sector among 2.145 businesses.

*Inspections in the food-processing sector*

	Inspections	Favourable	Favourable with remarks	Unfavourable
Self-checking	2.695	55,4 %	29,4%	15,2%
Infrastructure, installation and hygiene	5.385	52,2 %	40,9%	6,9%
Obligatory notification	1.297	80,6 %	14,3%	5,1 %
Tracing	2.877	69,7 %	26,7 %	3,6 %
Packaging and labelling	1.355	68,6 %	27,9 %	3,5 %
Transport	1.804	82,4 %	15,6 %	2,0 %

500 warnings and 98 fines were issued following these inspections.

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# The FASFC in action

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## Controls on Christmas markets

At the end of 2007, control officers in the Distribution sector concentrated their efforts on Christmas markets. In all, 391 businesses were inspected at 22 markets spread over the 11 PCUs. 143 warnings and 7 fines were issued following these inspections.

The lack of running water for washing one's hands is the most frequent non-compliance.

The other non-compliances revealed by these inspections were:

- no medical certificate of personnel
- using garbage bins without lids
- food exposed without any protection or kept in recipients on the ground
- non-compliant labelling
- non-compliant temperature during storage
- lack of thermometers that could be read by the public.



# The FASFC in action

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## Horeca and institutional kitchens

In 2007, 19.501 controls were carried out in 9.819 horeca (hotel and catering) businesses and institutional kitchens. The number of horeca businesses submitted to inspection is very high as a result of the specific controls related to the new smoking ban regulations.

### Inspections in horeca businesses and institutional kitchens

	Inspections	Favourable	Favourable with remarks	Unfavourable
Infrastructure, installation and hygiene in horeca businesses	9.454	19,4 %	58,8 %	21,7 %
Infrastructure, installation and hygiene in institutional kitchens	1.193	18,2 %	65,8 %	16,0 %
Self-checking	1.466	25,6 %	30,2 %	44,3 %
Obligatory notification	1.535	51,4 %	27,2 %	21,4 %
Tracing	1.629	56,5 %	25,3 %	18,2 %
Transport	1.804	82,4 %	15,6 %	2,0 %

3.359 warnings and 466 fines were issued following these inspections.

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# The FASFC in action

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## Microbiological inspections

During microbiological inspections in horeca businesses and institutional kitchens, we concentrated on food that is not heated once it has been prepared as well as on hot food:

- cold meat dishes
- sandwich salads (meat, chicken, shellfish)
- stews in school kitchens
- pita sold in pita bars
- salted preparations with raw eggs such as mashed potatoes and mayonnaise.

The results are generally satisfactory, except for pitas. These contain too much Enterobacteriaceae, organisms that reveal poor general hygiene conditions during preparation.

## Smoking ban inspections

On 1 January 2007 tobacco regulations became more severe and smoking was no longer allowed in hotels and restaurants in Belgium. Separate smoking areas had to be provided. The aim of these new regulations is to protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

Exceptions have been made for cafés (except when they are located in a large public space or part of a sports centre or sports club) provided they comply with certain requirements (the main activity of the business is serving drinks and no other food than light meals are served or meals account for less than one third of the purchases of the business). The smoking ban does not apply to establishments selling French fries if their capacity does not exceed 16 places (seating and standing room).

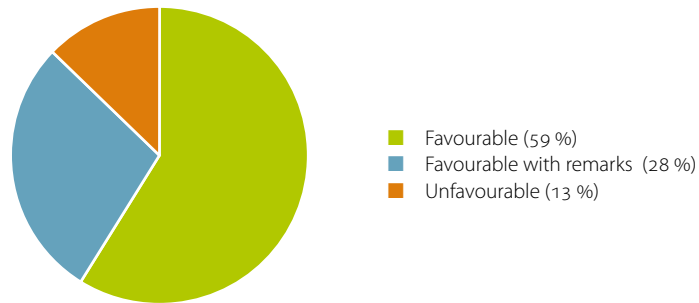
The inspections carried out by the FASFC were concentrated in the first quarter of the year. During these

## The FASFC in action

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inspections, the control officers spent much time giving advice and information to business operators. Horeca businesses that did not meet the new requirements were given a warning in writing to draw their attention to the items that needed improvement. After the first quarter, control officers immediately issued a fine when non-compliance was clearly revealed.

In 2007, 11.979 smoking ban inspections were carried out among 11.094 businesses. This number is significantly higher than the number of horeca businesses inspected in 2006 (2.535). This increase shows that the authorities judge that smoking ban inspections and giving information on the new tobacco regulations to be very important.



*Results of the 11.979 smoking ban inspections carried out in horeca businesses*

2.483 warnings and 108 fines were issued following these inspections.

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# The FASFC in action

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## Retail and wholesale businesses

In 2007, 4.010 missions were carried out in retail and wholesale businesses.

### *Inspections in retail and wholesale businesses*

	Inspections	Favourable	Favourable with remarks	Unfavourable
Infrastructure, installation and hygiene among wholesalers	151	21,2 %	53,6 %	25,2 %
Infrastructure, installation and hygiene among retailers	4.112	20,5 %	54,6 %	25,0 %
Self-checking	1.076	38,9 %	22,7 %	38,4 %
Obligatory notification	1.367	57,0 %	28,0 %	15,0 %
Tracing	1.193	56,7 %	25,8 %	17,5 %
Tracing of beef in meat stores	538	45,7 %	26,6 %	27,7 %

1.308 warnings and 310 fines were issued following these inspections.

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# The FASFC in action

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## Controls on additives

Additives are substances that are freely added to foods for technical reasons, the presence of which is intended to last until delivery to consumers. They are used to change or improve certain characteristics of foods: increase the storage time (preservatives, antioxidants), change their texture and stability, change the colour and the taste (colouring agents and flavourings).

Law forbids the use of sulphite in minced meat. The colour of meat that is exposed to the air turns to brownish. When sulphite is added to the meat, the natural colour of the meat is preserved. This additive may help to make spoiled meat look fresh and may thus be a hazard to food safety. Hundreds of inspections are carried out year after year among butchers, wholesalers and in institutional kitchens and supermarkets.

In 2007, 612 foods were analysed. 480 tests were carried out on minced meat: 27 of them were non-compliant and the meat was seized. All other samples (of dried fruit, vegetables, wine...) were compliant.

Benzene is a carcinogenic substance. Humans are at most risk from exposure to benzene through inhalation. In certain circumstances, benzene may be formed in soft drinks due to a reaction between ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and sodium benzoate (a preservative). But benzene is formed only when several requirements are met at the same time: temperature, storing time, UV light, the presence of some other substances, ...

# The FASFC in action

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In 2007, 89 analyses were performed on soft drinks. None of them contained more than 10 ppb of benzene (action limit proposed by the European Commission for soft drinks), and 9 of them contained 1 to 5 ppb of benzene (1 ppb being the European standard for water). These results show that the soft drinks industry has made efforts to prepare drinks that are free from benzene or do contain only a negligible amount of benzene.

## Contact materials

Foods may be contaminated by the materials or the objects with which they enter into contact. That is why controls are carried out on such materials (dinnerware, kitchen utensils, jars for baby food...) by means of migration tests.

When results are non-compliant, fines and warnings are issued and it may be decided to recall a product(s) (following risk assessment). In 2007, 9 recalls were operated through press releases and there were 6 European rapid alerts (RASFF).



# The FASFC in action

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*Analyses of materials coming into contact with food*

	Number of samples	Non-compliance rate
Lead and cadmium (ceramics)	65	3,1 %
4,4-diphenylmethane (objects made of black nylon)	145	9,7 %
Semicarbazide (baby food and fat food)	17	0 %
Formaldehyde (kitchen utensils made of melamine)	126	0,8 %
Bisphenol A (feeding bottles and drinking cups)	47	0 %

## Foodborne outbreaks

Foodborne outbreaks are infections or intoxications caused by the consumption of a contaminated food product or water. The term foodborne outbreaks refers to the occurrence of similar symptoms in equal circumstances in at least two persons with a (probable) causal connection to one single source of food.

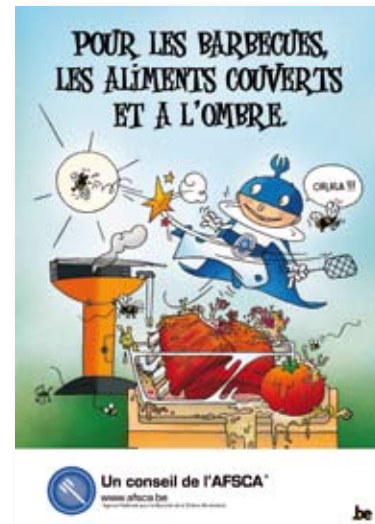
In 2007, 101 Foodborne outbreaks were reported, affecting 913 people, 75 of whom were admitted to hospital. For 44 of these infections, the (plausible) causal agent was identified either by analysis of remnants of the suspect food or by analysis of patient samples. The causes that were found most frequently were noroviruses (10), Salmonella (8, 7 of which were due to Salmonella Enteritidis), Bacillus cereus (6), Listeria monocytogenes (5) and coagulase-positive Staphylococcus (4).

# The FASFC in action

Although the surveillance of food-borne outbreaks has been improved, the number of infections is still underestimated. This has to do with the problems of diagnosis, the fact that it is difficult to establish a link between the infection and the food source as well as to the insufficient reporting of foodborne outbreaks. Whereas the mortality rate of these infectious diseases is low, their social-economic impact is substantial (absenteeism among workers...).

In 2007, several foodborne outbreaks affected children, e.g.:

- enterohemorrhagic E. coli intoxication of some 10 children at 2 birthday parties due to poor hygiene conditions when handling ice cream.
- intoxication of some 50 Dutch scouts due to the use of dirty water recipients
- Staphylococcus intoxication of some 30 scouts due to poor hygiene conditions when preparing, storing and cooking hamburgers



*"When barbecuing, keep food covered and protect it from the sun"*

# Fighting fraud

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Year after year, several services of the FASFC carry out controls and analyses in order to fight fraud in the field of food chain safety.

The national investigation unit of the FASFC takes part in the working groups of:

- the multidisciplinary hormones unit
- the interdepartmental commission for the co-ordination of fraud prevention in economic sectors
- the interdepartmental co-ordination unit for food safety control
- the multidisciplinary unit for food safety-related fraud prevention that is chaired by the FASFC.

2007

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# Fighting fraud

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## Fighting forbidden substances

Samples are taken on farms keeping cattle and pigs (urine, hair, feed, syringes...) according to the control plan and in suspect cases.

In 2007, a H-status was attributed to 5 cattle farms following the use of a mixture of substances with hormonal effects or corticosteroids. A R-status was attributed to 12 cattle farms and to 12 pig farms following offences related to the use of antibiotics or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory substances.

Within the context of targeted investigations, 2,214 samples were taken on 29 farms; 9 farms were found to be non-compliant.

Samples are also taken from carcasses of cattle, calves, pigs, sheep and horses at the abattoir according to the control plan and for the purpose of investigations. Tests for detecting forbidden substances and veterinary medical products are performed on various types of samples (urine, faeces, fat, liver, meat, injection site, thyroid...).

One bovine animal was found to be non-compliant in tests performed according to the control plan and 2 bovine animals were found to be non-compliant in tests performed on suspect samples.



# Fighting fraud

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## Controls during transport    Specific campaigns

In 2007, the FASFC took part in 23 controls carried out on the roads in co-operation with the local and the federal police forces, customs officers, the national employment office...

586 vehicles were inspected. Non-compliances were found in 39 lorries, relating mainly to road documents, labelling, the tracing of products and storage temperature.

In 2007, action was taken in 6 specific – and mostly multidisciplinary areas:

- on compost
- on seed potatoes
- on caviar
- the so-called KORBEEF campaign (animal welfare, feed and the use of hormonal substances forbidden during the transport of animals)
- on food supplements (fitness centres, sports shops, internet...); this campaign will continue in 2008
- on the feast of the sacrifice (sheep keepers, traders, clandestine slaughtering...).

Some 15 fines were issued once the campaigns were concluded.









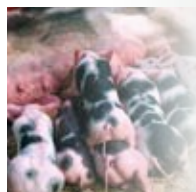
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2007

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